



ST. MICHAEL
P A R I S H
Schererville, Indiana

Faith Formation Parent Handbook 2026-2027

FAITH FORMATION OFFICE

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Our Vision of Faith Formation

WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

The purpose of St. Michael's Faith Formation Program is to provide opportunities for faith formation for the St. Michael Catholic Community and beyond; affirming participants in the practice of their faith within the family, parish, and community, under the direction and leadership of their pastor. This formation is based on Sacred Scripture, the Liturgy of the Church, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the National Directory for Catechesis, and the Directives for Faith Formation from the Diocese of Gary.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT?

"The role of the family is the first soil on which is planted the seed of faith. Parents are the primary educators in the Faith. All members of the extended family have some role in the formation of young Christians."

WHAT IS ASKED OF YOUR FAMILY?

Attending Mass each week as a family provides an example for our children. Regular church attendance helps connect their religious instruction to living a life of faith. By attending weekly Mass, actively contributing to the support of the Church, and being of service to others in the community, children learn to live the message of the Gospel.

Additionally, attending faith formation classes every week is vital to your child's understanding and learning about their Catholic faith.

WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

It is the task of the Faith Formation Board to assist the Bishop, Pastor, and Director in nurturing the faith development and catechesis of all members of St. Michael Catholic Community. Its purpose is to assist each person to live their faith and become aware that by their baptism they share in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ and are called to live the Gospel values.

All programs are in accordance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the General Directory for Catechesis, our National Directory for Catechesis, and the guidelines and policy of the Diocese of Gary.

How Will We Teach?

TEXT RESOURCES

Textbooks are the primary tool and guide in which your child will learn the faith.

All texts are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church per the Conference of Catholic Bishops. Students who lose or deface their religion books or Bible will be charged for the price of replacing the text.

First Penance, First Communion, and Confirmation information, dates, times and requirements will be given out during the specific meetings for these sacraments. The dates and times of these meetings will be forthcoming emails and the bulletin.

BASIC PRAYERS

The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of prayer forms inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Faith Formation program exposes the children to many of these prayers, liturgies and music. It would be helpful to your children if you would assist them in learning their prayers by praying with them and encourage them to “talk” to God in their own words (spontaneous prayer). By praying together and attending the different liturgies offered in the parish, your children will become closer to God by your example.

GRADES KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE THREE

Sign of the Cross
Blessing Before Meals
Act of Contrition

Glory Be
10 Commandments
Our Father

Hail Mary
Seven Sacraments

GRADES FOUR AND FIVE

Mysteries of the Rosary
Apostles Creed

Memorare
Stations of the Cross

Hail Holy Queen
St. Michael Prayer

GRADES SIX THROUGH EIGHT

Nicene Creed
Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Angelus
Mental Prayer

Lectio Divina
Prayer to the Holy Spirit

LITURGICAL PRAYER

To further expose our children to the church's rich tradition of prayer, there will be additional prayer services, liturgies and devotions throughout the year. Parents of the Traditional Faith Formation, and the Sunday Family Faith Formation program will be invited to participate with their children for these liturgical events. We sincerely hope you will join your child/children during these times.

At times, we will need help for some of the liturgies and programs. We will need readers, hospitality ministers, and music ministers and those willing to help set up and clean up. Information about these services will be sent home with your child and on the parish website.

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

Students and adults are expected to treat each other and all staff as Christians. Students are asked to follow the instructions of their teacher, any adults designated to assist them in their faith development, and the Director. Disruption of the class will not be tolerated.

When there is a behavioral problem, the child's Catechist will work with the student to correct the situation. If the problem continues to exist, the Catechist will notify the Director. If the behavioral problem continues after the student speaks with the Director, the parent(s) will be called to pick the student up and correct the situation before the student is allowed back in class.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Students should not bring any personal possessions to class other than their text book and necessary supplies. Please leave all portable electronics at home. **CELL PHONE USE is not permitted during class time.** If a student needs to make an emergency call, they are to make the call from the Faith Formation office or have the Catechist's permission to use the cell phone in class. If the student is found with a cell phone or electronic device in class without permission of the teacher, the cell phone or device will be taken and the parent must come to the Director's office to collect the device.

