
Elementary Faith Formation Parent Guide

2017-2018

St. Mark Catholic Church
Denton, TX



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Elementary Faith Formation Mission Statement

Our mission is to help children fall in love with God and yearn to know Him. Because parents are given the beautiful task to form their children in the faith, we offer to partner with them to form children as Disciples of Christ in our Catholic Faith. Our program is designed to provide opportunities for children to learn about the pillars of the Catechism and to apply these concepts to become active members of our Church. Our program also strives to provide opportunities for families to grow in their faith together and with other families in the community.

Contact Information and Office Hours:

Director of Elementary Faith Formation and Sacramental Preparation
Andrea Woolums
awoolums@stmarkdenton.org
(940)222-8081

Elementary Faith Formation Administrative Assistant
Denise Lopez
dlopez@stmarkdenton.org
(940)222-8072

Normally, one of us will be on campus during the following hours:

- Monday, Tuesday & Thursday, 8:30 am – 3:45 pm
- Wednesday, 12:00pm – 3:45 pm
- Sundays (class dates only), 8:30 am – 11:30 am; 3:00 pm – 7:00 pm

For your convenience each phone number has a 24-hour answering machine. Please leave your phone number and the best time to reach you. We will make every effort to reach you in a timely manner. Communicating well is important to our ministry with you and your children.

Please remember that class hours can be hectic. If you need to speak with the catechetical leader we ask that you please visit us during the week or make an appointment. This will allow us to give you our full attention.

You can also find us on the Internet.

- Stay in touch with the Parish Family by visiting the Parish website weekly at www.stmarkdenton.org. We will be posting information regarding our Religious Education program on a regular basis.
- Like our Facebook Page. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/saintmarkcatholicchurch/> to follow us and learn more about being a primary educator of our faith!
- Follow us on Instagram! Look for stmarkelementaryfaith.

Role of Director of Elementary Faith Formation

Director of Elementary Faith Formation is responsible for the development, implementation, administration and evaluation of the parish Elementary Faith Formation Program while striving to create a better understanding and support of Catholic education in our parish. The Director of Elementary Faith Formation, in communion with the pastor's directives, also has the responsibility to:

- To set broad guidelines as to what Catechists are to accomplish.
- To set a guideline of curriculum.
- To set Sacramental expectations
- To oversee material being taught is in communion with the Catholic Church.

Role of the Catechist

Catechists are women and men who are members of our parish family and have agreed to represent all of us in a specific area of ministry. In this ministry, catechists work as assistants to the parents who are the primary catechist. Our role is to help, not to replace the vital role parents have as the primary catechists. It is our role to help the parent's journey with their children as they deepen their faith and love for our Lord.

We would like to thank all the young people and adults who are not mentioned here but volunteer their time in so many ways to help create a wonderful environment for learning, prayer and worship.

Role and Expectations of the Parent/Guardian

Parents/Guardians are a child's first and enduring teachers. Parents/Guardians play a crucial role in helping their children learn and are to take the primary role in their child's faith formation. The Faith Formation Program at St. Mark is designed to supplement the faith lived out in the home of the family.

Parents/Guardians are to:

- Be the primary educators of their child.
- Pray with their children, attend Mass every Sunday and receive the sacraments as a family. Yours is the first model of parish family the children will learn.
- Serve as role models for their child by being moral Christians.
- Help their child in forming a good conscience and a Christian code of morality.
- Review with their child and use the *Faith and Life Family Guide Take Home Page*. As their primary catechist it is important to live, model and talk about your faith with your children. This will enrich them and you. Take home pages will be sent home each week with the child for the first 6 weeks, then will be available digitally on our website.
- Participate in meetings, activities and prayers that are planned to help their child prepare for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- Encourage their child to continue learning more about their faith as they mature.
- Help their child understand service projects are the beginning of a life committed to Christian service.

