

WHAT IS FAMILY CATECHESIS?

Recent studies on religion point to the importance of parents in the spiritual formation of their children. Parental involvement in a child's faith formation increases not only a child's identification with their faith as they grow, but their commitment to the faith, and their practice of that faith as they reach adulthood. The Church has always recognized and acknowledged the role of parents as the primary formers of faith in their children, but sometimes the Church does not enable or equip parents for their role as effectively as it could. A format grounded in Family Faith Formation supports the domestic Church by coming alongside families and journeying with them.

Lessons focus on *a lived faith*, on expressions of faith that affirm the Church teachings in everyday life, while helping parents to more intentionally teach the faith by identifying the faith lessons in the everyday moments when we teach our children to love, to respect, to forgive, to care for creation, and to care for each other. Working together, we will assist parents in building upon what they are already doing and help them to expand their knowledge and practice of their faith as a family.

FORMAT

FORMATION COMPONENT

Family Sessions

A monthly family session is held on the 2nd Sunday of the Month immediately following the 10 AM Mass. Session begin once families arrive in the school hall. Family Gathering/Class is 1 hour and 15 minutes. Dismissal is between 12:15 & 12:30 PM depending on start time.

- Families gather in a large group setting for snack and refreshments following Mass.
- After a brief prayer, a brief 20-minute presentation introduces families to the theme for the month. Facilitated conversation leads to an exchange of how the theme applies to daily life today, and families are challenged to discuss and identify ways in which they can incorporate the theme in daily life. Then children report to classrooms with catechists while parents remain in the hall.
- In the classroom setting, children are presented with the first chapter lesson of a thematic unit. Each thematic unit is comprised of three chapters and the theme is the same for all grade levels.
- Parents remain in the hall and receive a deeper instruction into the unit and a wealth of information on how to best present the material in an age-appropriate way to their children.
- After the prescribed time, parents will be dismissed to report to the classrooms to pick up their children.

Family Session Dates and Themes

- September 8, 2024: Family Orientation
 - October 13, 2024: Unit 1 – God, Our Creator & Father
 - November 10, 2024: Unit 2 – Jesus, Our Lord & Savior
 - December 8, 2024: Seasonal Theme – Advent & Christmas
 - January 12, 2025: Unit 3 - The Church, Our Community in the Spirit
 - February 9, 2025: Unit 4 – Sacraments, Our Way of Life
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- March 9, 2025: Seasonal Theme – Lent, Holy Week, & Easter
- April 13, 2025: Unit 5, Morality – Our Lived Faith
- May 18, 2025^^: Faith & Fellowship Group Celebration

^^The May session will be held on the 3rd Sunday instead of the 2nd Sunday to avoid family conflicts with Mother's Day (May 11). Please make note of this on your calendars.

AT-HOME ASSIGNMENTS

- See At-Home Assignments under Family Catechesis Option Program Policies and Procedures for specific details on this aspect of the Formation Component.
- The material presented to parents at the Family Sessions will assist and prepare them for presenting the remaining four chapters of the unit to their children at home at their convenience over the remainder of the month.
- Detailed lesson plans are available to parents in PDF format on *Finding God 2021 Website* <https://www.loyolapress.com/faith-formation/finding-god/finding-god-2021/parents-and-students/> as well as the student's Google Classroom
- When students complete all chapters for an assigned Unit, they take a Unit Assessment at home, and submit the assessment to the Catechist at the next Family Session. This assessment will be graded.
- No Assessments or Units are assigned for the months of December and March.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Program Director will be present on all dates related to the Formation Component and will track family attendance for this component. In addition, catechists will use the Unit Assessments to track student progress and will check the student's textbook for completion to ensure that families are completing the at-home assignments.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

- Students in 2nd grade will use the ***Alive in Christ*** textbook to prepare for the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist.
 - The Sacrament of Confirmation is now celebrated with students in 7th & 8th Grade in the spring the exact date will be published once we have a date from the celebrating bishop. These students will use the ***Chosen*** textbook which incorporates videos for each lesson to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Five additional special assignments are also required of candidates as part of their preparation, the details of which are conveyed at the parent and candidate evening of reflection in the fall. All work, video, and chapter reflection questions will be posted on Google Classroom for candidates.
 - Parental feedback throughout the preparation process is key to ensure that they are equipped with sufficient resources and support to work with their child during sacramental preparation.
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SPIRITUAL COMPONENT

Spiritual Gatherings

Families are expected to attend two spiritual activities within the parish. These activities include any of the events and liturgies listed below. The list below is not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added to the list below prior to or during the program year as additional options for families. Dates and times are subject to change. Current offerings and opportunities will be conveyed monthly to families.

- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Rectory Chapel
 - Weekly on Tuesday's from 8:30 AM – 8:00 PM
- All Soul's Day Mass of Remembrance @ 11 AM
- Parish Mission (November 10, 11, 12)
- Festival of Choirs (December 15)
- Ash Wednesday (March 5)
- Stations of the Cross (March 7, 14, 21, 28, & April 4, 11, 18 @ 7 PM)
- Living Stations of the Cross (April 15)
- Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper (April 17 @ 7 PM)
- Good Friday Veneration of the Cross (April 18 @ 3 PM)
- Easter Vigil (April 19 @ 7:30 PM)
- May Procession (May 14 @ 7 PM)

Sacrament of Penance (Confessions)

The 2nd Precept of the Church obliges all Catholics to receive the Sacrament of Penance a minimum of once a year unless they are in a state of mortal sin in which case, they should seek the sacrament immediately. As the Family Catechesis Program does not offer an opportunity for children to receive the sacrament of Penance in a formal way as the traditional Tuesday CCD classes do, parents with children in grades 3-8 are expected to take their child to receive the Sacrament of Penance at least once during the year. Participating in the Sacrament of Penance is its own requirement and does not fulfill the requirement for Spiritual Gatherings above.

