



Saint Bernadette Catholic Church
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Parent/Student
Faith Formation Handbook
Pre-K – 12th Grade
2018-19

FAITH FORMATION TEAM VISION

United by Christ, the St. Bernadette Faith Formation Team welcomes, teaches, supports and inspires desire to grow in deeper communion with Jesus lived in the world.

Church Information:

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Website: www.stbchurch.org

Priests and Deacons:

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. **Curriculum:** Our program for students in grades Pre-K-12th follows the guidelines outlined by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston for the Catechesis of Children and Adolescents.
- B. **Prayers:** Students (Grades Pre-K-12th) will be given a Prayer Booklet which lists all the prayers they should know for each grade level. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to help their students learn these prayers.
- C. **Communication:** We are here to serve the religious educational needs of our children and youth. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, contact your student's Director of Religious Education.
- Parents should watch for reminder notes that are e-mailed and/or sent home with the students, as well as look for notices in the bulletin.
 - Websites: Parents/Guardians and students are encouraged to visit St. Bernadette's website: www.stbchurch.org. Look under the Faith Formation tab for helpful specific grade level information.

II. Safe Environment Programs

All Catechists, Assistants and Core Team Leaders will provide a loving Christian atmosphere within the classroom so that youth will be able to learn and recognize they are special children of God. They are also positive Christian role models who are prepared to teach and discuss the designated curriculum.

All Leaders, Assistants and Volunteers have completed the VIRTUS program as required by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), and St. Bernadette Parish. Student phone numbers and e-mail addresses may be provided to the Catechists, Core Team and aides. They will be used strictly for Faith Formation communications and be done in conformity with the Archdiocesan confidentiality policy as outlined in the VIRTUS program.

There are three course levels of the VIRTUS Safe Environment Training for Adults and each level is valid for 5 years. For more information:

<https://www.archgh.org/offices-ministries/office-of-child-and-youth-protection/>

- **Protecting God's Children (PGC) (initial training) - VIRTUS Level 1**
This is the program selected by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston to educate clergy, staff, and volunteers who work with children and youth about child sexual abuse and the ways to create a safe environment for children. The 3-hour live session includes videos and facilitated discussions that focus on the prevention of abuse and the protection of children. Adults learn how to recognize the warning signs of sexual abuse and to respond appropriately. You will learn about steps that the faith community can take to create a safe environment for all God's children and how to respond when adults behave in a way that raises concerns.
- **Keeping the Promise Alive (KPA) (1st refresher) – VIRTUS Level 2**
This is a 1.5-hour refresher course which must be taken five years after the initial course listed above. The material covered in "Keeping the Promise Alive" is designed to identify and reinforce the lessons of the original "Protecting God's Children" program by clarifying some of the more challenging aspects of the sessions and strengthening the participants' ability to recognize risky behavior by adults in their environments and take action to intervene in potentially threatening situations.

- **PGC Online Awareness 3.0 – (2nd Refresher) – VIRTUS Level 3**
This 75 minute online training course is a truncated version of the live training with video excerpts surrounded by other important content. This online training requirement, along with a new background check, must be completed within three (3) months from the 5-year KPA anniversary date. If you fail to complete the online training within the 3-month grace period, the VIRTUS system will automatically default your account and require you to attend another live “Protecting God’s Children” workshop.
- **Circle of Grace** is a safe environment education program for all children in K-12th grades. Its primary focus is to help children and their parents develop the knowledge and skills needed to keep children and youth safe and protected from sexual abuse. Circle of Grace is an ongoing program which will provide annually age-appropriate lessons to children.
- **Retreat Formation** is a required course within our Archdiocese that must be completed by adult volunteers and teens who are selected to participate in helping with a youth retreat. This course focuses on the components of comprehensive youth ministry to provide a framework that will meet the needs of young people in a retreat setting.

II. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

A. Admission Policies:

Early-bird registration fees for parishioners are \$35 per student if received by June 6. Fees are \$55 per student from June 7 - August 22, 2018. Beginning August 23, 2018 the registration fee is \$75 per student. Registration fees for non-parishioners are \$150.00 per student.

