

**St. Luke's  
Catholic Church  
Faith Formation  
Handbook**

**2024-2025**

## **St. Luke's Church Faith Formation Program**

### **Welcome!**

On behalf of the D.R.E. and the Catechists, welcome to a new year of Faith Formation!

We thank you for allowing us to collaborate with you in the faith formation of your children and teens. It is truly an honor to be entrusted to assist with their faith journey. As you know, Faith Formation begins in the home, and is enhanced by organized catechesis, spiritual support, and prayers from your parish community. We support you as the primary catechists and thank you for remembering the promise that you made at your child's baptism -- the promise to raise your children in the Catholic faith. We recognize that there is nothing more important to the faith development of your child than the example set forth by you in your own faith journey. When parents and other adults live their Catholic faith, within a family setting filled with love and respect, youth are more likely to continue to live their faith as they grow and leave home. By encouraging your children to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community you are not only helping them to develop a better sense of belonging, but you are helping them to develop a stronger more lasting relationship with Jesus Christ.

Once again, we have an amazing group of Catechists this year; some returning for another year and some new. These volunteers are ready to share their time, talents, and faith to help guide your children in their faith journey. With the commitment of the parish, and these volunteers we hope to fulfill our mission in the lives of our youth and their families.

The mission of our Faith Formation program is to encourage and assist our parish community in cultivating a closer relationship with God, as well as a deeper and lifelong understanding of the Catholic faith through sacred scripture and the magisterial teaching of the church. We strive to create an atmosphere of personal and community

growth where all generations are encouraged to learn how the Gospel is relevant to their daily lives and to actively participate in the life and mission of the Catholic Church.

In the following pages you will find information designed to help you reinforce your child's journey to greater spiritual understanding as well as our established policies and procedures. As always, if you have any questions or need any clarification, please do not hesitate to call the office. Thank you!

## **Attendance Policy**

Good and faithful attendance of all Faith Formation Masses, classes, and CYM will help to build a firm foundation for your child's Lifelong Faith Formation. However, we do understand there may be times when you will keep your child home because of illness or for other reasons. During these occasions we would appreciate it if you would call the Faith Formation office at 308.284.3196 or the D.R.E.'s Cell 308-289-3774 before class time and let us know your child will be absent. This will save us from calling you later.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is the recommendation of the Diocese of Grand Island, Office of Child Protection to ensure the safety of all of our students by establishing a system for notifying parents when a child is absent. This requirement is essential to keep the parents and the Office of Faith Formation informed of the students whereabouts in the event of an emergency evacuation and/or lockdown. Attendance will be taken within the first 10 minutes of class and absentees will be reported to the office. ***If the Office of Faith Formation was not previously notified by a parent, of the student's absence, a call will be made to the parent to confirm the student's absence.***

**When considering an absence for a non-illness related activity, please be aware that there is a definitive scope and sequence to the lessons taught each week.** We understand that your students are involved in many different activities and we share in being proud of their achievements. However, Faith Formation must be prioritized if the student is to develop an understanding of the Catholic faith and grow a stronger more lasting relationship with Jesus Christ. **Your students should not miss several weeks of class for sports, play, or band practice.** In addition to your student missing important foundational material, it will send the wrong message to the student and the rest of the class. Excessive absences hinder a student's progress, especially when preparing for a Sacrament. In the case of a Sacrament class, absences in excess of 2 days per semester may delay the reception of the sacrament or make them ineligible to receive the

sacrament during the current Faith Formation year. This will be determined on a case by case basis.

## Schedule

The schedule for the current Faith Formation year can be found on the table at the back of the church or online at <http://www.kccatholics.com/pages/faithformation.html>. Please remember that all dates and times are subject to change due to winter weather conditions or other unforeseeable reasons. The calendar will not be published, and classes will not begin until all volunteers are screened. As always, updates will be made via email and/or via Facebook.

**CANCELLATIONS AND CHANGES IN THE SCHEDULE:** Notifications will be made via email, posted in the bulletin, and/or posted on our Facebook page whenever there is a cancellation or change in the schedule. If you have not already “Liked” our page you can use this link to get there >> <https://www.facebook.com/stlukesogallala/> **All last minute cancellations** will be announced at school and on the radio whenever possible as well as by email and/or postings on our Facebook page. If schools are cancelled because of inclement weather, Faith Formation classes will also be cancelled. If you think that the weather is bad enough that you don’t think we will be having classes and you have not received a notification – please don’t hesitate to call the church office. ***We will NOT call you for cancellations.***

## Bullying Policy

St. Luke’s Faith Formation staff recognizes that bullying and intimidation have a negative effect on class climate and negate the spirit of dignity and uniqueness of each individual we advocate in our Faith Formation program. Students who are intimidated and fearful cannot give their religious education the single-minded attention they need to successfully learn about their faith. Bullying can also lead to more serious violence. Every student has the right to be safe and feel safe in and around the church and school.

