

St. Joseph  
Religious Education

Parent Handbook  
2011/2012

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## Faculty Phone Numbers and Extensions

[www.stjosephlakeorion.org](http://www.stjosephlakeorion.org)

St. Joseph Catholic Church Parish Office

Main Phone: 248.693.0440 (and then ext. #)

Fax: 248.693.3724

Pastor *Fr. Michael Verschaeve* ext. 207  
[mverschaeve@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:mverschaeve@stjosephlakeorion.org)

Associate Pastor *Fr. Darrell Roman* ext. 206  
[droman@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:droman@stjosephlakeorion.org)

**Faith Formation Office direct line: 248.693.9555**

This is the best way to reach us during office hours. No extension needed! ☺

Faith Formation Office Secretary *Julie Skelley*  
[resecretary@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:resecretary@stjosephlakeorion.org)

Director of Religious Education *Kimberly Myers* ext. 217  
[kmyers@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:kmyers@stjosephlakeorion.org)

Youth Ministry *Kathy Galbraith* ext. 246  
[kgalbraith@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:kgalbraith@stjosephlakeorion.org)

FLOW and Adult Faith Formation Coordinator *Sherry Brandon* ext. 241  
[sbrandon@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:sbrandon@stjosephlakeorion.org)

RCIA Coordinator *Debbie Bloomgren* ext. 242  
[dbloomgren@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:dbloomgren@stjosephlakeorion.org)

Evening RE Coordinators *Lisa Stockard & Colleen Heacock* ext. 241  
[lstockard@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:lstockard@stjosephlakeorion.org) & [cheacock@stjosephlakeorion.org](mailto:cheacock@stjosephlakeorion.org)

St. Joseph School Office 248-693-6215

School Principal *Sr. Theresa Darga* ext. 214

Assistant Principal *Mrs. Amanda Lund* ext. 244

## **St. Joseph Church Mission Statement**

St. Joseph Parish comes together as a Eucharistic family. We celebrate the Sacraments and proclaim the Good News that Jesus Christ is Lord through Christian Formation and Catholic Education. We share our faith through Evangelization and Service to others.

## **Religious Education Mission Statement**

It is the mission of our religious education team to partner with the church community to help children and their families attain a closer relationship with God.

St. Joseph Religious Education recognizes parents as children's primary teacher, and will partner with them in the religious and spiritual formation of their children.

Recognizing the importance of parents' understanding and feeling confident in sharing their faith with their children, it is the mission of St. Joseph Religious Education to meet the needs of parents in their own religious and spiritual formation.

## **Philosophy**

The Religious Education department focuses on educating and guiding the whole child, spiritually, morally, intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. We are dedicated to develop in each student a deep sense of responsibility for self and others. We promote spiritual growth and development by teaching the doctrine of our Catholic faith and Christian values throughout the curriculum. We are committed to translating these beliefs into our actions within our Christian community and through outreach to the needs of the global church.

We believe that our religious education environment provides a stimulating setting where students are motivated to learn; where parents and guardians are recognized as partners in the formation process; where faculty and Catechists are committed to serve. Together we can touch the lives of our children who are tomorrow's Disciples of Christ.

## **Goals**

- Parents, Catechists, and Education Commission will commit to their own personal ongoing faith formation.
- Parents, Catechists, and Education Commission will work together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to provide the best experiences for our children.

## Objectives

- To strengthen the spiritual foundation of the parents, catechists, and the faith community to better serve our children.
- To be focused constantly on what God desires for us as Christian people and to pass it on to our children.
- To never underestimate the religious and spiritual potential of our children. We will be open to the fact that God works through His children and that we as adults learn from them as well.
- To use a program/curriculum that is empowering, spiritual in content and is consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church, and approved by the United States Conference of Bishops.
- Our Pastoral Team and Faith Formation Commission will provide support when needed.

## Protecting God's Children

We recognize the importance of providing a safe environment for our children, as well as the volunteers and staff that we serve. Therefore, criminal background checks have been done on all adults working with our children. All staff and adult volunteers attend a training workshop called *Protecting God's Children* to learn about protecting children from sexual misconduct and abuse. Teens attend *Called to Serve*.

## Policies

### Registration

Registration begins mid-April for the coming fall program. Families that take advantage of early registration, by the end of August, will pay a reduced tuition. The incentive to register as quickly as possible helps plan accordingly for the year. **Families registering for Religious Education must be current registered members of St. Joseph Church or bring a letter from Home Parish.**

### Tuition

The tuition paid for religious education helps to cover the cost of running the program, facility costs and purchasing needed materials. If you are unable to pay the cost of tuition, financial assistance is available. Please feel free to make payments throughout the year. Contact the Faith Formation office regarding financial assistance if needed. No family will be denied religious education due to finances.

