

Saint Patrick's Church

Christian Formation Program for Families

October 2022 Update

This academic year 2022-23 marks the fourth year that we are offering Parent-led Catechesis in our parish. During COVID, Parent-led Catechesis became a blessing for our families because Christian Formation was able to continue at home when we could not gather publicly in church. At the same time, COVID disrupted parish connections and communications; some families lost track and involvement in our parish Christian Formation Program.

As children return to school and parents inquire about sacraments, it is good to revisit what Parent-led Catechesis is about.

Why do we do Parent-led Catechesis at Saint Patrick's? Years prior to offering Parent-led Catechesis, we were experiencing increasing difficulty recruiting parents to teach religious education year after year. When approached, many parents shared their lack of confidence in sharing the faith with their children. Also, some children were merely dropped off to class and they were not seen at Sunday Mass, nor their families actively involved in parish life. Parent-led Catechesis recognizes and

*To live by example
is the most effective
way to teach
the Catholic faith.*

seeks to address these issues and concerns. Through the Parent-led Catechesis, we seek (i) to empower parents in sharing the faith with their children as primary teachers of the faith, and (ii) to promote lived life experience of Christian discipleship among our families.

Does Parent-led Catechesis eliminate the Grades 1-8 Religious Education Program? Absolutely not! It is good to be reminded that

our formation as Christian disciples is life-long. As the Grade 1-8 Religious Education Program sought to provide an understanding of the Catholic faith, Parent-led Catechesis intended to do the same. With Parent-led

*“Life with
Jesus Christ
is a wonderful
adventure.”*

– Pope John Paul II

Catechesis, the presentation of the Catholic faith follows the four pillars of the Catechism: (i) what we believe (the creed), (ii) what and how we celebrate the faith (the sacraments), (iii) how the faith shapes our daily living (Christian morality), and (iv) how we live in relationship with God and fellow disciples (on prayer). In Parent-led Catechesis, families learn about and grow in the faith using resources that are prepared and written with the Catechism of the Catholic Church specifically in mind. In Parent-led Catechesis, families learn and grow in the faith with the Bible and the Catechism at hand.

What does ‘lived life experience of Christian discipleship’ mean? When Jesus called His disciples, He formed them into a community of disciples, that is, the Church. When He called them, Jesus asked them to follow Him. As they followed Him, Jesus

- taught them how to pray,
- taught them about God and His kingdom,
- taught them to live as a community,
- sent them to teach and preach, to heal and serve, through the use of their God-given gifts.

What Jesus did for and with His disciples was something that He did deliberately and purposefully, and it set the tone for how past, present, and future disciples live the life of faith.

How intentional am I in living my life so that it resembles what Jesus did with the first disciples?

Many Christians today may think of the Christian faith as something just ‘between Jesus and me’. We only need to go back to the gospels and other New Testament writings to see that this notion has no biblical foundation at all and, therefore, false. A Christian disciple’s relationship with Jesus and the Church is well-understood by Saint Paul when he talks of Jesus as our Head and we are the many parts that make up His mystical body, the Church.

Can you provide an overview of what the parish offers to our children for Christian Formation? Christian Formation (aka Faith Formation, Sunday School, CCD) begins at Baptism with parents modeling the faith through prayer as family (mealtimes and bedtimes), weekly participation at Sunday Mass, teaching rote prayers, active involvement in parish life, etc.

We offer formal “classes” for children beginning at 3 years old through the program called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS).

As they age out of CGS, around kindergarten or first grade, they transition directly into our Parent-led Catechesis. This is their ongoing formation process that we offer here at St. Patrick's, through grade 7. With Parent-led Catechesis, parents are primary teachers of the faith, and the faith is taught and lived at home and reinforced in the parish.

Then, we offer EDGE, our middle school youth ministry for grades 6-8. This does not

*“Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.”
- 2 Corinthians 9:25*

replace their regular formation but rather supplements it with faith, fellowship, and fun. Once in high school, we transition to LifeTeen youth ministry for grades 9-12.

We also have plenty of opportunities for our children to participate more actively at Sunday Mass. Children who have celebrated First Communion may serve as altar servers at Sunday Mass. And for children who are comfortable speaking in public, they may read at Mass as lector. Parents and children may serve together as altar servers, lectors, and even as ushers. For children who love to sing or play a musical instrument, they are invited to join our Children’s Choir or our music ensembles.

Every month, families are invited to serve at Sunday Mass. These monthly opportunities offer first-hand experiences to those who are interested in liturgical ministries.

At Saint Patrick’s, we are blessed with a Giving Garden, who produces hundreds of pounds of vegetables annually. The produce is enjoyed and appreciated by the many who go to the Victor-Farmington Food Cupboard. Help from families is always welcome at the Giving Garden – preparing the beds in spring, planting, weeding, harvesting, bringing produce to the food cupboard, and clean-up in the fall.

Thank you, parents and children, for your active involvement in our parish. God bless you.

- Donna DeJoode and Father Edison
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