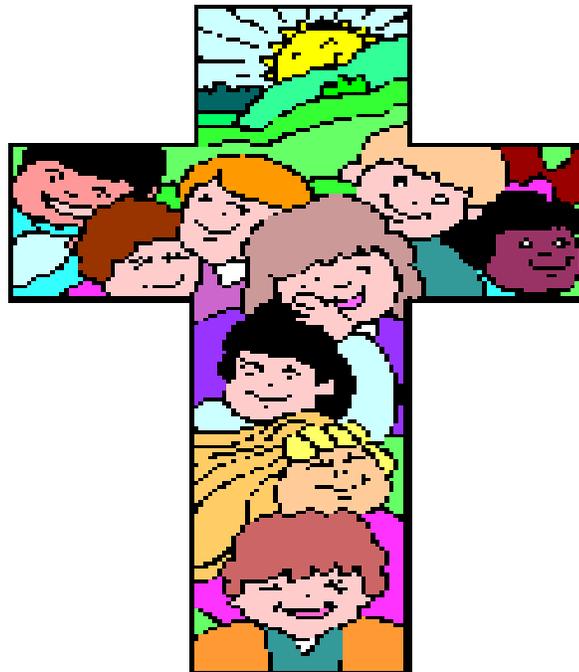


Faith Formation
Grades 1-5
617-696-1388
faithformation@StAgathaParish.org



Policies and Procedures
2016-2017

Please carefully and completely read the following policies and procedures. The Faith Formation program operates most smoothly when all catechists consistently follow the same guidelines.

Safety of the Children

Separate handouts on Safety Issues are included in your Catechist Folder, and/or may be distributed throughout the year. Please make sure you are aware of all pertinent safety issues.

- Please program the following number into your cell phone: **617-698-3800**. This number goes directly to the Milton Police Dept. In an emergency, do not dial '911' from your cell, as this is transmitted to the State Police, not the Milton Police. '911' will go to MPD only if it is dialed from a land line.
- Wear your name tag at all times, even while entering the building. The staff and teachers of St. Agatha School have been instructed to stop any adult in the building who is not wearing an identification badge.
- All classroom doors are to **remain open** at all times.
- **Children should never be left unattended**. If an emergency arises in the classroom, open the connecting door to the neighboring room and ask the catechist to supervise both classes while you come to the office, or send 2 responsible children to the office to get help.
- At no time is any adult to be alone with a child in a place where you cannot both be seen by another adult.
- **No lit candles** in the classrooms. You may use an unlit candle or a battery operated candle in the classroom for prayers.
- **NO FOOD or DRINK may be given to the children**. Many children in our program have serious allergies and medical conditions. These are not always listed on the allergy/disability form. Additionally, we share space in the classrooms with the children of St. Agatha School, and we have no way of knowing about their possible allergies. Therefore, **NEVER give children any food, candy, gum or drink before, during or after Faith Formation sessions**. (This includes parties, and treats as children leave the building.) Children may not bring any food, candy, gum or drink into the school at any time nor may they purchase anything from the vending machines in the cafeteria. Even though you would never intentionally give a child anything harmful, we cannot control the sharing that may occur between children outside of the classroom nor can we count on a child not to eat or drink something he/she is not supposed to have. If any child cannot have food or drink, no child shall have food or drink. (Parents have been asked to give children a snack before they arrive for Faith Formation sessions.)

We understand that catechists may desire to give small gifts to their class on special occasions. A supply of non-edible items for occasional distribution to children is available in the office. **We appreciate your cooperation and strict adherence to this policy.**

- *If you wish to take children out of the assigned classroom* (outside on a nice day, to the church, to another classroom for a joint activity with another class, to another location for a video), you must please notify the Faith Formation office, and let us know exactly where you will be. No Faith Formation class is allowed in the Gym.
- **A child can be dismissed early from a classroom only if the adult picking up the child is accompanied to the classroom by an adult from the office. If an unaccompanied adult arrives at a classroom to pick up a child, you are to ask the adult to go to the Faith Formation office before the child will be dismissed. Our office is located a distance from the door; sometimes a person is buzzed in and gets to a classroom before we can catch them, so this safety procedure is of particular importance.**
- If you suspect that a child is being neglected or abused in any way, you must report your concerns to the Coordinator or to one of the parish priests.

Confidentiality

All personal information about children in the program is absolutely confidential and may not be shared with anyone, including your own child(ren). Pay close attention to allergy/disability information and contact the office with any questions or concerns. What children say/ share during class is also confidential.