### Catechists *one who echoes the word of God*

If you feel called to be a Catechist, please contact our office. You will be asked to fill out a Catechist Application. One of our RE Coordinators will contact you to assess the best placement in our program. You will also be paired with a Co-Catechist. Catechists are required to attend trainings throughout the year. All volunteers must attend the diocese's mandated *Protecting God's Children Workshop* and also undergo a criminal background check. In appreciation for answering the call to this ministry, tuition for the family is reduced.

### Volunteers

We continually look for help throughout the year and value our volunteers. If you feel called to help out as a babysitter, office helper, substitute, or in other various areas of need, let our Coordinators know. All volunteers must attend the diocese's mandated *Protecting God's Children Workshop* and also undergo a criminal background check.

### **Attendance**

Religious education should be a priority. It is expected that students will attend classes at their scheduled time. Catechists will be taking attendance and will call families if a student has missed two sessions in a row. Parents must call the Religious Education office to report their child's absence. Parents are encouraged to *pick up* missed assignments.

### **Arrival and Dismissal**

Parents must walk in to **pick up** children from class. This helps build an important relationship between child, catechist, and parent. It is expected that students will arrive on time so that the class can use the entire time efficiently. If children are capable of walking into class on their own, parent **drop off** at the entrance door will be permitted. If concerns from catechists or staff arise, parents may be asked to walk their child into class. Children will not be permitted to enter a classroom without the catechist present. Children will be dismissed on time and it is expected that parents will be on time to pick up children. Parents should check their child's folder regularly and encourage him/her to share what he/she has learned.

### **Discipline**

It is expected that children will attend class and participate in a positive and safe way. It is also expected that catechists and parents form, and maintain, an open and ongoing relationship throughout the year to ensure positive and appropriate behavior.

Children that are disruptive or pose harm to others in the class will, at the catechist's discretion, receive a warning, and parents will be notified. A second incident will result in the child being removed from class and sent to the Religious Education office; parents will be notified. Children who have a third incident may be asked to move to the Family Study program. All discipline incidents will be documented and kept in the child's file.

### **Weapons or Medication (or any type of Drug or Alcohol)**

Students, parents, staff, and catechists/volunteers are prohibited from bringing weapons and any type of alcohol or drug onto the St. Joseph campus or to any church sponsored activity. A weapon is described as anything that can be used to threaten or injure another. Students, parents, and catechists/volunteers under the influence of drugs and alcohol are prohibited from the St. Joseph campus.

## **Parental Involvement**

Parents are encouraged to be as active as they can be in their child's religious education/ faith formation experience at St. Joseph Church. There are many opportunities to be involved as a Catechist, Substitute, Room Helper, or Volunteer in the office during the evening of class. If you are interested, please let us know.

All parents are expected to be part of their child's religious and spiritual formation. The church provides formal instruction, but without discussion, prayer, and activities at home the experience and growth is limited. The church will always recognize parents as their child's primary teacher. *All parents are encouraged to volunteer in class or in the office throughout the year.*

### **Canceled Classes**

Please be aware that the religious education program will cancel whenever *Lake Orion Schools* close due to inclement weather. If there is an early release due to a building problem or inclement weather, parents will be notified by phone and email. Please keep us updated on current address and emergency phone numbers. You may also check our website for closures at [www.stjosephlakeorion.org](http://www.stjosephlakeorion.org).

### **Media Waivers**

All parents will fill out a Media Waiver indicating whether their child(ren) has permission to be photographed or videotaped during class. **This will be kept on file for the duration of your family's participation in our program.** The photos and videos are used as display for our program and possibly on our website and/or church bulletin articles. *It is your responsibility to notify our office of any changes to your Media Waiver request.*

### **Emergency Contacts**

Parents must update their child's records in our office and with the Catechist regarding any changes to phone, email or address information. Our office must always be able to reach a parent/guardian in case of an emergency.

## Sacraments

All children preparing for a sacrament must be registered in a weekly religious education class. Our alternate RE *Family Study* program will not be an option for the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade sacrament years. Those who attend a Catholic School or Catholic Home School program are exempt from the weekly RE classes.