- Read all correspondence sent home, including The St. Mark Elementary Faith Formation Newsletter, sent home digitally each month. It is one of the primary ways for us to stay in touch.
- Attend the three Family Faith Formation Classes on the following dates:
 - Wednesday, October 25 OR Sunday, October 29 (All Saints)
 - Wednesday, December 13, OR Sunday, December 17 (Christmas/Epiphany)
 - Wednesday, February 7 OR Sunday, February 11 (Mardi Gras/Lent)
- Consider attending the special events and activities that are planned this year. Look for more opportunities to be available throughout the year.
 - St. Nicholas Night, December 5, 6:30-8:00 (All classes will be performing!)
 - Fourth Grade classes lead the Rosary - Sunday, February 25 & Wednesday, February 28
 - Fifth Grade classes lead the Stations of the Cross – Wednesday, March 21 & Sunday, March 25
 - Easter Egg Hunt – Saturday, March 31, 9:00 am
 - Third Grade Classes Hold a May Crowning – Sunday, April 29 & Wednesday, May 2

Role of the Student

Students are expected to:

- Attend class regularly.
- Participate in class activities and discussions.
- Learn assigned prayers for each grade level.
- Attend and participate in family faith formation classes and liturgical celebrations that are scheduled by the Director of Elementary Faith Formation
- Respect their catechist and classmates at all times
- Respect the property of others
- Accept responsibility for his/her misconduct or actions.

Policies and Information

Continuity

Faith, like Religious Education, is a lifelong process. Every child is expected to faithfully participate in each grade without skipping any grade. You know that all of life's success is built on the learning that preceded it. Similarly, our program is designed to build on and deepen the teachings of the previous grade. In the event of a missed or skipped grade we will work with you to help bring the child up to the proper grade level.

Evangelization Year (Year One Students)

Some of our students are beginning or returning to faith formation and we welcome you! In order for your child to be introduced to Jesus, what He did for us and how to have a relationship with Him, we provide a "Year 1" or Evangelization class for mixed grades (2nd-5th grades) at teach class session time. After your child completes this year of foundational learning, they will be ready to participate in

their grade level classes the following year. Because parents are their child's first and foremost educator of the faith, we ask parents to attend monthly parent meetings to discuss what their child is learning of the faith, so these concepts can be explored and lived out in the family as well.

Reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist

According to our diocese:

any parishioner who has reached the age of discretion, and has been prepared for and given the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, is eligible and should be invited to participate in sacramental catechesis for First Holy Communion. The Church's desire is for children to celebrate First Holy Communion as early as possible after reaching the age of discretion, that is, about the seventh year of age. (cf. CIC, can. 914)

In their second consecutive year of Faith Formation, any child at St. Mark may enter preparation for the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Because sacrament preparation is so vital in the life of faith, parents are asked to accompany their children in their learning by also attending sacrament preparation classes. Parents usually find this a welcome refresher of their own long-ago preparation, in order to more deeply engage with their child as they prepare.

Rite of Christian Initiation Adapted for Children

Families of children over the age of discretion (about 7 years old) who have not been baptized will journey through the RCIA process. Please visit with the Director of Elementary Faith Formation for what this individualized journey will look like.

Materials/Books

St. Mark uses the *Image of God* Series for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes. Each student will have a workbook that the catechist will use, along with fun activities, to build a foundational understanding of our faith.

We use Ignatius Press' *Faith and Life* Series for 1st – 5th grades. This series consists of a textbook and an activity book. Our catechists are encouraged to supplement the series with engaging and thought-provoking activities and crafts. A Family Guide page will be sent home each week for you to deepen your child's understanding of the material.

Our Evangelization Class will use RCL Benziger's *Our Catholic Heritage* that provides an initiatory catechesis to new or returning students. This series presents the life and teaching of Jesus, and lays a foundation for a lived life of faith.

Faith Formation and Learners with Disabilities or Special Needs

St. Mark Parish will provide opportunities for the on-going catechesis and faith formation of all of its members, working with families and individuals to make provisions and adaptations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in parish programs and events.

Arrival Time

We ask that you arrive no more than 15 minutes ahead of your session time-- an adult should always accompany the child into the building. Please enter through the main double doors that face the

courtyard. Please stay with your child until both catechists are present. Sessions begin promptly at the posted times. Late arrivals disrupt our very short learning time together.

Closing Time

Please pick up your children promptly so we can safely close each session on time. Any children who are not picked up on time will be taken to the reception desk in the RE building.

Dismissal

The children in all elementary classes will be dismissed from their classroom doors. Please come into the building and wait in the front foyer area until dismissal time to pick up your child. At dismissal time, you may walk to the classroom door. An adult must accompany every child as they leave the building. This policy is for safety reasons. If a person other than the parent is to pick up your child, please inform the catechist at the beginning of class.

