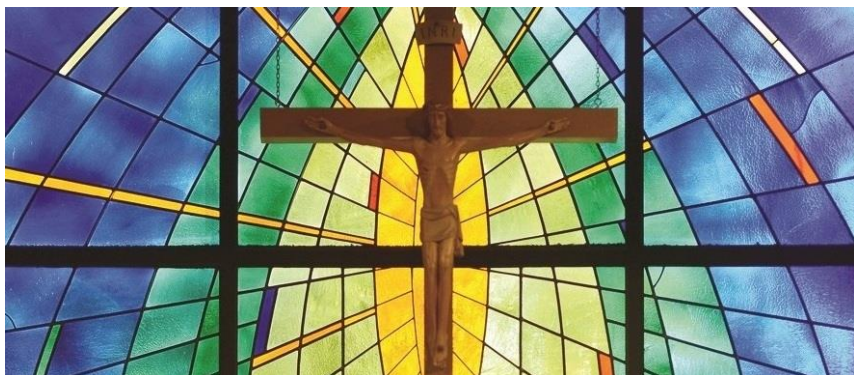


# **ST. JOSEPH FAITH FORMATION FAMILY HANDBOOK 2024-2025**



**Rev. Chris Fontanini**

**Pastor**

**515-402-4725**

**David Ortega**

**Director of Faith Formation/**

**Parish Evangelist**

**515-402-4733**

**St. Joseph Catholic Church**

**3300 Easton Blvd.**

**Des Moines, IA 50317**

**515-266-2226**

**[www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org](http://www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org)**

# **Table of Contents**

<b>Letter of Welcome</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mission Statement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Contact Information and Hours of Operation</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Faith Formation Policies and Procedures</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Sacramental Programs</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Grievance Procedure</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Behavioral Expectations</b>	<b>11</b>

Dear Families of St. Joseph Parish,

Welcome to the Faith Formation Program for the 2024-2025 school year. We hope to bring families into a closer relationship with Christ through prayer, education and our Catholic community.

We are grateful to all of our volunteers who give of their time and talent to form the faith of our young disciples.

Our curriculum is only part of the program. Faith formation is about prayer and developing our relationship with Jesus in your lives and the lives of your children. Please watch your email for weekly updates. You will find easy to follow suggestions for families to enter in this relationship together at home. Together, we can make prayer a priority.

**Mass is the best prayer we can pray as Catholic Christians.** We highly encourage you to attend Mass weekly as a family. If you are looking for a deeper and more passionate connection to your faith and to the person of Christ, receiving the Eucharist at Mass is the best way to do that. There will be opportunities for you to join your children at Mass on select Wednesday nights when it is scheduled.

In this handbook, you will find the policies and expected conduct of your children.

Thank you for trusting the St. Joseph faith formation program to accompany you on your faith journey with your family.

In Christ's Love,



Rev. Chris Fontanini, Pastor



David Ortega, Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist

## **Mission Statement**

Together we are St. Joseph: a healthy, growing, and welcoming faith community that brings people to Christ, forming intentional disciples and sending them out to transform the world. Every member is committed to worship, grow, serve, connect, and give.

## **Contact Information**

### **Faith Formation Program Team**

Rev. Chris Fontanini     [cfontanini@stjosephcatholicdsm.org](mailto:cfontanini@stjosephcatholicdsm.org)  
515-402-4725 (parish office)

David Ortega     [dortega@stjosephcatholicdsm.org](mailto:dortega@stjosephcatholicdsm.org)  
515-402-4733 (parish office)

### **St. Joseph Parish Office Address**

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
3300 Easton Blvd.  
Des Moines, IA 50317  
Telephone: 266-2226    Fax: 266-2227  
Website: [www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org](http://www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org)

Office Hours:  
8:30 am - 4:30 pm

### **Location of Classes**

St. Joseph Catholic School  
2107 E. 33<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50317

Classes are held in the school classrooms.

## **Faith Formation Policies and Procedures**

### **ATTENDANCE**

To receive the maximum benefit from the faith formation program, students are asked to arrive promptly and to attend all faith formation classes. If your child will be absent, please call the office to inform the staff. Excessive absenteeism will result in a conference with the Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist, the Pastor, and possible delay of the conferral of Sacraments.