- **Kindergarten Students:** All students entering Kindergarten must be age 5 or older by September 1 of their enrollment year.

B. **Registration Forms:** Faith Formation Registration Forms for Pre-K through 12th Grade are offered online (www.stbchurch.org => Faith Formation tab => any grade level), with printed copies available at our parish reception office. On the form, mark the grade your child will be **ENTERING** in the **FALL**, as well as the Sacraments he/she has received. List a first and second time choice for class assignments for Pre-K and Elementary grade enrollments.

- Please be accurate and supply complete information on your Registration form.
- The completed Faith Formation registration form and fees can be mailed or delivered to the church Faith Formation offices. All forms are dated upon arrival, and are processed on a FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS.
- Incomplete registration forms are handled last.

C. Classroom Locations:

- **Pre-K and Nursery** children will meet in the classrooms located in the church building.
- **Elementary Faith Formation** students in grades K-5th will meet in the classroom building near the Mini Hall, facing Clear Lake Intermediate and El Camino Real.
- **EDGE/(Jr High) Faith Formation** students in grades 6th-8th will meet in the Parish Life Center (PLC) and the Titus Brandsma Building.
- **High School students** meet in the Parish Life Center (PLC) and the Titus Brandsma Building.

- D. **Class Assignments:** Actual room assignments for Pre-K-5th grade students will be posted prior to the start of Faith Formation in September. For EDGE and LifeTeen students, the class assignments are randomized each year so that students have a better opportunity to know more of their peers.
- E. **Attendance Policy:** Regular attendance in our Faith Formation programs is an important factor in helping your child deepen their understanding of church teaching, scripture, prayer and community. Any missed lessons for students in K-8th grades and Confirmation should be made up at home, as you would make up regular school class work. High School attendance policies will be addressed at the LifeTeen Parent Meeting. If there are special circumstances regarding your child's participation in the program, they may be worked out in advance with the grade-level Faith Formation Director.
- F. **Arrival and Departure:** All students are expected to arrive promptly at class time. If there is no teacher in the room (Grades Pre-K-2), please wait with your child until they arrive.
- G. **No unsupervised students will be allowed in the classrooms. Students should wait outside the classroom until their teacher arrives.** Students in grades Pre-K-2nd should be walked to and from the classroom by a parent/guardian or older sibling. Students in grades 3rd-12th may be dropped off near their building.
- **Please note that BEFORE or AFTER class, no student will be allowed to play on the playground without adult supervision.**
 - Early pick-up is discouraged. Frequently missing all or part of weekly classes does affect your child's religious education.
 - Late arrival is also discouraged. It is disruptive to class. Parents/Guardians of students who are consistently late will be notified.
 - **Help your child set priorities, and respect our policy of no early dismissal due to sports practices or games.**
 - If you do need to pick up your child before dismissal, the parent/guardian must notify their Director of Faith Formation with a brief note (stating time, date, catechist's name and room number).
 - Students will be released only to those persons approved by the parent or other designated adult. Any person(s) picking up the student will be asked to provide photo identification.
- H. **Emergency Cancellation:** If CCISD and/or local schools have closed due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, Faith Formation classes will be canceled for that day. (We do reserve the right to cancel class even if CCISD is still in session.) If you have any questions about cancellation, please call the Faith Formation office before bringing your child to class. (281-486-0337) **Heavy rain does not automatically cause cancellation.** Please use your best judgment about whether or not to bring your child.

III. SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

All students preparing for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation are required to have a copy of their Baptismal Certificate on file. If your child was not baptized at St. Bernadette Church, please provide us with the original Baptism certificate. We will then make a copy for our files and return the original to you.

- A. **First Reconciliation and First Communion:** The celebration of First Reconciliation and First Communion usually occurs during the 2nd grade year for most students who have been baptized, and who are in their second consecutive year of Faith Formation. Older students who have not received either of these Sacraments are eligible if they have been baptized, and are in their second consecutive year of Faith Formation.

- **Sacramental Preparation Meetings and Workshops:** Sacramental preparation is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. To aid you in this process, we offer Sacramental preparation classes/workshops. It is essential that both a parent/guardian and the student who is preparing to celebrate the Sacrament, attend together. Specific information will be mailed to all eligible students prior to the start of any Sacramental preparation.

