

Loreto: Forming Families in the Faith

Parent Handbook

(Last Revised: July 21, 2023)

July 21, 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians,

“The family is the privileged setting where every person learns to give and receive love.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *5th World Meeting of Families*, 2006)

This year, the people of St. Catherine Parish are invited to embark on a new journey. Unlike most journeys, this quest will not require us to pack our bags and to travel to a far off land. Instead, the place we are headed, this “place of encounter”, is nearer than one might think. Seemingly, one might feel they are all too familiar with society’s foundational unit, the family. However, there is much to *rediscover* regarding this entity commonly referred to as the “domestic Church” and “sanctuary of life”. Families are called to be “‘Good News’ for all the world”, “the salt of the earth”, and “the light of the world”! But despite the difficulties, exhaustion, and confusion that prohibit this otherwise exciting adventure from taking place, this year our parish will be encouraged to challenge the status quo and to take to heart these words, “Family, become what you are!” (*Message from 32nd Meeting of the Bishops of the Church in America*, 2004)

As John the Beloved tells us, “God is love.” (1 Jn 4:8) And since the family is the “privileged setting” where one first learns about God and love, “the role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2221) With this being said, starting in the 2023-2024 academic year, our parish will be implementing what will be called, the *School of the Family: A Family Catechesis*. This is an “ever ancient, ever new” approach to religious education, which is rooted in the empowerment and equipping of parents to serve as the primary catechists of their child(ren). ALL parents, regardless of where a child attends school, is invited to attend!

This new approach will be accomplished by hosting in-person catechetical sessions ONCE A MONTH for parents and their children (on the 1st Wednesday of the Month from 6:30pm – 8pm.), which will serve as an entirely new approach compared to our previous religious education program, formerly known as CCD. We will host a parent session, which will take place in McCrystal Hall, as well as sessions held simultaneously but separately for children (child sessions will be per grade level) in a school classroom with a parish catechist. (Babysitting will also be offered in the gymnasium during class instruction, but with a limited capacity based upon a “first come, first served” registration process).

The purpose of this is to more appropriately place our attention on parental formation, so that parents may fulfill their role and duty as not only the “first heralds” of the Gospel to their offspring, but as witnesses who catechize their children by the way they live and speak about their faith. So during the parent sessions, parents will be equipped with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to share the Catholic faith with their families using the remaining month’s activities and lessons, which will be provided to them through two workbooks that accompany each month’s in-person session: the *Parent’s Guide* and the children’s *Activity Book*. This new model is intended to not only be more family centric, but it will be more conducive to family life as well.

Participants will be expected to attend NINE (9) in-person lessons so that the rest of the content can be taught at home according to each family’s unique, individual schedule. In addition to our NINE monthly class sessions, community activities will be hosted approximately once a month as well. While attendance at

the “community activities” will be voluntary, they are still an integral part to building up and sustaining the *Loreto*, as they will serve to assist in reinforcing topics discussed in the classroom and will help us grow together as a whole community as well.

Moreover, *Loreto: Forming Families in the Faith* will follow a four-year rotation based upon the pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1) the Creed, 2) the Sacraments, 3) Life in Christ, and 4) Christian Prayer. The 2023-2024 year’s content will focus on the profession of faith (the Creed), and to ignite a love for God in the domestic Church, the Family. The target goal will be to eventually have every family attend all four years of formation, with full implementation of this plan in 2025-2026. This could be accomplished in four consecutive years, or broken up over the course of a child’s educational journey from Kindergarten to 8th Grade. However, we recognize the unique challenges that this new approach might present, so we plan to gradually transition into this new model, allowing all families to adapt appropriately. Each year, we anticipate that as families grow in familiarity with this new approach and recognize the wonderful value it presents for our community, we will be able to make adjustments as needed, solidify requirements, etc.

For the coming 2023-2024 academic year, attendance at *Loreto* sessions will be VOLUNTARY for all parents and students, **with the exception of (2nd and 8th grade) students enrolled in public school who desire to receive the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion or Confirmation.** Only 2nd and 8th grade students enrolled in public school will be required to attend the once-a-month Wednesday evening sessions as part of their sacramental preparation. (Please see below for more information regarding our attendance policy). Parents and students of all other grade levels (1st & 3rd-7th) are still encouraged to attend, but will not be required. The lack of requirement should not diminish the importance of religious formation during these formative years; instead, it should be seen as all the more necessary to continue the work that has been started! But given the role that the parish plays in sacramental preparation vs. the role parents play in their child’s overall religious education, it is more beneficial for the bulk of a child’s faith formation to happen in the home versus in a religious education program.

To that end, the parish will continue to increase our efforts in assisting parents in carrying out their responsibilities. We will work to offer more bible/topical studies as well as small faith groups to help parents learn more about their Catholic Faith. Parents will also be asked to play a larger role in their child’s sacramental preparation, and will be required to attend THREE parent meetings throughout the year as well as other requirements, per usual, specific to the Sacrament their child is preparing to receive. A calendar of these requirements will be published on the parish website and will be shared with these specific families at a later time. In addition, there will be informational meetings for parents in 1st and 7th grade at the end of the school year to help prepare them for the sacramental year that will follow.