Classroom Management

- On the first day of class, develop procedures/rules with the children as well as consequences for not following them. Post them in your classroom each week and enforce them consistently and fairly. One of the rules that everyone should have is respect for the property in the classroom. We only use our own supplies and do not touch anything that does not belong to us. For catechists, please do not use any of the St. Agatha School supplies (eg books, toys, etc)
- All children are to **remain in the classroom** except under extraordinary circumstances.
 - A request to use the rest room is the most common reason for a child to leave the classroom.
 - For older children, encourage them to use the rest room before 3:45 or stop at the rest room on the way to the classroom and allow everyone to use the facility. Keep the class together and wait in the hallway between the rest rooms to supervise. State clearly that no one will be allowed to leave during class time.
 - For younger children, consider taking a rest room break halfway through class. Everyone must leave the classroom and wait in the hallway between rest rooms with you until everyone who needs to use the facility has done so. The entire group then returns to the classroom together.
 - If you need something from the Faith Formation office, **send 2 responsible children** together.
 - If you need to send a child to the Faith Formation office, (for illness or behavior issues) either open the connecting door and ask the catechist in the neighboring classroom to supervise both classes while you accompany the child to the office **or send 2 responsible children with the student.**
- **Take action immediately** if there are any problems with your class or with a particular child. Do not hesitate to send a child to the office and/or to contact parents about difficulties/concerns. Please discuss your concerns with the Faith Formation office. Many catechists hesitate to ask for a variety of reasons. **We are here to help you!**

Communication with Families

- *Communication with families is important.*
 - Be sure to send home the lesson pages and family page as indicated in the syllabus every week. This is the primary means parents have of knowing what their children are learning during Faith Formation sessions.
 - You are encouraged to send a brief note to each family at the beginning of the year introducing yourself and **asking parents if they are willing to be a substitute** for your class during the year. (The Faith Formation office is happy to provide a suggested letter for you.)

Weekly Procedures

- **Follow the syllabus.** This is critical. We need to know that all material is covered, and we need to be able to guide a substitute to the right chapter if needed. Chapters are not necessarily assigned in numerical order. Chapter order is determined based on a number of factors, including other activities going on that week or in the preceding/following weeks. ***If a class is cancelled, send home the missed chapter and stay on the correct syllabus for that day.***
- **Arrive by 3:30, check your mailbox, and read the Catechist Reminders.** We will try to send the Catechist Reminders by email as well.
- **Greet your class in the Cafeteria no later than 3:40.** Do not linger in the office. If you need to check your mailbox, find hand-outs, etc. you can go back into the office after the classes are dismissed. Have your class sit quietly in the cafeteria for that short time. It is important to good order that you sit at your class table, and supervise children as they arrive. **Take attendance in the cafeteria and leave the colored Attendance Card on your table. Keep your white copy of the Attendance with you at all times. Do not allow children to take attendance or write on the attendance cards or table name cards.**
- When the bell rings at 3:45, we will begin together in the cafeteria. Some weeks we will have an opening prayer and some weeks you will be dismissed immediately after a greeting. When dismissed, please lead your children quietly to your classroom. Please remind the children that we are not the only ones in the building.
- If you are doing a project which requires special supplies such as scissors, glue, etc., (**no glitter, please**) please take the necessary supply boxes (glue sticks and/or scissors) from the shelf in the office, and return it at the end of class. (Notify the Office if any supplies are missing.)
- Before the end of class:
 - **Tear the appropriate pages from the textbook** (they are listed on the syllabus), staple them together and send them home with the children. One of the primary reasons this textbook series was chosen was because of the ability to send home lesson pages and the Faith Alive at Home & in the Parish pages. These inform parents of what the children are learning and offer them ideas and activities to reinforce the lesson goals at home. If a child is absent send the pages home with the child at the next session. Some catechists prefer to tear out the appropriate pages ahead of time.
 - **Return special supplies to the office** – scissors, glue, videos, prayer supplies, etc.
 - Neatly place textbooks back into your assigned milk crate and return the milk crate to the place designated by the St. Agatha School teacher.
 - **Make sure the classroom and its furniture are exactly** as they were when you entered the room.
 - Close all windows.
- Dismissal --
 - Two or three minutes before 5:00 begin cleaning up the room, returning the Faith Formation books to their milk crates and placing them in the designated area, etc.
 - **When the bell rings at 5:00 (not before), line up the children, turn off the lights and lead children out to the parking lot, staying with them until they are all picked up.**
 - **NO ONE IS TO LEAVE THE BUILDING UNTIL THE 5:00 BELL HAS RUNG.**
 - **Do not let the child leave you until they see a parent/ride and point out their ride to you. The parent must get out of their car and come inside the “cond” safety area. Children may not go out to the car on their own.**
 - It is helpful to pick a standard place where you wait with your class. ***Do not cluster on the stairs.*** Your parents will get used to coming to that spot to pick up their child(ren).
 - Grades 2 & 4 exit via the door at the end of the ramp near the gym.
 - Grades 1, 3 & 5 exit via the door closest to the church.
 - If a child’s ride is late, the child should be brought to Faith Formation office staff. The Faith Formation office will contact the child’s driver and wait with the child until the ride arrives. If there is only one staff person present, the catechist will need to remain as well.

- Return any borrowed materials/videos/resources to the Faith Formation office.
- If you have any good ideas or copies of successful activities please leave them in the office. Some of our best resources originate with our catechists!

