

Lifelong Faith Formation Handbook For St. Louis Bertrand and St. Mary's Catholic Churches

Preschool thru Post-Confirmation and All Adults

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Faith Formation Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Faith Formation Program is:

- To assist the parents by giving parents knowledge, teaching aids, help and faith building opportunities in order for them to educate their children in the Catholic faith
- To nourish the lives of families, students and catechists by building a strong moral and spiritual foundation
- To increase knowledge of our religious fundamentals and inspire the growth of sacramental awareness

The Churches of St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's view Faith Formation as a total parish experience that engages not just the child, but also parents, adults, families, catechists, clergy, and other religious leaders that form our parish community of faith. The Faith Formation program reflects an integrated learning experience comprised of catechetical instruction in traditional Catholic doctrine, prayer, biblical studies, liturgy, sacramental preparation, service, and the understanding and development of Catholic moral values. Furthermore, the Faith Formation program exists to **assist** parents in their responsibility of forming their children in the Catholic faith into which they have been baptized. This is according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 543, 2252: **"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children in the faith, prayer, and all virtues. They have the duty to provide as far as possible for the physical and spiritual needs of their children."**

Faith Formation Offices

The Faith Formation Offices for St. Mary's and St. Louis Bertrand are located in St. Mary's Church at 645 3rd Avenue SE, Milaca, MN.

Policies of the St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation Program

Administration

Anti-Discrimination

The Faith Formation Program of St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Parishes will comply with federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination.

Mandated Reporters

Guarding the dignity of all members of the parish community is a priority for all catechetical leaders. Any form of demeaning behavior has no place in any Faith Formation program. Staff members and volunteers of St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation Program are required by Minnesota State Law to report if they know or have reason to believe a child is being neglected or abused or has been within the last three years.

Implementations:

1. The report is to be made by phone and a written report made within 72 hours of the verbal report.
2. The report is made to County Social Services or a Law Enforcement Agency.
3. Anyone who reports in good faith is immune from any civil liability.

Neglect is defined as:

- Failure to provide necessary food, clothing, shelter, education or medical care.
- Failure to protect a child from conditions or actions that endangers the physical or mental health of the child.

Abuse is defined as:

- Any physical or mental injury or threatened injury by a person responsible for the child's care.
- Physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment.

Support, Supervision and Evaluation of Catechists

All Catechists will have the support of the Director of Faith Formation. The Director of Faith Formation (DFF) will supervise all Catechists:

- To set broad guidelines as to what Catechists are to accomplish.
- To set a guideline of curriculum.
- To set Sacramental expectations
- To oversee material being taught is in communion with the Catholic Church.

Role and Expectations of the Catechist

A catechist is a person of faith who has been called to communicate God's love by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and creating an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in faith among the members of our parish. Catechists are commissioned to teach the truths of the Catholic faith and will follow the official church teachings. Catechists must also realize the importance of living our Catholic Faith in attending Mass, in participating in the Sacraments, and in how they live daily.

Our church values the ministry of the catechist and views them as an essential element to the catechetical mission of our parish. All catechists must be registered as volunteers at St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's parishes. They are provided with initial and ongoing training in order to ensure a high quality of Faith Formation.

The code of conduct for all those participating as volunteers in the St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation Program is one of Christian kindness, respect, hospitality, and caring for others. It is our goal that each volunteer and participant act as a witness of Jesus' love and respect for all people, places, and things.

General Classroom Guidelines:

- Catechists are to follow the curriculum guidelines and time schedules set out by the DFF.
- They are to supervise their classes at all times (classes should NEVER be left alone without an adult in supervision.)
- Catechists will follow discipline policy as set by the Faith Formation Program.

Privacy and Confidentiality (Catechist — Student)

When a student confides in a Catechist, that information is to be kept confidential, unless it falls under the classification of Mandated Reporting or could seriously hurt another person. When this happens, the DFF will be brought into the situation.

When a Catechist confides in another Catechist or the DFF, that information should be kept in confidence unless it falls under the classification of Mandated Reporting or could seriously hurt another person.

Rights to Non-Custodial parents

St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation Program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, we will provide the non-custodial parent with unofficial copies of records. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the catechetical leader with an official copy of the court order.

Communication and Concerns

Parents should communicate to the DFF any questions or concerns regarding their child's faith formation. Parents are encouraged to establish a relationship with their child's catechist. The name of each child's catechist will be provided to parents at the beginning of the school year.

Governance

Pastor:

The Pastor is overall head of the parish. Provides Sacramental services to the program and consults with the Director of Faith Formation.