DETAILS AND LOGISTICS

- **1st Session on Wednesday, September 6, 2023, from 6:30pm – 8:00pm**
- Sessions are on the 1st Wednesday of each month from September–May (see the calendar for exact dates)
- Following 5:30pm Wednesday Mass (attendance, optional), all families will first drop their children off in their appropriate classroom at St. Catherine School. After which, parents should walk to McCrystal Hall (under St. Catherine church) for the parent session. All Classes start promptly at 6:30 PM and will conclude no later than 8 PM. At the conclusion of class, parents pick up their children from their classrooms.
- A “parent guide” is given to each family as well as a student activity book for each child.
- (See *Loreto: Forming Families in the Faith* Registration Form for fees/costs)

REGISTRATION & DEADLINES

To register for *Loreto*, please go to our website: www.stcatherineofsiena.org/family-catechesis and fill out the registration form. A late registration fee will be applied to any forms received after Sept. 1 Registration opens

at the completion of the academic year, and the registration deadline for students receiving a sacrament is **SEPTEMBER 12TH**. All other registrations are on a rolling basis throughout the year. If your child is receiving a sacrament, you must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate, if they were not baptized at St. Catherine.

MISSION STATEMENT

Loreto: Forming Families in the Faith exists to help your family develop a daily relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We want your family to grow closer to the Lord by regularly receiving the sacraments, learning about the Catholic faith, reading Scripture, and experiencing the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

GOALS

- Equip parents with the knowledge, understanding, and confidence to be the primary catechists of their children.
- Guide families toward a routine of daily prayer that has a foundation in the Mass
- Provide families with knowledge of the faith and a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit
- Promote the importance of knowing and reading Scripture
- Prepare 2nd graders to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and 1st Eucharist*
- Prepare 8th graders to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation*

*Sacramental Preparation within *Loreto* is currently offered for those students who do not attend St. Catherine School.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

All classroom materials are faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The program uses *A Family of Faith* by the Sophia Institute as well as supplemental resources for the children's monthly parish lessons. Each child will receive an *Activity Book* and each family will receive a *Parent's Guide*. Parents of 2nd and 8th grade students will receive additional materials as well.

GENERAL POLICIES - ALL GRADE LEVELS

1. Students must attend their monthly class and participate to the best of their abilities.
2. Parents must attend and participate in the monthly parent session.
3. Families must participate in the Community Sessions throughout the year.
4. As we will only meet as a group once per month, it is imperative that each family attend each month and avoid absences as much as possible. Children in the 2nd & 8th grades who are preparing for a sacrament **MUST** attend all 9 monthly preparation sessions to receive the Sacraments. If more than 2 sessions are missed without a valid reason, we will ask the family to withdraw and re-register for sacramental preparation for the coming year.
5. Students must be on time and attend the full length of the class session. In case of illness, please do not send your child to class.
6. Everyone is to show respect and be cooperative with adults and other students.
7. If the student brings any type of electronic device to class, it must be turned off and not used during the class time. If a phone is used during class time, it may be taken and put on the catechist's desk until the end of class. This includes all cell phones and electronic entertainment devices.

8. Students are expected to wear modest clothing to all functions. Catechists and the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education will speak with parents/guardians if a student wears immodest clothing to a class or other program function.
9. Parents must manually pick up their students from their classroom in St. Catherine School after the end of the parent lesson. Children will not be released from the classroom until a parent picks them up. No child will be driven home by a staff member or catechist.

MEDICATION

Adult leaders of *Loreto: Forming Families in the Faith* are only allowed to dispense medication with written parent permission. This applies to both prescribed medication and over-the-counter medication. Adult leaders will follow all medication policies as designated by the Diocese of Covington. In case of emergency, adult leaders of the program may administer epi-pens with written parent permission. It is the parent's responsibility to give written instructions for using epi-pens to both the catechists and the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education.

CLASS CANCELLATION

Parents will be notified through email if classes need to be canceled because of inclement weather. The decision will be made no later than 9:00 PM the day before class.

ABSENCE, ARRIVAL, AND EARLY DISMISSAL

As we will only meet as a group once per month, it is imperative that each family attend each month and avoid absences as much as possible. Children in the 2nd & 8th grades who are preparing for a sacrament **MUST** attend all 9 monthly preparation sessions to receive the sacraments. If more than 2 sessions are missed without a valid reason, we will ask the family to withdraw and re-register for sacramental preparation for the coming year. If parents plan to arrive late or leave early, please notify the DRE/CRE so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

DISMISSAL

Parents must manually pick up their students from their classroom in St. Catherine School after the end of the parent lesson. Children will not be released from the classroom until a parent picks them up. No child may be driven home by a staff member or catechist, without prior written and communicated consent from parents/legal guardian.

CATECHISTS AND AIDES

Parish catechists lead the monthly sessions with the children. Catechist aides are assistant teachers with the primary role to assist the Catechist. All catechists and catechist aides are volunteers who practice their Catholic faith on a daily basis, which includes attending Mass on Sundays each weekend. Every volunteer in our program must complete an online background check and comply with the Diocesan VIRTUS and Safe Environment requirements.

INCIDENT REPORT

If a health, safety, disciplinary, or other incident occurs during the class time, the catechist will complete an incident report and return it to the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education. The incident report will list

the date/time/location of the incident, the type of incident, a description of the incident, and the response taken by the catechist at the time of the incident. The catechist and Director/Coordinator of Religious Education will then discuss and write down recommendations for handling such incidents in the future. The catechist and Director/Coordinator of Religious Education will sign the report once it is completed. A copy of the incident report form will be kept on file for parents or guardians to access throughout the year. The catechist or Director/Coordinator of Religious Education on the day of the incident will notify parents/guardians.