Resources & Supplies

- **You will be given a**
 - Catechist Guide (which you are asked to return to the office at the end of the year), Please do not write your name in it.
 - Detailed, week-by-week syllabus indicating the chapter to be covered and special activities,
 - Crayon Bag with pencils, crayons, etc. for use throughout the year (see note below)
 - Class list with phone info (keep this at home in case you need to call a parent to substitute for you)
 - 2 Attendance Sheets –*colored for the Faith Formation Office and white to be kept with you at all times.*
- You will receive a Student Book for each student. If a child changes days or class, please make sure the original book is sent to the Office, so that the child is not issued another. Have the children write their names on the **outside front cover** of the text (not inside the book)
- Milk Crates- each Catechist will be assigned a milk crate, and each day has a different color milk crate please make sure you are only using the supplies in your designated milk crate.
- Tuesday = red milk crate
- Wednesday = white milk crate
- Thursday = blue milk crate
- A **Crayon Bag** containing a stapler, staples, pencils and crayons for the class will be given to each Catechist. You may store it in the classroom with your books in your designated milk crate. If supplies need to be replenished, please notify the Faith Formation office.
- **Supply Boxes** containing scissors, glue sticks, markers and foamies are available in the Office. Please help yourself to a box when your class is doing a special project. The box is to be **returned to the office** at the end of class. Please notify the office if supplies are missing or need to be replenished.
- **NO GLITTER- thank you**
- **Paper** (colored, scrap and construction) is available in the large storage cabinet in the office.
- **Prizes and awards** such as stickers, bracelets, rosaries and more are available on the bookcase behind the door. This area is for catechists only.
- Additional **activity sheets** are available on the “Catechist Table” outside the Faith Formation office in the cafeteria. These activities are related to the season or a special theme. You may help yourself. Do not allow children to pick out hand-outs; they generally choose everything and there is excessive waste. Jenn Caputo works diligently to provide you with a variety of lesson-expanding hand-outs. If you are looking for something in particular, please contact Jenn; she will be happy to help. Additionally, if you have found something great, please give Jenn a copy for future use. We are always looking for new ideas! jcaputo@stagathaparish.org
- Resources from the Office may be borrowed for 2 weeks. Videos may be borrowed for one week. Please sign out borrowed materials and sign in returned materials on the sheet provided near the videos. Additional resource material is located in the Faith Formation Office in the lower rectory.

- **Bibles** are available for use during class. They are in the bookcase near the videos. Please return them before you leave so they will be available for other catechists.
- William Sadlier Co., the publisher of the texts used in our program, provides additional information and activities on their **website** at www.webelieveweb.com. You may also find helpful resources at www.catechist.com.
- Please share resources and ideas with each other and us by making an extra copy and leaving it in the office.
- We can order other supplies. Please give at least 1 week notice. Contact Jenn Caputo at jcaputo@stagathaparish.org
- You can be reimbursed for reasonable, out-of-pocket expenses by submitting a receipt to the Coordinator. Please consult the Coordinator, prior to ordering/purchasing items for which you want reimbursement.

Photocopies

- If you need copies of the pages in your Catechist Guide, email or call us ahead of time and we will have the copies in your mailbox. ***Because of our smaller space and much smaller copier, we will not be able to make copies just before or during Faith Formation sessions.***
- If you need copies from other sources, send it to us at least 24 hours in advance. (earlier, if possible) Copies will be placed in your mailbox by the date requested. We generally need to leave the office in the rectory by 2pm on the days we have sessions, so all requests for copies need to be made well before then. **We do not have email capability in the school office, so if you email for copies or information after 2pm, we will not get the message.**

Audiovisual Aids

- If you wish to show a video, you must let the Faith Formation Office know in advance. There are limited TVs available, and the cafeteria is often used for other purposes. Remember; never *show a video you have not previewed* or that the Office hasn't vouched for. The video must reinforce the goals of the lesson and must be age appropriate for your class.
- We have several CD players you may use. Please call ahead to reserve one. We have CDs keyed to each grade level.

Catechist Absence

- We understand that sometimes unavoidable circumstances arise that could make you absent for a week. If you are part of a catechist team, check with your partner catechist. If the parent of a child in your class has volunteered to sub, we will let you know. At the beginning of the year, please contact all the parents in your class and see which of them would be able to sub. (Even if you have been told about a possible substitute, it is good to have back-up.) We have a sample letter that you can send home. Please make every effort to do this *before* you may need it. Nothing is worse than to have a sick child, or be sick yourself, and then have to try to line up a substitute.
- If you will be absent, please notify the office in writing (email) as soon as possible with your substitute's name and phone number. We may need to have that person fill out forms, etc.
- **The office is committed to many activities during the sessions and staff members will not be available to sub for your class.**

Thank you so much for taking the time to read these policies and procedures. There will be a short quiz next week. ☺

May God reward you with God's richest blessings! Good luck for a great year!

Jennifer Caputo

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