Role of the Director of Faith Formation:

The Director of Faith Formation is responsible for the development, implementation, administration and evaluation of the parish Faith Formation Program while striving to create a better understanding and support of Catholic education in our parish. Additionally, the DFF has the overall responsibility of implementing the principles of civil law concerning the safety of students in the Faith Formation Program. As part of this responsibility, the DFF is responsible for carrying out the provisions set forth in the St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Handbook. On a regular basis, the DFF, with the assistance of the parish priest, will review and update the Handbook.

ROLE OF THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

Parents/Guardians are a child's first and enduring teachers. **Parents/Guardians play a crucial role in helping their children learn and are expected to take the primary role in their child's faith formation. It is essential to the child's growth and development in the Catholic faith that the parent/guardian live the life of faith at home.**

The **parent/guardian** has the **primary and sacred responsibility to educate their child/ren in the Catholic faith.** The St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation Program is established to assist them in this responsibility.

Children's growth and development in the Catholic faith depends on the parents/guardians outwardly living lives of faith. The effectiveness of the Faith Formation process radically depends upon this parental involvement in faith.

Children learn in faith formation class that celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday in their local parish as a community of faith is essential to being a Catholic. **Therefore, children must attend the weekly Sunday or Saturday evening liturgy supported by their parents/guardians.**

The values of parents/guardians form the values of the child. When children do not experience what is being taught in Faith Formation classes at home, they receive a "mixed message" which can cause inner conflict for children.

Parents/Guardians:

- Act as the primary educators of their child.
- Initiate their child into the sacramental life.
- Serve as role models for their child by being moral Christians.
- Help their child in forming a good conscience and a Christian code of morality.
- Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with their families.
- Participate in meetings, activities and prayers that are planned to help their child prepare for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- Encourage their child to continue learning more about their faith as they mature.
- Help their child understand service projects are the beginning of a life committed to Christian service.

ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Students are expected to:

- Attend class regularly.
- Participate in class activities and discussions.
- Learn assigned prayers for each grade level.
- Attend and participate in planned church visits and liturgical celebrations that are scheduled by the Director of Faith Formation
- Respect their catechist and classmates at all times
- Respect the property of others
- Finish food or drinks before coming to class.
- Accept responsibility for his/her conduct or actions: no abusive language, fighting, vandalism, stealing, or disrespect will be tolerated.

Safety and Classroom Policies

Transportation

Transportation to off-site educational or faith formation events will be provided in a safe manner. Each driver and/or chaperone is to be given a copy of the itinerary including the route to be followed, a summary of his/her responsibilities and a statement of the educational or faith formation purpose of this trip. A master list is to be made of the names of the students riding in each vehicle.

Faith Formation Sponsored Trips and Activities

If a trip or activity is planned for a catechetical program, the Parent/Guardian Permission Form, Code of Conduct Form and Medical Release Form must be completed by the parent/guardian of each minor who will participate for each trip or activity. **Telephone calls will not be accepted in lieu of written permission forms.** Great care will be taken to ensure the safety of the students during the entire course of the trip/activity, including the provision for appropriate supervision. The trip/activities leader will be required to bring along medical emergency information documents for each student. Only hired buses, vans, etc., which are properly covered by insurance provided by the owner, will be used. There may be situations where volunteers have agreed to use their own vehicles to transport children for various catechetical activities. The volunteers must understand that the automobile insurance policy of the volunteer responds first in the event of an accident (insurance follows the vehicle, not the driver). Field Trip Driver forms must be completed and minimum insurance standards apply.

Discipline Policies

All students must obey the rules set forth by their catechist. We expect all students to act in a kind and courteous manner at all times. In turn, catechists are expected to respect each student. No physical discipline or humiliation on the part of the catechist is ever permitted and will not be tolerated. Unsatisfactory or inappropriate student behavior will also not be tolerated. Disciplinary infractions include, but are not limited to: abusive language, fighting, vandalism, stealing, habitual tardiness or absenteeism, throwing of any objects, possession of dangerous objects, possession of tobacco, possession or use of a controlled substance, leaving the building without permission, or disrespect to a catechist or other student. Catechists are not required to be babysitters nor are they professional educators. They are volunteers who give of their time to pass on the faith to the children of our parish. The following steps will be used to handle discipline problems. A child may be removed from class if the situation does not improve.