The Sacrament of Penance is offered at the following times:

- Saturday afternoons from 4:00 – 4:45 PM in the church chapel.
- Sunday mornings from 11:00 – 11:45 AM in the church chapel.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The families are responsible for notifying the Program Director when they attend a Spiritual Activity in the parish. Such notification must be in the form of an email sent to the Program Director at dre@satg1.org. The Program Director will maintain a record of each family's progress for the Spiritual Component.

ACTS OF MERCY COMPONENT

Families are expected to engage in two Act of Mercy per year offer by the parish. These activities include any of the events listed below. The list below is not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added to the list below prior to or during the program year as additional options for families. When engaging in Acts of Mercy, children should be actively involved.

- Making Casseroles for St. John's Hospice – ongoing
- Making meals for Caring for Friends (formerly Aid for Friends) – ongoing
- Food Drive for Holy Innocents Food Pantry – ongoing
- Sandwich Sunday (3rd Sunday of the Month after 10 AM Mass)
- Trunk or Treat – October 25, 2024 (Rain Date: 10/27)
- Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast – October 27, 2024
- Lunch with Santa – December 7, 2024
- Advent Giving Tree (November 27 – December 15, 2024)
- Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast – March 16, 2025
- Man's Supper – April 18, 2025
- Baby Bottle Drive (May 4 – June 15, 2025)

ACCOUNTABILITY

The families are responsible for notifying the Program Director when they complete an Act of Mercy Activity in the parish. Such notification must be in the form of an email sent to the Program Director at dre@satg1.org. The Program Director will maintain a record of each family's progress for the Act of Mercy Component.

FAMILY EVENTS – NEW 2024

To help families connect and to foster a sense of fellowship we have added two family events to the program calendar for 2024. These events are open to all families in our religious education program. Even though these events are voluntary, we hope families will consider joining us for a night fun, engagement, and community building.

CCD Family Bingo Night – November 15, 2024, 7:00 – 8:30 PM

CCD Family Movie Night – February 28, 2025, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

CLARIFICATIONS

DEFINING FAMILY CATECHESIS

This program option is grounded in family catechesis and therefore depends on the family's participation for a student to succeed. The Program defines the family as the student, and any parents and siblings living in the same household. If the family, as defined, cannot participate in a Family Session, Spiritual, or Act of Mercy activity, then at least one parent must accompany the student and participate in the activity with the student. If both parents are unavailable due to work, then a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or godparent may stand in the parent's place. Parents of other students enrolled in the Program ***DO NOT*** meet this definition and may not serve as a substitute for another student's parent unless they are directly related to said student.

REQUIRED PARTICIPATION

The nature of this program encompasses all of the components outlined herein this document, explicitly the Formation, Spiritual, and Acts of Mercy Components. As such, families must meet all of the requirements for each component by the end of the Program year (May 31), or they will be prohibited from participating in the Family Catechesis Option the following year. The Program will provide the opportunities for parents, students, and families to participate in various component related activities throughout the course of the year, but it is the responsibility of parents to make sure that they and the student fulfill the Program requirements.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROGRAM¹

To qualify for this program option families must meet the following requirements:

- Attend Sunday Mass on a weekly basis
- Be a registered member of St. Albert the Great Parish for at least one year, or had children enrolled in St. Albert the Great weekly CCD Program for at least one full program year.
- Complete all registration forms and submit all required paperwork and fees at the time of registration.
- Have a reliable Internet connection for email and access to online materials.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS/INFORMATION

ATTENDANCE

- The entire family is welcome and encouraged to attend the sessions and activities. However, at the minimum, children must be accompanied by an adult family member at every session and activity.
- Families will be expected to attend all nine (9) Sunday Sessions barring extenuating circumstances, such as illness or family emergency, and no more than two sessions can be missed under such circumstances. Participation in Sports and extracurricular activities are not considered extenuating circumstances. Family vacations should not be planned during any of the Sunday sessions, as the program dates are known well in advance and are consistent from year to year.
- Families that miss more than two sessions may be required to complete the remainder of the program year in the traditional weekly program.
- For those families that miss due to extenuating circumstances, we will make the session available via a Google document so that parents may review the session materials and theme at home. They will be responsible for teaching the entire unit (5 chapters) that month instead of four chapters.
- Families that do not meet all of the program requirements by the end of the program year (i.e., May 31), may not be invited to participate in this model the following year.

¹ Eligibility requirements may be modified as program continues to evolve.

EVALUATION / PROGRESS REPORTS

- Because of the nature of this program, Progress Reports are not utilized.
 - Progress will be evaluated through the use of Unit Assessments that will be provided as a PDF document in the student's Google Classroom, a hard copy of which will be distributed at the Sunday session. This assessment should be completed once the entire Unit (all five sessions/chapters) have been completed by the student. The assessment must be turned into the catechist at the next Sunday Family Catechesis Session.
 - The grades for the Unit Assessment will be posted in the student's Google Classroom. The Catechist may recommend that certain pages, concepts, or material be reviewed with a student if the assessment indicates that further review is warranted to ensure mastery of the material. Catechists will communicate this information directly to parents via email.
 - Students that fail to complete and submit the Unit Assessments will be withheld from year-end promotion until all outstanding work and assessments have been satisfactorily completed and submitted. The Program Director reserves the right to administer a written Archdiocesan assessment to ensure that a student is proficient in the key objectives established for their grade level by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.
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