

St. Rose of Lima
Faith Formation Policy Manual



St. Rose of Lima – Office of Faith Formation Policy Manual

The St. Rose of Lima Office of Faith Formation seeks to foster the knowledge and understanding of God and growth in relationship with God, to the youngest members of our parish community. The understanding of God begins in the home, the Domestic Church, and is experienced through love, prayers, meals, forgiveness and sharing as a family. “Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.” (NDC 212) Parental and family involvement in the life of the Church is vital to the faith formation of our parish children.

In the catechetical mission of our religious formation program, we seek:

- to lead the students to develop a deep and personal relationship with Jesus,
- to promote life-long formation in the Catholic faith, through age appropriate religious and sacramental formation,
- to lead the students and their families to participate in the parish faith community and its Sacramental life,
- to help the students to form a moral conscience rooted in Gospel discipleship,
- to raise student and family awareness and create opportunities for service to those in need,
- to support parents in their primary faith responsibilities to their children.

Religious formation classes are only one aspect of the faith journey of a child. Worship, prayer, and outreach go hand in hand with faith development. Participation at prayer services, sacramental preparation, retreats, and stewardship events is an integral part of the formation of the child. It is our expectation that parents will bring their children to hear the Word of God and celebrate at the Table of the Lord at Sunday Mass.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we inspire to make each person’s faith alive and active so that their personal response models the teaching of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Policy

St. Rose of Lima Religious Formation Program is open to all young parishioners who do not attend a Catholic elementary or middle school. Our program begins in first grade and concludes with the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation in the fall of 9th grade. All students are strongly encouraged to continue their faith journey by participation in the parish youth ministry.

The sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation are two-year programs. Preparation for Eucharist and Reconciliation begin in first grade and are celebrated at the conclusion of the grade two instructional year. First grade children attend bi-monthly classes in the parish school, or a small group home setting taught by parent catechists under the direction of the religious formation coordinator. Our second-grade program gathers children in small groups in a home setting facilitated by two adult catechists.

The faith journey to full initiation in the Catholic faith begins at baptism and culminates with the celebration of Confirmation. To enter the Confirmation program at St. Rose of Lima, all students are required to complete the first six years of religious formation in the Catholic Church. The Confirmation program encompasses the grade seven and grade eight instructional years. The celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation occurs in the fall of 9th grade. RCIA for Children is available for those students who have not regularly attended instruction. An individualized catechetical plan for the child will be developed and discussed with the parent and implemented by the religious formation office on a need’s basis.

Our Catechists

All adults in our parish community are invited to become an integral part of the catechetical mission of our Church as a catechist. After an initial interview with our Coordinator of Faith Formation, applicants are required to complete a Background Check and Volunteer Code of Conduct. In addition, all catechists must attend a Virtus Protecting God's Children live training session which is offered at St. Rose of Lima as well as throughout the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Compliance of this mandated program includes reading of online bulletins issued by the Virtus program several times each year. In addition, all new catechists must attend a New Catechist Training session prior to beginning the instructional year and submit a Catechist Commitment Agreement annually.

The Coordinator of Faith Formation conducts a minimum of three catechist meetings for each grade level during the instructional year. Catechists must attend their instructional grade level meeting and have the option of either a day or evening session.

The attendance and progress of our students is monitored and recorded by the catechist. Any issues of concern are addressed with the coordinator of our program at which time parents are contacted.

The Faith Formation program cannot function without the generous support of its volunteers, including catechists, room helpers, hall monitors and substitute teachers.

The practical aspects of our Faith Formation Program are described in this calendar for your convenience. As you read through them, please remember that these details are but one small facet of the total faith formation of your child(ren).

New Family Registration

All new families must be registered with our parish prior to registering their child(ren) in the faith formation program. A fillable parish census form is available for download, on the parish website. Save the file to your computer and then fill in all information using proper names for all members of your family. Print the completed form and call our office at (516) 541-1712 for office hours and to set up an appointment to meet with the coordinator or staff support member. This gives our staff the opportunity to provide specific information about our program by grade level, discuss the individual needs of your children and discuss expectations for both the parents and the children, and if you are so inclined, invite you to become actively involved in our catechetical ministry.