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND POLICY FOR HOMESCHOOLING

**Parents are called to impart Christian values and to educate their children at home. "Parents receive in the sacrament of Matrimony 'the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children, to whom they transmit and bear witness to human and religious values. This educational activity which is both human and religious is a 'true ministry'" (GDC, 227).*

- Home school families must be registered members of the parish for at least 2 years and make the Pastor aware of their intent to home school.
- The full name, address, date of birth, baptismal certificate and current grade level of each child being home schooled is to be submitted to the parish's Director of Religious Education in order to maintain appropriate and accurate records.
- Each child from Grade one through eighth grade is to receive appropriate religious instruction of at least one hour per week, if not more.
- Parents may use the parish's age/grade equivalent Catechetical textbook(s) or any other textbook on the USCCB's published list of approved resources. It is highly encouraged to use the educational series utilized by the parish's Religious Education Program, if/when possible.
- Any catechetical textbook(s) used for religious education home schooling (not including those used within the parish's RE classrooms shall be reviewed and approved, in advance of their usage for homeschooling, by the Pastor and the Director of Religious Education.
- Parents home schooling their children are encouraged to seek assistance from the Pastor and the parish's Director of Religious Education when questions or needs arise.

Mass Attendance-

- Children, together with their parents or guardians, are expected to participate regularly in the celebration of the **Holy Mass** at their parish, including attendance at all **Holy Days of Obligation**. Regular participation in the Sunday liturgy and Holy Days of Obligation is an essential component of the child's faith formation and sacramental preparation.

Sacramental Preparation-

***Reconciliation (Grade 2) * Holy Eucharist (Grade 3) *Confirmation (Grade 8)**

- Any child preparing to receive a sacrament is required to register for the Parish's **Faith Formation – Sunday Family Program** in order to celebrate the sacrament.
- A brief **catechetical assessment** will be required for any child who is homeschooled in religious education and is preparing to receive a sacrament. This assessment will help ensure that the child has received the appropriate religious education and is adequately prepared.
- **Parents/guardians** are also required to participate in all designated **parent information meetings** and **sacrament practices** as part of their child's preparation

What Is Asked of You as A Parent/Guardian?

FAITH FORMATION POLICY AND THE SACRAMENTS

St. Michael's policy requires that all children begin their formal formation in grade one. Each child should have completed grade one curriculum before entering grade two, the sacramental year for First Penance, and have completed one year before they celebrate the sacrament of First Communion in grade three. Students receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation need to complete four years of formal catechesis.

Children aged seven and older who are not baptized will be moved into the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults which offers a process for bringing older children into the faith. Please refer any questions regarding OCIA to the Director in the Faith Formation Office.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place in the eighth grade. Children need to continue their Faith Formation after First Communion. Children should be involved in the Faith Formation curriculum from grade four through grade seven before entering the Confirmation year. Middle school youth enrolling in grade seven or grade eight without prior formation will need to make-up the missed years before celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation.

REGISTRATION

All families should be registered members of St. Michael Church and actively contribute to the support of the parish. There is a yearly registration for the Faith Formation Program. Registration forms are to be filled out with the necessary family information and emergency information. Students are assigned classes on a first-come and first-served basis. For registration details, please see our website, the bulletin, or contact the Faith Formation Office.

TUITION

Tuition for Traditional Classes

\$120.00	year for (1) child
\$210.00	year for (2) children
\$290.00	year for (3) children
\$350.00	year for (4) + children

Tuition for Family Sunday Class

\$110.00	year for (1) child
\$200.00	year for (2) children
\$280.00	year for (3) children
\$340.00	year for (4) + children

*Non-members of St. Michael's will be assessed \$150.00 per family plus tuition. St. Michael members will be given preference for placement if there is a waiting list for classes.

Participating in Parish Life

It is expected that all families who are parishioners of St. Michael's parish contribute weekly using their Sunday envelopes or electronic fund transfer. If this condition is not met, the non-member assessment will be added to your tuition. If this assessment is not paid by the first of April, your registration will not be accepted for the upcoming year.

CLASS ATTENDANCE FOR YOUR CHILD

Traditional Weekly Classes

Gr. 1-8	Tuesday	6:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m.	St. Michael School
Gr. 1-8	Wednesday	6:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m.	St. Michael School

Family Sunday Monthly Class (Parents will attend Adult Formation)

- **MUST be a parishioner for at least 2 years.**
- **Parents will teach the class lessons during the 3 weeks at home.**

Gr. 1-8	Sunday	9:30 a.m.—11:00 a.m.	St. Michael School
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Attendance and punctuality are vital to your child's success in his/her religious education. Please make every effort to have your child arrive on time with their books and supplies. Late arrivals and early dismissals disrupt the class. Frequent absences may prevent your child from advancing to the next level.

ALLOWED ABSENCES

- **Sunday Class- 2 Absences ONLY**
- **Tuesday & Wednesday Classes- 4 Absences ONLY**

CALL OFF PROCEDURE

If your child will not be attending class for any reason, **DO NOT SEND AN EMAIL—you must call the Faith Formation office at 219-322-3077.** Please leave a message for us during non-business hours with the following information: Name(s) of student(s), class day, grade, and reason for the absence. We will record the absence as part of your child's attendance record and notify the catechist of the absence. You are required to contact your child's catechist to get the classwork/homework that was assigned.