B. Confirmation:

- For Confirmation, most youth are ready to begin their Sacramental preparation after they have been a regular participant for at least one year in our Life Teen program. The Sacrament is celebrated in the fall of each year, (in a student's junior year). Most teens are excited to continue their faith formation and participate in helping the younger teens coming on board. In addition, this experience better prepares them to live their faith and form a deeper communion with Jesus lived in the world of college and beyond.
- For your child to be considered a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation, they must be in 10th or 11th grade and have attended 75% (missing no more than **4** classes) of the Life Nights **the year before** they wish to receive the sacrament. They should also attend at least 75% of Life Nights for the year they wish to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Following the guidelines from our Archdiocese, students participate in the following: Life Nights, one summer service event for the community, and one service event for the parish, Confirmation classes (7 sessions), one Life Teen retreat or summer conference *and* one Confirmation retreat.
- Confirmation Candidates will partake in a one-on-one Readiness Interview at the beginning of preparation to ensure understanding of the preparation for the Sacrament and understanding of the Sacrament itself. There will also be a final interview at the end of the Confirmation classes.

- C. **Children's Catechumenate for Children and Teens:** is for those students seven years of age or older who have not been baptized and wish to become Catholic. It is required to have at least one year of religious education (Faith Formation) completed before entering this faith journey. An introductory meeting is held in the fall. For more information, contact your child's Director of Faith Formation.

IV. EXPECTATIONS

- A. **Parents:** As the primary Catechists of your children, parents are encouraged to help your children and youth attend classes regularly and on time, as absences and tardiness disrupt the continuity of learning. Please communicate with your child's Director and Catechist or Core Team Leader any special needs or circumstances that may affect your child within the classroom. Parents are welcome to be an active part of their children's learning.
- **Mass:** All families should be regularly attending Mass as full, conscious, active participants. Children and youth learn by our example.
- B. **Students:** Students are to behave in a Christian manner at all times. Students are to be respectful and cooperative with any adults assisting within the program and with their peers. They should actively participate in classroom discussions and activities. Students

should attend class regularly, and complete all assignments given. Students should honor the programs' Dress Code, Code of Conduct and policy regarding use of cell phones.

- I. **Dress Code:** All dress should be modest and appropriate for class and for Mass, similar to Clear Creek Independent School District (CCISD). No undergarments should be visible, nor should bellies or lower backs.
 - II. **Code of Conduct:** Students will follow classroom rules, respect others and their property, as well as respect church books and church property.
 - III. **Use of Cell Phones:** Upon entering the church buildings for Faith Formation or other activities, students will turn off their cell phones and leave them off until the program concludes. If a student does not comply, leaders have the discretion to take the student's phone for the duration of the program.
- C. **Discipline and Support for all students (Pre-K-12th grade):** If there are any accommodations, support, health, allergy concerns, or suggestions that will assist your child in Faith Formation, please list those on the registration form and/or contact your student's Faith Formation Director.

Our expectations are that the students will do their best to keep their hearts and minds open to the faith, respect each other and the property, and to learn to be fully active and conscious participants of our faith at Mass and in their daily lives. The leaders will do their best to guide the student's behavior with love and compassion, redirect when possible, and if needed, contact the parent for help with solutions.

V. PARENT AND STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

The St. Bernadette Parent Faith Formation Handbook was created to outline our policies and programs. By signing the Parent and Student Acknowledgement section on our registration form, you are acknowledging that you have reviewed a copy of the St. Bernadette Parent Faith Formation Handbook.

You are also accepting responsibility to read and understand your commitment to the program and to cooperate with the parish policies set forth in the handbook. The parent is responsible for reviewing the applicable policies with their student so that they will understand their commitment and cooperation in their St. Bernadette Faith Formation Programs. Any questions should be directed to the appropriate grade-level Director of Faith Formation.

VI. RIGHT TO AMEND

St. Bernadette Catholic Church Faith Formation Program reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified in writing if changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this handbook.

Updated 4/2018