1. **DEFINITION OF BULLYING:** Bullying is a pattern of abuse over time and involves a student being “picked on.” Bullying includes physical intimidation and/or assault; extortion; oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name-calling; threatening looks, gestures, or actions; cruel rumors; false accusations; and social isolation.

2. **BULLYING IS ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED:** St. Luke's Parish community shall not tolerate any bullying on church or school grounds or at any church or school activity on or off campus.
3. **STAFF INTERVENTION:** St. Luke's expects all staff members who observe or become aware of an act of bullying to take immediate, appropriate steps to intervene – unless intervention would be a threat to staff members' safety. Staff members shall not directly intervene in a fight or physical altercation. *All instances of bullying resolved or unresolved **must** be reported to the Director of Faith Formation (DRE) and an incident report **must** be filed as per **The Child Protection Policy of the Diocese of Grand Island.***
4. **STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS SHALL REPORT BULLYING:** St. Luke's expects students and parents/guardians who become aware of an act of bullying to report it to the Faith Formation Office for further investigation. Any student who retaliates against another for reporting bullying may be subject to consequences listed below in paragraph 6.
5. **INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES:** Upon learning about a bullying incident, the DRE shall contact the parents/guardians of both the aggressor and the victim, interview both students and thoroughly investigate. This investigation may include interviews with students, parents/guardians, and staff. A detailed report of the incident will be completed and signed by all parties involved as well as the DRE and Pastor. This report will then be submitted to the Child Protection Office of the Diocese of Grand Island.
6. **CONSEQUENCES/INTERVENTION:** Consequences for students who bully others shall depend on the results of the investigation and may include counseling; a parent conference; detention; suspension and/or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the incident, the DRE may also take appropriate steps to ensure student safety. These may include implementing a safety plan; separating and supervising the students involved; providing staff support for students as necessary; and developing a supervision plan with the parents or guardians.

## **Discipline Policy**

If a child's behavior is knowingly inappropriate, disruptive or disrespectful to the Catechist or another student, he/she will receive a verbal warning from the Catechist. At the THIRD verbal warning, the catechist will notify the DRE and the child will be removed from class. The DRE and the child will call the parents and explain the situation. At that time, it is hoped that between the DRE, the Catechist, the parents, and the child

we can work together to alleviate the problem. However, should that fail, and the child returns to class and continues their behavior, they will once again be removed and the parents will be contacted and asked to come and pick up the child. The child will not be allowed back into the class until a parent or guardian attends with the child for the entire class, each week, or until it is determined by the catechist that the child can behave on his/her own.

**Please note:**

- Should the child's behavior be extreme they will not get three chances to correct the situation.
- Depending on the severity of the situation, an incident report may need to be filed with the Child Protection Office at the Diocese in Grand Island.

Learning to treat others with respect and courtesy are the very core of the Catholic Faith. In an effort to avoid discipline problems please discuss this policy with your child and explain to them that proper behavior will be expected at all times. We appreciate your help as parents in ensuring that everyone is treated with the respect they deserve.

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Policy**

We are responsible for creating and maintaining a Safe Environment for your child. This includes their physical safety during drop-off and pick-up as well as during the time they are in our care. Your help during drop-off and pick-up is crucial in providing this safe environment. We appreciate your help and ask that you observe these simple safety precautions:

1. For your child's safety and the safety of others, please DO NOT drop-off or pick-up your child in the middle of the street – **PLEASE PULL OVER AND PARK AT THE CURB.**
2. Elementary Drop Off: Please park on the school side of the street whenever possible, if not, then please ask your child to use the crosswalk or escort them across the street. Kindergarten and First Grade students should be escorted to their class room by a parent.
3. Student drivers: please take extra care and watch for people crossing the street – for the most part you will be arriving and departing after dark – look carefully and be aware of your surroundings.