Arrival and Dismissal of students will occur at the gym Door A and School Door B. Parents will line up along the orange cones on Wilhelm Street proceeding West. (See Arrival/ Dismissal Handout)

For safety reasons, the inside front door B will be locked 10 minutes after classes begin. If you arrive late, please press the Faith Formation button at Door B. Children must be picked up no later than 10 minutes after the car train ends.

How Will We Keep Your Child Safe?

EMERGENCY PICK-UP

If there is an emergency and you need to pick up your child/children early, please let both the Director and the Catechist know preferably in writing. Children leaving early must be picked up in the Faith Formation office for their safety. **CHILDREN WILL NOT BE RELEASED TO ANYONE UNLESS THE PARENT/GUARDIAN PUTS IT IN WRITING OR PLACES THEIR NAME ON THE EMERGENCY REGISTRATION FORM. PLEASE NOTE: SPORTING EVENTS ARE NOT A VALID REASON FOR EARLY DISMISSAL.**

PROTECTING MINORS

The Diocese of Gary requires the following for any of its employees, agents or volunteers who are ministering or working with minors to abide by the following:

1. A criminal background check is conducted on said employees, agents, or volunteers.
2. Each person must read and sign off on the following documents.
 - a. “Sexual Misconduct Toward Minors and Others at Risk.”
(Policy of the Diocese of Gary)
 - b. “Practical Guidelines for a Safe Environment for Our Youth.”
 - c. “Safe Environment Plan” (Policy of the Diocese of Gary)
 - d. Attend a 3-4-hour workshop on “Protecting God’s Children” with additional on-line training.

In keeping with the requirements mandated by the United States Bishops, the Diocese of Gary requires every Catholic school and Faith Formation program to offer a program that is age appropriate and sensitive for children in kindergarten through high school on the subject of sexual misconduct/abuse. Each year a program will be offered addressing this matter. **Protecting God’s Children Program is PARENT-LED and will be a requirement for the program**

BUILDING EVACUATION-In the event of an emergency where the building needs to be evacuated:

- An announcement will be made over the public address system.
- Students will use fire drill procedures and then will be escorted to the church.
- Parents will be notified to pick up their child/children.
- Catechists are to bring their class list with them and take attendance once outside.
- **Students will stay at the church until a parent or designated emergency contact person arrives.**

TORNADO DRILLS

- An announcement will be made over the public address system.
- Each student will bring their book to cover their head and proceed to the assigned area.
- Safety instructions are posted in each room and the Catechists will go over these with their students.
- Catechists are to bring their class list with them and take attendance once in place.

FIRE DRILLS

- An announcement will be made over the public address system.
- Staff and students should walk quickly in silence to assigned areas out of the building.
- Windows and doors should be closed and lights are to be shut off.
- Catechists are to bring their class list with them and take attendance once outside.

CODE RED

- An alarm will be made over the public address system.
- Catechists will immediately lock the class doors, keep the children in the classroom seated away from the windows and remain quiet.
- Window shades will be open and lights to be kept off in the room.
- Students in the halls or bathroom should proceed to the nearest room. Catechists are to assist any student in the halls or bathroom to a safe room.

No one is to leave the room or unlock the door until instructions are given by the authorities.

MAKE-UP OF CLASSES

If it is necessary for make-up classes, we will send a note home with the student, post the information in the bulletin and on the parish website at stmichaelparish.life.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

In the case of an emergency, cancellation of classes, or an early dismissal due to inclement weather, Faith Formation has **an automated call off system (One Call)** that will notify one emergency number supplied by the parent/guardian. Only one number will be called and that number will be updated every year by the parent on the emergency card. **This system will only be used if the Faith Formation closing is different than that of the Lake Central School Corporation.**

USE OF PARISH BUILDINGS

St. Michael School is a parish building that is used by many families and students. We have full time students attending during the day and Faith Formation students attending at night as well as students attending on the weekend. Please remind your children of the need to respect the use of the building and all personal property in it. This is a shared building and all of the parish members are to be respectful of the surroundings. Students should not sit at the teacher's desk or at the lectern. The smart boards are NOT to be touched at any time by a student. They are for Catechist use only.

VERIFICATION PAGE

My signature affixed below indicates that I have received and read a copy of the St. Michael Faith Formation Parent Handbook 2025-2026. My family and I agree to abide by the policies and guidelines set forth in this handbook.

Requirements for Saint Michael's Faith Formation Program:

- 1. Attend Sunday Mass on a regular basis with use of envelopes.**
- 2. Complete the required curriculum before the reception of sacraments.**
- 3. Respectful behavior towards Catechists, staff and other students.**
- 4. Regular attendance.**
- 5. Complete all sacramental requirements.**

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name: _____

Student Name(s) and Grade(s):
