

CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that growth in faith is a lifelong journey, undertaken in community and guided by the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the family is the primary community in which faith is shared and nurtured. The whole Church community, beginning at the parish level, puts itself at the service of the family to help form young Catholics. Formal faith formation in the parish is intended to support the family and the Church community in this mission.

We believe that the goal of our Faith Formation program is active learning that translates into active faith. What we believe about children and the ways in which they best experience the transmission of faith shapes this program in many ways.

REGISTRATION

All families wishing to register for the Sunday session or the **G.I.F.T.** (Growing in Faith Together) program must be registered members of St. Michael's Parish.

According to Archdiocesan guidelines, for a young person to be eligible to receive a sacrament he/she must be attending Faith Formation classes or Catholic School regularly for at least year before the year they receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, or Confirmation. Faith Formation is considered to be a life-long experience not just for the reception of sacraments.

CURRICULUM

Here at St. Michael's we offer two options for faith formation for children. You may choose from a family focus or a classroom type of preparation.

Option 1

Family Faith Formation or **G.I.F.T.** (Growing In Faith Together) is an innovative approach to faith formation for grades pre-K through 7. Religious Education moves from the classroom approach to engaging families as a community. Adults and children "Grow in Faith Together". This type of Faith Formation is lectionary based on the readings of the Sunday Liturgy.

It encourages families to work with the themes of faith presented each Sunday with their children and help them to grow in family and parish centered activities that bring home the faith and make it personal. Children and families engage in gatherings meant to enrich the learning process. Children are provided with the necessary materials to guide the Family Faith Formation and we offer additional activities on line at www.pflaum.com

Option 2

Children in Pre- K 4 through Grade 8 meet on Sunday mornings at the 9:30 AM Mass followed by their regular faith sharing sessions. The sessions will begin at the 9:30 am Mass in the church followed up by classroom instruction until 11:45 AM. They will use religion materials that have been approved for use in the Archdiocese of Baltimore and follow the guidelines laid out in the curriculum. To register for the classroom program (Pre-K to Gr. 8), use the Children's Faith Formation Form and check "Sunday Morning Session. . . ." under "Session Preference"

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Because Faith Formation is so important, and **our time with your child is slightly more than one day** (45 minutes per week over and above the Sunday Mass), our attendance policy is as follows: *Children may miss no more than 4 classes* and must make up all missed work. Be sure to contact your child's Catechist in the event of an absence. If make up work is not completed or a child misses more than 4 classes, he/she will remain in that grade level for another year and will be ineligible to prepare for any sacrament the following year. If regular attendance is a problem for your family please consider the G.I.F.T. program.

FIRST SACRAMENTS

According to Archdiocesan guidelines, children wishing to participate in preparation for a Sacrament must be regularly attending a parish faith formation program or Catholic school. Children must also honor the attendance policy set forth by the parish

MASS ATTENDANCE

Because we are Catholic, the center of our faith is the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. The focus and strength of our lives is found in the celebration of Eucharist with the community. Our full, active participation in the Eucharist binds us closer together as disciples of Jesus Christ. *Children will be attending Mass as part of the regular Faith Formation class on Sunday morning. Parents are invited to attend.*

FIRST PENANCE & RECONCILIATION & FIRST EUCHARIST

The earliest time allotted for First Sacraments is age 7 or usually Grade 2, but First Sacraments can happen at any time in a child's life (over the age of 7). In this parish, preparation for First Reception of Sacraments takes place at home. "Penance and Reconciliation" preparation begins in the Fall and Eucharist in early Spring. Each begins with an informational parent meeting. It is at that time you can register your child for reception of the sacrament and receive materials that you will use to prepare him or her. Please watch the church bulletin for the date and time of the meeting. Canon Law dictates that persons preparing for Eucharist must first be given the opportunity to receive Penance & Reconciliation. **Therefore, any child wishing to receive Eucharist must first be prepared for Penance & Reconciliation.**

CONFIRMATION

Any young person registered in the ninth grade that meets the Archdiocesan requirements for reception of a sacrament (mentioned above) may register for the Confirmation Prep sessions at the end of their 8th grade classes. There will be a parent/candidate meeting to discuss the program. Preparation includes times of personal prayer and formal classes, as well as group activities and service to the faith community. There will be a weekend overnight retreat mandated in the Diocesan plan for Confirmation. The reception of the Sacrament will take place in late spring. Confirmation is not "graduation" from their faith responsibilities, but a beginning of their new, fully initiated faith life.

RCIA ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN (Rite of Christian Initiation)

If you would like to RENEW your commitment to the church and have a child or children who has never been Baptized, please call the office (410-665-1054 ext 106) for information about a special class. For older children who are already baptized Catholic but have never attended Faith Formation Classes there are special ways of helping them "catch up" in their faith. Just call the number above.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the heart and soul of our program. Our catechists (the adults who share faith with your children), our substitute catechists who pitch in, often at a moment's notice, our classroom aides, our office helpers, parents who volunteer to make snacks for one event or another all come together to make up the wonderful faith formation program that we have here at St. Michael's. We always need volunteers, but volunteers who work with children must have the Archdiocesan "STAND" training before working with them. Anyone who wishes to work with children must have their STAND requirements completed BEFORE they begin ministry. Please help us out . . . call the parish and ask for Nikki.