4. Students arriving on bicycles we ask that you park your bikes in an orderly fashion away from doors and walkways.
5. Everyone: Please, be on time! Elementary Parents: For safety purposes the school doors are locked at all times. If you arrive late your child may not be able to get in. This is especially a concern during cold weather. Make sure your child is INSIDE the school before you drive away.
6. Please be on time! I cannot stress this enough. We only get one hour for class, please help us to use it well by being on time.

## **Lock-Down Procedures**

**CLASSES HELD IN THE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS:** All entrance doors to the school will be locked at all times. It will be the catechist's responsibility to answer the door should the door bell ring. In the event of a terrorist/hostage threat, the catechists will direct all students to stay within their designated classroom with the door to the room locked. They will gather the students away from the door and any windows and encourage them to remain as quiet as possible until the threat has been cleared.

**CLASSES HELD IN CHURCH BASEMENT:** In the event of a terrorist/hostage threat, catechist(s) will direct all students to The Legion of Mary Room with the doors to the room locked. They will gather the students away from the door and any windows and encourage them to remain as quiet as possible until the threat has been cleared.

**CLASSES HELD IN THE CHOIR AREA OF THE CHURCH:** During class time the door leading to the Altar from the Sacristy will remain locked as will the doors leading from the entryway to the Sacristy and Robe Room. The doors leading from the rectory and choir area through the interconnecting hallway to the Sacristy will remain unlocked. In the event of a terrorist/hostage threat, the catechist will direct all students to proceed into the Sacristy through the interconnecting hallway, locking the door at the choir area and the Sacristy/hallway as you go through. The catechist will direct the students into the Robe Room then close and lock the door leading to the Sacristy. Gather the students away from the doors and windows and encourage them to remain as quiet as possible until the threat has been cleared.

**CLASSES HELD IN THE CONVENT BASEMENT:** The entrance door to the convent basement is to remain locked at all times; it will be the catechist's responsibility to answer the door should someone knock at the door. In the event of a terrorist/hostage threat the catechist will close the door of the classroom and gather the students in one place away from the

door and windows, encouraging them to remain as quiet as possible until the threat has been cleared.

**CLASSES HELD IN THE RECTORY BASEMENT:** In the event of a terrorist/hostage threat the catechist will lock the entrance door to the rectory meeting room and gather the students away from the door and encourage them to remain as quiet as possible until the threat has been cleared.

**IN THE EVENT THAT A CLASSROOM IS TAKEN HOSTAGE:** Should the perpetrator gain access to any of the safe rooms outlined above and succeed in taking the class hostage, the catechist will attempt to maintain student safety and do what is demanded of them by the perpetrator.

## **Safe Environment – Know the Rules**

To ensure the safety of our youth and to ensure that those who work with our youth are knowledgeable in regards to the signs of bullying and abuse, The Diocese of Grand Island, Child Protection Office requires Safe Environment training for all adults who work with our youth. In the same respect, Safe Environment training is also required for our students. This ensures that students understand the rules of the classroom, boundaries, personal space, how and when to say no and how to report violations of these rules. **The first day of class is dedicated to this training. It is imperative that your student is present for this training.** We are required by the Diocese of Grand Island to report the attendance and absence numbers for this training. If your student is not present the first day of class they will be required to attend a make-up class – this causes them to miss out on their lesson for the week that they are attending the make-up session. So, please make sure your student is present.

## **Prayers by Grade**

It is important to us as Catholics to know the traditional prayers of our faith. In times of trouble, at times when we find it difficult to pray, or when we wish to pray together as a group, these memorized prayers become the mainstay of our prayer and a source of strength and unity. Some of them are prayers that are part of the Mass; many are daily prayers.

These recommendations are a culmination of information received from the Diocese of Grand Island - Office of Religious Education as well as recommendations from Catechists



and Teachers. These recommendations take into consideration our current curriculum and the prayers your students should know at each important stage in their lives; especially before receiving each new sacrament.

As such, these prayers have been ‘assigned’ to a grade level, and by the end of that year, your child should be able to recite these selected prayers by memory. This does not mean that prayers, such as the Rosary, cannot be introduced in earlier grades. Certainly, these prayers should not be restricted to a particular year but should be said every year after they have been memorized. For example, grace before and/or after meals should be routine whether students be in grade one or in their last year of college.

Parents are the primary educators in the faith. We encourage parents to take this role seriously and to pray with your children at home. This list is provided to assist you in helping your child develop this essential prayer life. The important thing about these prayers is that they be prayed ... regularly. As with any learning, practice and repetition are necessary. In so doing, prayer becomes part of the everyday routine for you and your child.