### **ARRIVAL**

The exterior doors of the school are always locked. Access is granted by St. Joseph staff. Parents are not to enter the building without permission. Drop off your student at the gymnasium doors in the rear parking lot of the school. A Hall Monitor will be available to let your children into the building and take them to their classroom.

### **DISMISSAL**

Class time for RE is from 6:15 until 7:30 PM. Classes will be dismissed in an orderly fashion by the hall monitor. They will assemble in the gym. Families with more than one student in more than one grade can stand together. Volunteer will verify student name(s) and ensure the student is picked up by their parent. *Carpooling note: It is possible that some families carpool. Please let the director and/or volunteer know (in advance) if the student will be picked up by someone other than their parent/guardian.*

### **PICKING UP A CHILD EARLY**

If you need to pick up your child before Faith Formation classes are over, you must notify the Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist beforehand.

## **CANCELATION OF CLASSES**

**If St. Joseph School** is dismissed early due to weather OR have classes canceled for the day, St. Joseph Faith Formation classes will automatically be canceled as well.

- Check the parish website at [www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org](http://www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org).
- You may receive an email notifying you of cancelation.

## **VISITORS**

Visitors will not be allowed inside the school building. Check with pastor or Director for exceptions/permission.

## **ITEMS NOT ALLOWED ON SITE**

### **FOOD**

No food is allowed to be brought in. This includes gum, candy, pop, and other snack items. Special events and celebrations may allow food.

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Cell phones may be brought, but may be turned in to a collective location at the beginning of class, at the discretion of the catechist. They are not to be used during class time unless directed by the catechist. St. Joseph faith formation leadership is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

**SKATEBOARDS/SHOES** with wheels are not allowed on premises.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The Church recognizes the supreme responsibility of parents as the first and foremost teachers of their children in matters of faith. Your example, prayer life and participation in the weekly Sunday liturgy and other sacraments speaks volumes to your children.

There are also many ways to be formally involved in the faith formation program. Parents are needed as catechists, assistants, and hall monitors. Please contact the Faith Formation Director/Parish Evangelist if you are interested.

## **MASS ATTENDANCE**

A vital part of each student's spiritual life and growth as a Catholic is regular participation in the sacraments of the Church. All students are required to attend Mass and participate in the liturgy each Sunday as well as on Holy Days of Obligation. If you are unable to make it to a weekend Mass because of sickness, vulnerability to sickness, or other extenuating circumstances, please find an online service that your family can view and celebrate together (such as <https://www.youtube.com/@SundayswithAscension>) As a reminder, there are many opportunities for Mass attendance all around the diocese (see [masstimes.org](https://www.masstimes.org) for alternate opportunities). **Scheduling conflicts with other extra-curricular activities are not a sufficient reason for your children not attending Mass.**

**Mass Times at St Joseph are:**  
**5:00 PM on Saturday**  
**8:00 AM, 10:00 AM on Sunday**  
**Spanish Mass at 12:00 PM on Sunday**

## **VOLUNTEER SCREENING & TRAINING**

All volunteers who have contact with children must pass a background check and attend the Protecting God's Children (Virtus) training available online.

## **BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS**

Blood and other bodily fluids will be considered infectious. Reasonable precautions (gloves, disinfecting with bleach) will be used.

## **ACCIDENT/ILLNESS**

If your child becomes ill or has an accident during faith formation classes, the parent/guardian or emergency contact will be notified. Basic First Aid will be given and an accident report will be filed. We are not allowed to dispense medications of any kind.

## **HEALTH INFORMATION**

Please inform the Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist regarding any health concerns that may affect your child during faith formation classes. This information will be shared with your child's catechist but otherwise is held confidential.

<h2><b>Sacramental Programs</b></h2>
--------------------------------------

The Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children. They are the first teachers in their children's lives. According to the United States bishops, parents have the "right and duty" to be intimately involved in the sacramental preparation of their children. This obligation springs from the commitment made by the parents at the child's baptism to form them in the Catholic faith.



Preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is normally offered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade year. It is also offered to children in grades 3-8. Additional formation is required. One of the requirements is that all children going through sacramental preparation are to attend the retreats and mandatory meetings. All parents of children preparing to celebrate sacraments are expected to participate in all parent meetings, family experiences and the celebrations of the sacraments.

### **ENROLLMENT FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

It shall be the policy of the St. Joseph Board of Education that there be an evaluation of any students entering grades two through eight who were not associated with a faith formation program or Catholic school in prior years. It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist to conduct the evaluation of each applicant to determine the student's level of religious formation and explain the process for completion of the sacramental preparation.

### **Out of Sequence**

Children who are above the second grade and have not yet celebrated the sacraments of Reconciliation and/or Eucharist are invited to participate in preparation for these sacraments. Contact the Parish Evangelist to begin the planning process.

### **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Students will have the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation at a communal penance service during the year. These celebrations will occur during evening class time. Look for these special reconciliation events on the Youth Faith Formation calendar. Please see parish website at [stjosephcatholicdsm.org](http://stjosephcatholicdsm.org) for information on regular weekly confession opportunities.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS**

It shall be the policy of the St. Joseph School Leadership that if an occasion arises that a parent feels a problem has occurred during faith formation, the parent will use the following procedure:

1. Contact the Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist. The parent may be asked to attend a meeting with the catechist and Director to reach a solution.

2. If a parent does not feel an agreement has been reached, the problem may then be taken to the Pastor.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE GUIDELINES**

It shall be the policy of St. Joseph School Leadership that as a Catholic faith community, open communication between parents, students, teachers, staff and administrators is encouraged in all programs including day school, preschool, faith formation and youth ministry. It is the intent of the St. Joseph School Leadership that all such interaction shall be conducted in a respectful Christian manner, as we believe Christ has taught us "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace."<sup>1</sup> In all such interactions, all parties involved shall strive to "be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven [us] in Christ."<sup>2</sup> We believe that in following Christ's example, we can create an environment in all our education programs that allows our children the best opportunity to grow and achieve academic, spiritual and social success.

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:2-3

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:32

## **Behavioral Expectations**

To maintain an environment of Christian education and learning, we have set guidelines which make it possible to have a valuable and vital program. Our philosophy is one of respect for one another and ourselves. Every child has the right to learn and each catechist has the right to teach in a respectful atmosphere.

### **Parents**

1. Please ensure that your children attend classes regularly and on time.
2. Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect your child within the classroom to the Faith Formation Director/Parish Evangelist.
3. Be an active part of your child's learning and be involved in the classroom as needed with special activities or service projects.
4. Attend monthly faith formation sessions.

### **Students**

1. Behave in a Christian manner at all times, showing respect and being cooperative with adults and other students.
2. Actively participate in classroom activities and discussions.
3. Attend class regularly and complete any assignments or homework.
4. Respect the property of others, especially the desks shared with the students of St. Joseph School.
5. Demonstrate respect for the catechists who volunteer to share their faith and lead each session. (e.g. Back talk and verbal or non-verbal interruptions are not acceptable.)

## **\*\*\*PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH DISCIPLINE ISSUES\*\*\***

The catechist will deal promptly with any inappropriate behavior. If the student chooses to continue the inappropriate behavior after sufficient warning, the following procedure will be implemented:

**1ST OFFENSE** • The student will be removed from the classroom and given a choice to either return to class and cooperate or go to the Faith Formation office. A discipline report will be filed and parents will be contacted.

**2ND OFFENSE** • Recurrent misbehavior will result in a second discipline report being filed and a conference with the parents, the Faith Formation Director and/or the Pastor will be held prior to the child returning to Faith Formation Activities.

**3RD AND FINAL OFFENSE** • In the case of repeated failure to behave and/or gross violations of the discipline policy (including but not limited to: fighting, danger to others, repeated insubordination), the student may be suspended from the faith formation program. Parents will be given materials and assume the responsibility for instructing their child for the remainder of the year. Re-admission to the faith formation program will NOT take place until the Director and the Pastor have met with the parents and child and are satisfied that the behavior problem is under control.