Enrolling your child(ren) - items needed for registration:

- A copy of each child's baptismal certificate.
- If you have recently moved to the area and your child/ren were enrolled in a religious education program at your former parish, please contact them and request a Letter of Transfer. This required document provides us with the catechetical information necessary to place your child in the appropriate level of instruction.
- Please bring a personal check. Fees vary depending on how many children will be registered.

Registration for existing parish families is conducted each year in March.

- **For grade one and new students**, a copy of your child/children's baptismal certificate **must** be submitted at the time of registration.

Transfers from another parish faith formation program will require verification. The parent is responsible to provide the Office of Faith Formation with a letter of transfer from the child's previous faith formation program. Children must successfully complete each level according to the individual parish guidelines. All children who have not received prior instruction will be evaluated on an individual basis by the Coordinator of Faith Formation to determine the appropriate level at which they should begin the faith formation program here at St. Rose of Lima.

Each stage is considered a pre-requisite for the next stage. The sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation are two-year sacramental programs. Preparations for the sacraments of First Eucharist and Reconciliation begin in first grade and are celebrated at the end of the grade 2 instructional year. Students in grades three through six continue to learn and mature in their faith understanding. The journey to full initiation in the Catholic faith begins at baptism and culminates with the celebration of Confirmation. To enter the Confirmation program here at St. Rose of Lima, all students are required to complete the first six years of religious formation in the Catholic Church. The Confirmation program encompasses the grade 7 and grade 8 instructional years. Confirmation is celebrated in the fall of 9th grade.

Situations where students are registering without any prior faith formation/religious education will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine the placement level and an individualized catechetical plan created. It would not be unusual for such placements to include a requirement that involves the parents and children in some form of faith formation/religious education before the beginning of the faith formation/religious education year. The faith formation of our parish children is at the heart of our ministry. You are strongly encouraged to register early so that your child will be placed in a session of family schedule convenience. We adhere to a strict late registration policy. Due to the attendance requirements, **students cannot be registered after October 1 except for those transferring from another program.** All parents are encouraged to register early so that children have a smooth beginning experience.

Our Children with Special Needs

Providing faith formation for children with special needs is an important part of our faith formation program. We have been blessed with certified special education teachers serving as volunteers at St. Rose. The program coordinator will meet with parents to discuss concerns and every reasonable effort will be made to assist parents to provide the best possible experience for the child. If your child has an IEP, we request that a copy of your child's current IEP be submitted annually. Please contact the office at your earliest convenience so we can schedule an appointment and make the best possible accommodations and an individualized catechetical plan for your child.

Family Registration Fees

Early registration will help assure you in obtaining the requested session and time for your family needs. It also enables us to secure the necessary number of catechists and volunteers needed for our program, and to order textbooks and resource materials. As always, if this presents a financial burden, please do not delay your family registration. Contact the office and our Coordinator of Faith Formation will speak with you regarding an individualized payment plan option.

Two principles of the Catholic Church's Social Teachings are the life and dignity of every person and the care for all of God's creation. Because we believe that every human life is sacred, and especially our children, the "*Think First & Stay Safe Program*" program resources are distributed to each family for the purpose of reviewing the topics in an age-appropriate manner at home.

EpiPen

If your child requires the use of an EpiPen in an emergency, please contact the office so you can complete a *Food Allergy Action Plan* prior to the first day of class. Students cannot self-carry without written authorization and the completion of the Food Allergy Action Plan.

Snacks

Absolutely no food, candy or drinks are permitted in class *at any time. No Exceptions.*

Arrival and Dismissal Policy

Please be reminded that parents and students are required to enter the school building through the front lobby doors. Once your child has been brought to the classroom proceed to the south door for exiting. We appreciate your cooperation in adhering to this safety matter. Please proceed with the utmost caution when driving through the parish parking lot during arrival and dismissal times.

Arrival: All on campus students must enter the school building through the **main lobby doors in the front of the school**. For the safety of your child(ren), these doors will be open **10** minutes before the start of class. Please wait for the hallway door to be opened before proceeding to your child's classroom. Parents must always accompany their child into the building. If you are more than 10 minutes late, please ring the bell at the main lobby door to be buzzed into the building and to sign your child into class. Students must be escorted by their parents or a guardian when arriving late for class. If your child is late three (3) or more times, this will count as one (1) absence in their attendance record.