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|-------------|--|
| Step One: | Student will be verbally warned and asked to correct behavior. |
| Step Two: | If the student does not correct his/her behavior, the student will be asked to leave the class and the problem will be addressed between the student and catechist. If the student agrees to correct his/her behavior, the student will be allowed back into class. |
| Step Three: | If Step Two does not correct behavior, parents/guardians will be notified and the parent will need to accompany the student in the classroom until an agreement can be made between the DFF, the student and the parent before the student can return to class unsupervised. |

Harassment

St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation Program will not tolerate the harassment of any person and will insist that all persons be treated with dignity and respect. Harassment includes, but is not limited to the following:

- a. Sexual Harassment and/or Violence
- b. Racial Harassment and/or Violence
- c. Religious Harassment and/or Violence
- d. Physical Harassment and/or Violence
- e. Emotional Harassment and/or Violence

Any student found guilty of harassment shall be subject to appropriate discipline policy. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible when harassment has been reported.

Health Services

Injury/Illness Procedure: If student is seriously hurt or becomes ill, he/she will be sent to the office of the DFF. At that time the parent/guardian will be notified to come and pick the student up. If we are unable to reach the parent/guardian, the hospital will be contacted for advice and their recommendations followed.

Immunizations: Should be followed according to the Minnesota School Immunization Law.

Emergency Plan

Fire and Tornado drills may be conducted. When the fire signal is given, everyone must leave the building by the prescribed route. When the tornado signal is given students are to proceed to the assigned shelter area. When the signal is given it is essential that everyone behave in an orderly and calm manner.

Dress Code

Participants are encouraged to dress in a manner that is modest and keeping with Christian values. We believe that neat and proper dress contributes to desirable attitudes and behavior. Vulgar or rude sayings on T-shirts are not appropriate. Parents are asked to cooperate in checking the clothing their children wear to Faith Formation activities. Modesty in dress gives witness to others that our bodies are temples and need to give glory to God. Students may be asked to turn their shirts inside out, to put on a Faith Formation T-shirt until the end of class and/or parents may be called if they are wearing inappropriate clothing.

Tobacco/Alcohol Free Environment

All Parish buildings are smoke/tobacco/alcohol/drug free. Possession of tobacco products by minors on parish property is prohibited. The following conduct by participants in the parish education programs or on parish grounds or at an event off the grounds is prohibited.

- Possession or being under the influence of any narcotic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind. (Use of a drug authorized by a physician for your use during the program hours is not a violation.)
- Possession or use of tobacco/alcohol by students.

Conduct

Under no circumstances will any of the following be tolerated:

- Willful destruction or damage to parish or school property of individuals.
- Stealing.
- Assault or threat to do bodily harm upon a student, a member of the staff, or any employee or official.
- Possession or use of any object that can be reasonably considered a weapon.
- Conduct which endangers the health, safety, welfare, or morals of the students in the program.
- Conduct which disrupts the right of others to obtain an education.
- Willful violation of any administration regulations which have been established.

Electronic Devices

All electronic devices, such as I-pods and video games, will not be tolerated during any Faith Formation Program. Cell Phones must be turned off completely during scheduled events. Students may return a phone call after the scheduled event or during a break. Electronic devices may be taken away from a student and returned after class or at a later time.

Service

Catholic social teaching comes from the belief that the nature of the Triune God is communal and social. We, who are made in God's image, share the same nature and are called to reach out and build relationships of love and justice. We encourage and invite our Faith Formation students to participate in service projects offered by our Director of Faith Formation. St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Catholic Churches cannot be responsible for any accidents to participants doing service projects off the premises.

Arrival at Faith Formation Programs

Participants are requested to arrive at church no more than 15 minutes before the scheduled class or event. Your cooperation in preventing earlier arrivals will be greatly appreciated. Classes begin at 6:15 pm and end at 7:45 pm.

Dismissal from Faith Formation Programs

Students in Preschool thru 6th grade will be released into the open space in the church hall. Parents will come into the hall to pick up their children. If someone other than a parent is picking up a student, a note signed and dated by the parent is needed to release the child. Participants are requested to depart the church no more than 15 minutes after a scheduled class or event ends. Your cooperation in preventing late pick-ups will be greatly appreciated.

Parking/Road/Parking Lot

The parking lots and roads around the churches can be an especially dangerous area for our students so the following rules should apply during any Faith Formation function:

- NO PARKING directly in front of the main entrance to the Parish Center,
- Speed limit in this area is 15 mph.
- Please use extra precaution during the darker winter months.

Registration Policy

No person who desires to enroll in parish programs will be denied on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender or religion.

New people can be admitted at any time during the school year to a parish program. Prior to such admission, the person or parents/guardians and the Faith Formation Coordinator need to reach an agreement regarding all tuition obligations and expectations concerning completion of that school year.