Attendance

Regular attendance is expected of all students. Parents are to call the Faith Formation Office or their child's catechist if it is known that a student will be absent or tardy. Every effort should be made to have your child attend every scheduled class. When a class is missed, parents should obtain the lesson from their child's catechist and assist their child in completion of the lesson.

If a student accumulates three (3) absences, parents or guardians will be contacted to discuss the situation and/or to confirm that missed work has been made up at home.

If six (6) or more classes are missed in a year, students will not be given credit for the year unless sufficient understanding of the material is demonstrated to the Director of Elementary Faith Formation.

Change of Information

Please notify our office of any changes in address, phone numbers, emails, or medical situations.

Called to Protect Classes

In accordance with the 2002 *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* promoted by the United States Catholic Bishops, it is the policy of the Diocese of Fort Worth and St. Mark Catholic Church that classes be offered once a year to teach children and youth about sexual abuse and its prevention. These are always taught at grade level. If you wish to preview this class content, please contact the Director of Elementary Faith Formation.

If your child will be volunteering in any capacity at St. Mark, your child MUST attend this class.

This year these classes will be offered on Sunday, October 15 and Wednesday, October 18 during each class session. Please complete the form found at the back of this packet to grant or deny your permission for your child to attend this class.

If you have any questions regarding the class or its content, please contact the Director of Elementary Faith Formation.

Discipline Policies

All students must obey the rules set forth by their catechist. We expect all students to act in a kind and courteous manner at all times. In turn, catechists are expected to respect each student. No physical discipline or humiliation on the part of the catechist is ever permitted and will not be tolerated. Unsatisfactory or inappropriate student behavior will also not be tolerated.

Catechists are not required to be babysitters nor are they professional educators. They are volunteers who give of their time to pass on the faith to the children of our parish.

The following steps will be used to handle discipline problems. A child may be removed from class if the situation does not improve.

- Step One: Student will be verbally warned and asked to correct behavior.
- Step Two: If the student does not correct his/her behavior, the student will be asked to leave the class and the problem will be addressed between the student and catechist. If the student agrees to correct his/her behavior, the student will be allowed back into class.
- Step Three: If Step Two does not correct behavior, parents/guardians will be notified and the parent will need to accompany the student in the classroom until an agreement can be made between the Director of Elementary Faith Formation, the student and the parent before the student can return to class unsupervised.

Health Services Injury/Illness Procedure

If student is seriously hurt or becomes ill, he/she will be sent to the reception area of the Religious Education Building. At that time the parent/guardian will be notified to come and pick the student up. If we are unable to reach the parent/guardian, if needed, the hospital will be contacted for advice and their recommendations followed.

Emergency Plan

Fire and Tornado plans are posted in each classroom. When the fire signal is given, everyone must leave the building by the prescribed route. When the tornado signal is given students are to proceed to the assigned shelter area. When the signal is given it is essential that everyone behave in an orderly and calm manner.

Dress Code

Participants are encouraged to dress in a manner that is modest and keeping with Christian values. We believe that neat and proper dress contributes to desirable attitudes and behavior. Vulgar or rude sayings on T-shirts are not appropriate. Parents are asked to cooperate in checking the clothing their children wear to Faith Formation activities. Modesty in dress gives witness to others that our bodies are temples and need to give glory to God. Students may be asked to turn their shirts inside out, to put on a Faith Formation T-shirt until the end of class and/or parents may be called if they are wearing inappropriate clothing.

Tobacco/Alcohol Free Environment

All Parish buildings are smoke/tobacco/alcohol/drug free. Possession of tobacco products by minors on parish property is prohibited. The following conduct by participants in the parish education programs or on parish grounds or at an event off the grounds is prohibited.

- Possession or being under the influence of any narcotic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind. (Use of a drug authorized by a physician for your use during the program hours is not a violation.)
- Possession or use of tobacco/alcohol by students.

Electronic Devices

All electronic devices, such as I-pods and video games, will not be tolerated during any Faith Formation Program. Cell Phones must be turned off completely during scheduled events. Students may return a phone call after the scheduled event or during a break. Electronic devices may be taken away from a student and returned after class or at a later time.

Lost and Found Items

If your child loses an item, please check with our reception desk in the RE building or contact our office at 940-222-8072. We will do our best to assist you.

Emergency Closing Information

In the case of an emergency, we will post information through email and MyParish app.

Together As Parents, Catechists, Parish Community

And Global Community

We will bring all of Our Children

To the Lord, Our God!

