

# 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 Children's Faith Formation Classes must be registered members of St. Michael's Parish. If you homeschool your children they should be part of a Faith Formation Program unless you are using a Catholic based Homeschool program.

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*

Children in Pre -Kindergarten (4 year olds) through Grade 8 meet on Sunday mornings for regular faith sharing sessions. Our classes begin at 9:00 a.m. in the school building. Children will go to the 10:30 a.m. mass at the end class. Parents are encouraged to attend with them. Children who attend the Spanish Liturgy at 12:30 p.m. may do so. Their parents can pick them up and bring them back to the later Mass. They will use religion materials that have been approved for use in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Both "Be My Disciples" and Pflaum Gospel Weeklies emphasizes learning and practicing the skills and habits, virtues and spiritual gifts that lead young disciples to higher levels of moral thinking and spiritual growth. Their comprehensive tools and lessons empower young people and their families to answer the call to discipleship. The lessons are rooted in Scripture and Catholic tradition and focus on leading children to a *lived faith*.

## *ATTENDANCE POLICY*

Because Faith Formation is so important, and our total class time with your child is slightly more than one day a year, our attendance policy is as follows: **Children may miss no more than 4 classes to advance a level each year and all missed work must be made up.** Be sure to contact your child's Catechist in the event of an absence. Perfect attendance is rewarded at the half year mark (usually the end of January) and at the full year mark. Half year perfect attendance (either the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> half) receives a certificate and candy, while perfect attendance for the year receives a certificate and "Chick Fil A" gift card.

# 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 are required to attend Mass with their families on a regular basis. Attending a Faith Formation Class should never take the place of Mass.*

## **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.** If your child is eligible for receiving these sacraments, you will be invited to attend a meeting for First Reconciliation in the fall. Children who are in Catholic Home School programs should call the Parish Office to register for sacraments.

## **CONFIRMATION**

Any young person registered in high school that meets the Archdiocesan requirements for reception of a sacrament (mentioned above) may register for the Confirmation Prep sessions provided they have a year of Formal Faith Formation or Catholic School prior to their preparation. Confirmation is not considered a "graduation" from Faith Formation. It is for young people who are committed to their faith. Confirmation is a beginning of their new, fully initiated faith life! They will be required to attend classes and be involved in service projects and youth ministry before they can be confirmed. They will also be required to attend a retreat designed just for them!

## **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) 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 their Archdiocesan approved "Virtus" requirements completed BEFORE they begin ministry. Please help us out . . . call the parish for information.