Dismissal: All students need to exit the school building through the **south doors at the rear of the school. Please do not enter the building through these doors as we require traffic to flow in one direction for the safety of your child(ren).** Grades 1-6 must be picked up by a parent or guardian unless other arrangements have been made with the program coordinator. If someone other than the parent or legal guardian is to pick up the child, the coordinator must be informed of this change in writing prior to the beginning of class. If a parent/guardian is not there to pick up the child at dismissal time, your child will be taken to the Faith Formation Office by the catechist where he/she will remain with the coordinator until your arrival. The child will not be released unless the parent comes into the faith formation office to pick up the child.

Attendance & Lateness

Lateness and irregular attendance interfere greatly with a student's progress and is disruptive to both the catechist and the rest of the class. Please make sure you allow yourself time to get your child to class on time. If your child(ren) will be absent, please call 541-1712 x243 or email the Office of Faith Formation to report the absence. Please follow the calendar of lessons in completing the class work for the day of absence. We permit a maximum of 3 absences. Excessive absenteeism and incomplete lessons can impede your child's formation process and progress. If your child is late three (3) or more times, this will count as one (1) absence. If your child will be absent for an extended period, we request that a doctor's note be submitted to the Coordinator of Faith Formation explaining the reason for the absences. A temporary catechetical plan will be created to keep your child on track with the program requirements.

Early Dismissal from Class

Commitment to faith formation class is important, therefore, sports practices or games do not constitute a valid reason for early dismissal. If a student must be excused from class for some urgent reason, a note, signed by the student's parent or guardian is to be given to the catechist at the beginning of class. The note should contain the reason and time of early dismissal. Parents must come to the main lobby to sign the student out for an early release.

Students are never permitted to leave the building without an adult escort in these situations. If your child leaves class for an early release three (3) times, it will constitute one absence on their records. Please enter the building through the front doors when picking up your child for early release.

Visitors

All visitors must report directly to the Faith Formation Office in the school upon arrival. No unauthorized persons will be allowed in a classroom unless they have been previously authorized by the Coordinator of Faith Formation. If you would like to arrange a classroom visit during the instructional lesson, please contact the coordinator to schedule the visit prior to the class time.

Books and Supplies

All religious education textbooks used in our program are in conformity with the guidelines published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Each week all students are expected to bring their religion book(s), a folder, and pen or pencil, to class. If a book is lost during the year, it will be necessary for you to purchase a new one for your child. Charges for replacement books will apply. In grade 6, the Bible must be brought to class as well.

Homework

It is extremely important for parents to discuss with their child/children what they have learned during the instructional session. At times, homework may be assigned by the catechist or assignments distributed by the coordinator. Please check your child's folder regularly for assignments, notices, calendar updates, and parent communications.

Restroom Usage

Please encourage your child to use the bathroom *before* arriving for class. If your child has a physical condition that necessitates going to the bathroom frequently, please notify the Coordinator of Faith Formation. The children are not allowed to make frequent trips to the bathroom as this can be disruptive to the classroom instructional setting.

Program Closings/Cancellations

If the program is cancelled due to inclement weather, every attempt will be made to send an email to parents. Additionally, it will be announced on Optimum Channel 12LI (www.longisland.news12.com), the St. Rose of Lima website (www.srolchurch.org) and the Faith Formation Facebook page. If St. Rose of Lima School or the Massapequa School District is closed, the Faith Formation Office will also be closed. Please do not call the Rectory.

Instruction Outside the School Building on Parish Grounds

There are occasions when a catechist will escort the students to our Church or Outreach Center for instructional lessons or prayer opportunities. These occasions are not considered "field trips" and no prior notification to the parents will be communicated.

Communication

We view the faith formation of children as a collaborative effort of parents, catechists, coordinators, and the entire parish community. We encourage parents to be in communication with the child's catechist. The Office of Faith Formation will communicate with parents on a regular basis, usually by email or by sending letters home with students. It is important that any changes to your phone numbers, email address or home address be communicated at the earliest convenience so that you will not miss any important notifications regarding the faith formation objectives of our program.

Assessment

All levels are assessed both *informally* and *formally* throughout the instructional year. Assessment may include verbal and written reviews as well as optional alternative assessments. Parents will be contacted by the Coordinator of Faith Formation if there are concerns regarding the formation of your child.