- **Kindergarten:** Sign of the Cross, Glory Be, Grace before and after meals, introduce the 7 Sacraments – by the end of the Kindergarten year your child should be able to name 2 or 3 of the Sacraments.
- **1<sup>st</sup> Grade:** The Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, Guardian Angel Prayer, 7 Sacraments – by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Grade year your child should be able to name 4 or 5 of the Sacraments.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Grade:** These children will be receiving their First Communion. These prayers are especially important at this stage. Act of Contrition, Holy, Holy, Holy (Mass), Memorial Acclamation (Mass), Lamb of God (Mass), 7 Sacraments –by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade year, your child should be able to name all of the Sacraments.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade:** the 5 Forms of Prayer, the Ten Commandments, Parts of the Rosary and basic prayers , Morning Offering, 7 Sacraments .
- **4<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Psalm 23, The Apostles’ Creed, Penitential Rite (Mass), Parts (proper names) of the Church, 7 Sacraments.
- **5<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Rosary and 4 sets of Mysteries, Fatima Prayer, Hail Holy Queen, Parts of the Mass, 7 Sacraments.
- **6<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Act of Faith, Act of Hope, Act of Love, Use of Basic Catholic Prayer Book, 7 Sacraments.
- **7<sup>th</sup> Grade:** 8 Beatitudes, Memorare, the Jesus Prayer, Come Holy Spirit, the Angelus, 7 Sacraments.

- **8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** The Gloria, The Nicene Creed, The Stations of the Cross, Saints – Saint Prayers
- **9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades:** Students in Grades Nine through Twelve would be expected to know most if not all of these prayers and to use them during prayer times. These prayers should become part of their daily prayer. There's no designated time for prayer, but opportunities for prayer need to be provided, whether it be first thing in the morning or afternoon or at the very end of the day.

**NOTE:** All of the above prayers can be found in the FREE purple booklet “*Catholic Prayers for Catholic Families*” available on the table in the back of the church or in the Faith Formation office.

## **Sacraments**

**FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION:** Ideally First Reconciliation and First Communion preparation begins in Kindergarten and continues through first and second grades. Preparation includes: learning important prayers, parts of the church, parts of Mass, how to behave at Mass, how to make a good confession and why, and what we believe about the Eucharist and why. With the home being the primary place of Faith Formation, many of these things are learned by watching you, as parents, while at Mass and while interacting with others as you live your faith. Faith Formation classes support and enrich this learning process with a standardized curriculum.

**FIRST RECONCILIATION** is your child's first act of penance. Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing by which we receive God's mercy and forgiveness for the sins committed after baptism. This penitential rite is called reconciliation because it reconciles us with God and the church community.

**FIRST HOLY COMMUNION** is a child's first reception of the Eucharist. It is an extremely important event in the life of all Catholics and therefore preparation for this wonderful sacrament should not be taken lightly. This is an opportunity for your child to participate at Mass on a much deeper level than ever before.

**CONFIRMATION** is a continuation of the initiation that began with Baptism and perfects that grace and seals us with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Preparation for Confirmation begins after the reception of First Holy Communion and through-out the following years and is received in the fall of a child's junior or senior year in high school. Confirmation is a time of self-reflection and thoughtful consideration. A time for candidates to explore, deepen, and strengthen their Catholic faith.

**RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR CHILDREN (RCIC)** – is for youth beyond the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade who have missed sacraments since Baptism, or to join the Catholic Church through Baptism. These classes require a commitment from the parents to also attend and participate in the class. Classes begin in the fall and continue into the Easter Season, culminating in a celebration of the Eucharist.

Celebrating the sacraments is a pivotal and exciting time in your child's life. As such it is essential that your child have good and faithful attendance at Faith Formation, (this includes CYM in the Middle and High School years). Absences in excess of 2 days per semester especially during a sacramental year may delay the reception of the sacrament or make them ineligible to receive the sacrament during the current Faith Formation year. This will be determined on a case by case basis.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

- Regularly check the Faith Formation schedule to be aware of scheduled activities and/or changes.
- Encourage regular and prompt attendance of all Faith Formation classes, CYM, and other activities.
- Contact the Faith Formation office at 308.284.3196 if your child will be late or absent.
- Like our Facebook page to receive messages and notifications regarding Faith Formation and other parish news and events.
- Read the weekly bulletin for messages and/or changes.
- Share prayer at home and attend Mass each week with your child.
- Provide your children with opportunities to learn and practice their faith at home and within the parish community.