All people who are to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation are to provide the Faith Formation office with an official copy of their Baptismal certificate. If the child was not baptized here, at St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Catholic Churches, an official copy with a raised seal is needed. If you need help, please contact the office. Students are registered in the Faith Formation program by filling out an Information Form. The forms require the parent/guardian to provide an emergency contact. In addition, parents/guardians are asked to provide pertinent information regarding any special needs which may affect the teaching/learning experience for their child (e.g. medical conditions, learning disabilities, custody issues, etc.). **This information will be kept confidential and will be used with discretion.**

Requirements for Registration of New Students

- Completion of an Information Form and Parental Consent for Medical Treatments Form for each family enrolled in the program.
- Payment of tuition.
- Baptismal certificate and First Communion certificate (when applicable).
- Any previous records if child/ren attended a Faith Formation Program in a different parish or diocese.

Registration Requirements for Returning Students

- Completion of an Information Form and Parental Consent for Medical Treatments Form for each family enrolled in the program.
- Payment of tuition.
- Baptismal certificate and First Communion certificate (when applicable).
- Any previous records if child/ren attended a Faith Formation Program in a different parish or diocese.

Materials/Programs

All materials used in The Church of St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation program are cross-referenced to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) and supported by scripture. The four pillars of the CCC are belief, worship, the moral life, and prayer, which are expressed by the creeds, the Mass, the Ten Commandments, and prayer styles. Specific detail on lessons for each grade level is readily available in the Faith Formation Office.

Our Faith Formation program offers instruction for preschool through high school children in the Foreston/Milaca area. The program includes the preparation for the reception of the three sacraments of First Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation. Just as sacraments are integral parts of the Christian life, so too, each grade in the Faith Formation program adds to the development of the Christian life. The overall goal of the program is to provide an environment in which our parish youth can grow in sound Christ-like attitudes and values.

St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation follow the Standards for Kindergarten thru Grade 8 set forth by the Diocese of St. Cloud. These standards may be found on the Diocesan website www.stcdio.org or you may request a copy from the DFF.

Tuition Policy

All families are encouraged to pay yearly fees at a reasonable time. Catechists involved in the program will have their fees reduced. All students are provided with appropriate materials for their grade level, such as textbooks, prayer sheets, Bibles, folders and class schedules. The Faith Formation office will assign children to a class and no changes in a class will be made without consultation with the Director of Faith Formation.

Sacrament Policy

All curriculum level programs must be completed prior to reception of a sacrament.

1. The Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Eucharist will be administered at the second grade level to program participants who have successfully met program expectations at that time.
2. The preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is in addition to the weekly Faith Formation Classes and is completed independently with sponsor and/or parent. Activities at the parish will be required as well.

Attendance Policy

Attendance, Kindergarten thru Post-Confirmation

Regular attendance is expected of all students. Parents are to call the Faith Formation Office or their child's Catechist at least one hour before class if it is known that a student will be absent or tardy. Every effort should be made to have your child attend every scheduled class. Excused absences will be accepted for illnesses and/or family circumstances. **Parents are asked to notify the Faith Formation office in the event their child will be absent.** When a class is missed, parents should obtain the lesson and assist their child in completion of the lesson.

If a student accumulates three (3) absences, parents or guardians will be contacted to discuss the situation and/or to confirm that missed work has been made up at home.

If six (6) or more classes are missed in a year, students will be required to repeat the year unless sufficient understanding of the material is demonstrated to the Director of Faith Formation.

Parish Faith Formation & Learners with Disabilities

St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Parish will provide opportunities for the on-going catechesis and faith formation of all of its members, working with families and

individuals to make provisions and adaptations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in parish programs and events.

Cancellation of Classes/Events

If the Milaca School is closed or closing during the school day due to inclement weather, it is understood that all Faith Formation classes and/or activities are cancelled as well. **In the event of cancellation due to inclement weather following the school day, parents will be contacted by email or the phone number listed.** If parents or guardians are uncomfortable with traveling to and from Faith Formation classes or activities due to inclement weather, please stay home!! Call the Faith Formation Office and inform us of your choice.

Right to Amend

The Director of Faith Formation and Pastor retain the right to amend this policy book for just cause. Parents/Guardians and catechists will be given prompt notification if changes are made.

Faith Formation Standards set forth by the St. Cloud Diocese are available for families to look at upon request in the Faith Formation Office.

In Conclusion

These policies and procedures are meant to make St. Louis Bertrand/St. Mary's Faith Formation Programs a safe and Christian environment for all. Please read the handbook and fill out the *Information Form* provided by the Faith Formation Office. Your signature will indicate that you and your family agree to follow the stated policies and procedures. Return the *Information Form* to the Faith Formation office.