Photographs

Throughout the instructional year photographs of the children in our faith formation program may be taken during various activities. At times, we may use these photos for promoting the faith formation program. St. Rose of Lima Parish reserves the right to take and use pictures of the children enrolled in Faith Formation classes. **If parents request that their child not be photographed during class time, the request must be signed on the Student Safety and Consent Form and received by the Office of Faith Formation by October 15. Emails will not be accepted.**

Dress Code

Appropriate clothing must always be worn. When necessary, students will be reminded of the following guidelines once. If the student continues to disobey the rule, the student will be referred to the coordinator to set up a meeting with the parent.

- No clothing may be worn with suggestive or questionable language or drawings.
- No bare midriffs or any shirt/top that exposes cleavage.
- If shorts are worn to class, they must be no shorter than two inches above the knee.
- No basketball jerseys or see-through mesh unless a T-shirt is worn underneath.
- No sagging pants that expose undergarments.
- No pajamas, bedroom slippers and shower shoes. Heelys, also known as shoe skates, are not permitted in the building.
- Coats and hats are not to be worn inside the church or classroom. Hoods may NOT be worn inside the church or parish/school.
- No chains or any attire that could be used as a weapon.
- Baseball caps should be removed when the student enters the school or church.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, selling or distributing of any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance, Vaper or electronic cigarette, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, or injection. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property or at parish sponsored events will be immediately suspended from the program. A conference with the student, parent, Pastor, and the coordinator is mandatory for re-admittance into the program. Any student selling or distributing will be turned over to the local authorities.

Custody Issues and Orders of Protection

Where there is an order of protection in effect, a copy of such must be submitted to the Office along with a photo of the party identified in the Order. The parent or guardian must provide a list of names of those persons allowed to pick up the child. This list must bear a notarized signature of the parent or guardian. Any authorized adult picking up the child must present photo I.D. to the Catechist. If the Catechist sees the person referred to by the Order of Protection, the police will be called immediately.

Home Schooling/Home Study

There is no home study permitted unless due to a health condition or your child is presently being tutored at home by the school district and is unable to attend class in a communal setting. If for any reason we cannot accommodate your family scheduling needs, we will assist you in contacting one of our neighboring parishes to find a suitable Faith Formation Program for your children.

Conduct/Discipline Policy

All students are always expected to exercise self-control and conduct themselves properly. They are expected to respect the property of the school, the classroom reserved for their use, and the teacher and student materials within the classroom. In addition to these most basic expectations, the following discipline policy shall be followed by our students:

- We always expect courtesy and respect from our students. That respect should always be shown to the catechists, parish priests and staff members of our program. In addition, students are expected to treat their fellow classmates with compassion and respect as they journey in faith alongside each other. We will take any accusation of bullying seriously. Parents should contact the coordinator immediately if they feel that their child is in a situation whereas they have or may become a victim of bullying.
- Students are expected to display a Christian attitude in the way they dress, speak, and behave. That attitude extends to all aspects of their lives and encounters with others.
- Students must avoid any behavior that is disruptive to the learning environment. Gum chewing or candy eating is not permitted during class or when the children attend parish sponsored activities, prayer services and mass.
- Students are not permitted to have any hazardous items/materials in their possession while at church or class.
- Cell phones must be off while the children are in the building. If usage of a cell phone is not curtailed after a verbal warning by the catechist or program coordinator, the phone will be confiscated by the catechist and a parent/guardian will be required to retrieve it from the Faith Formation Office after class.
- All hand-held electronic devices (IPODS, handheld game systems) must be left at home.

The Coordinator of Faith Formation shall use reasonable judgment in responding to student misconduct and accusations. The first instance of student misconduct may warrant a verbal warning unless the action is serious enough to require parental involvement. If the Coordinator feels that the misconduct is serious, the student will be removed from the class and the parent will be called immediately to pick up his/her child. The Coordinator and the Pastor may determine that it is necessary to remove a student from the program entirely.

Our volunteer catechists are the backbone of our ministry, and we are fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers. These individuals have responded to the catechetical mission of the Church by their active participation in our ministry. Please remind your child(ren) that these faith-filled volunteers give freely of their time to enhance and enrich the faith formation of our parish children. Encourage your child to see that in their presence in our ministry, they are living out the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ that we are each called to. As always, we thank our catechists for continuing to represent the Church in a special way by sharing their talents and faith as a dedicated St. Rose of Lima catechist!

The Office of Faith Formation