Preparing for any sacrament involves parents, the child, and the church. While the children learn in their classroom about these special encounters with Christ, the best learning is through family prayer, attending Mass, and talking together about what the sacraments are, and what they mean. Children begin to prepare to receive Christ in the Eucharist the first time they are brought to church and watch others walk humbly to the Table. They begin to prepare for Reconciliation the first time they say they are sorry and truly feel forgiven, and they begin to prepare for Confirmation when they see our church family as a community working to do God's work, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor and spreading the Gospel of God. We all continue to grow and seek a deeper understanding of these sacraments.

It is recognized that sacramental preparation is a separate program from the regular religious education curriculum. To celebrate a sacrament at St. Joseph, it is required that the family be registered members of the parish.

Parents must provide a copy of their child's Baptismal Certificate at the time of registration for Communion and Confirmation. Children baptized in a faith other than Roman Catholic will be asked to make a Profession of Faith prior to the celebration of First Communion.

Children attending a Catholic school or Catholic Homeschool must register for sacraments in the Faith Formation/Religious Education office. Parents must attend sacramental preparation meetings. All other religious education requirements are met at the school.

***First Reconciliation:*** Typically children in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade prepare for this healing sacrament the first part of the year and celebrate in December. Parents are expected to attend meetings throughout the year and work in a First Reconciliation workbook at home with their child.

***First Communion:*** Children continue to prepare and celebrate in the spring of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade. Parents are expected to attend meetings throughout the year and work in a First Eucharist workbook at home with their child.

***Confirmation:*** Candidates begin their preparation at Baptism and begin final prep in Seventh Grade. They begin working on a combination of service and enrichment activities in the areas of Church, Community, and Family. They will keep a journal on all service and enrichment experiences. They must choose a sponsor who is an active, participating Catholic who will help them prepare for this sacrament, as well as, continue to walk in faith with them after being fully initiated into the Catholic Faith. Candidates are expected to understand and express Catholic doctrine through an interview, and write a letter to the Pastor explaining their desire for Confirmation at the end of their Eighth Grade year. Eighth grade students will also receive a Confirmation workbook to complete at home. Candidates will attend two required activities during the year. They attend a retreat in the fall of ninth grade as well as celebrate the sacrament in the fall of ninth grade. Parents are expected to attend meetings throughout the year.

***RCIC:*** Children who are over the age of seven and have had no formal religious education are invited to be part of our *Rite of Christian Initiation for Children*. This group meets on Mondays at 4:30pm and will celebrate sacraments in the spring.

## Curriculum and Schedule

We currently use *Faith First Legacy* which is a spiral curriculum published by **RCL**. This curriculum focuses on the four pillars of the Catholic faith, which are *Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer*. The program also offers a wonderful website [www.faithfirst.com](http://www.faithfirst.com) as well as [www.blestarewe.com](http://www.blestarewe.com). Please check them out. There is great info for parents, games and trivia for kids, interactive pieces for teens, and much more!

All religious education classes are held in the St. Joseph School classrooms.

The first through fifth grade classes have two class time options: Monday 4:30pm-5:45pm or 6:30pm-7:45pm. They will begin the last week in September and end the last week in April.

The Middle School grade classes (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>) will be held on Tuesday from 6:30pm-7:45pm. Their classes will begin mid-October and end in March.

Sunday School for 3, 4, and 5 year olds will meet on Sundays during the 10:45am Mass. A schedule of class dates will be distributed at the first class in the fall.

We offer an alternate program called **Family Study** for those that want to study at home or who struggle with meeting the above offered schedule. Parents receive materials that follow our curriculum to study at home and attend monthly gatherings with the entire family throughout the year. Children in sacramental prep (2<sup>nd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) are not eligible for Family Study.

We also offer a *Children's Liturgy* during the 9:00am and 10:45am Mass times. Children are dismissed by the priest to go to another room to hear the Gospel readings and homily from the *Children's Lectionary*. All school age (K-5<sup>th</sup> grade) children are invited to attend. You do not need to sign up for this program.

Middle school children are also encouraged to attend **FLOW** meetings (*Following the Lord Our Way*) which is structured much like a Jr. Youth Group under the direction of Kathy Galbraith and Sherry Brandon. Students will enjoy field trips, special gatherings, movies, guest speakers, etc. This group is a bridge into the High School Group - **J Walkers** (*Walking with Jesus*). Call Sherry for more information at extension 242.

The church depends on parent partnership in the religious and spiritual formation each child. It is expected that parents will get to know their child's catechist and take an active approach to their learning our faith. It is also expected that parents will take their family to Mass each week to celebrate as a community and encounter Christ in the Eucharist, scripture, and the people.

The curriculum used for weekly classes and sacramental preparation has been approved by the Council of U.S. Bishops.