

Christian Formation Program

Expectations and Frequently Asked Questions

Why has Saint Patrick's adopted a Parent-led Catechesis (PLC) model rather than the weekly drop-off classroom model?

From our past experience leading to 2016, each year was becoming more and more difficult to get catechists to help teach religion classes. The primary reason that parents gave us was "I do not feel comfortable teaching the faith to my child." While it is a concern that catechists were getting harder to find, *it is a more serious concern that parents, who are first teachers of the faith to their children, felt inept to share the faith with their children.*

Around the same time, the research by the Notre Dame sociologist, Christian Smith, was becoming available. Smith studied young adults who journeyed from their teenage years. He found that among the young adults who continue to practice their faith, these three factors were consistently present:

- 1. Participation in the Sunday Worship**
- 2. The Witness of the parents in practicing the faith, and**
- 3. Family faith-sharing at home**

We acknowledge your desire to share the faith with your children. Let us work together to make this happen and to do it in **a manner that is transformative and lasting**. With the PLC model,

- we acknowledge the impact of parental witness on their children, and we hope to help equip parents so as to become comfortable in sharing the faith with their children.
- we hope that faith-sharing becomes important part of daily life at home.
- parents need not be theologians but must be willing to share their love for God and the Christian faith with their children. The Christian faith is one of the most beautiful gifts that parents can impart on their children.

Who can participate?

All parish families with children aged Preschool to 7th grade. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is open to children aged 3 and 4 years old. At 8th grade, students begin preparation for their Confirmation, which is a two-year program and builds on the PLC experience.

How frequent are the PLC meetings?

It is an expectation for families to participate in two meetings a month: one, in the Parents' Sessions, and two, Large Group Sessions. The Parents Sessions and the Large Group Sessions each last about two hours. We ask you to put the schedule on your calendar asap to avoid conflicts with other events. It is respectful to come on time and to leave only at the end of the sessions.

What happens at the Parent Sessions and the Large Group Sessions?

During Parents Sessions, parents meet as a group led by the director. Their children go to leveled classrooms where they will review the lesson of the previous month with help from a catechist. The Parent Session goes over the material that families will learn about that month and will give parents resources and strategies for teaching it. At the Parents Sessions, parents also learn from each other how they go about teaching the material.

In the Large Group Sessions, families participate together in faith-focused activities prepared by the director. Activities can range from liturgical year activities (like making an Advent wreath), Bible Story presentations, crafts and games, or celebrating a saint's feast day. The activities are fun and engaging, and they have an added benefit of introducing families to each other and growing in the community.

How many sessions must my family attend?

Hopefully, every session. We hope that you look at every session as an opportunity for you and your family to encounter Christ and experience His love through other families. May every session be informative and transformative for your family. If and when there is a session that you will miss, please communicate with the directors as soon as possible.

How about our participation at Sunday Mass?

To fulfill the Sunday obligation is to fulfill the Third Commandment and Jesus' commandment at His Last Supper, "Do this in memory of Me!"

Through the PLC, we get to learn about God, Jesus, and the Christian faith. By celebrating the sacraments, like the Eucharist or Mass, we get to really encounter God and Jesus. We hope this image helps: participation in Christian Formation Programs is like knowing the information on the cereal box. Participation in the sacraments, like the Eucharist or Mass, is actually eating the cereal. It is by our active participation in the life of the Church that we grow as Christian disciples.

Thank you for choosing Saint Patrick's Church as your parish. The heart of our Catholic faith is our celebration of the Sunday Mass together as a parish family.

How long does my child need to be enrolled in the PLC to be eligible for First Penance and First Communion?

The Diocese of Rochester sets the expectation that starting in their 1st grade year, a student preparing for First Communion will be enrolled in their Parish Christian Formation program and complete 2 full years prior to reception of the Sacrament. If a student attends a Catholic school that offers preparation, they may only need to be included in the additional Sacramental Preparation. It is helpful to be familiar with the expectations set by the diocese in order to understand the expectation of the parish:

<https://oec.dor.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/Sacramental-Policies-Diocese-of-Rochester.pdf>

What does the preparation for First Penance and First Communion look like?

Your child's remote preparation for these sacraments happens now. Your child must see you regularly celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Even now, commit your family to being present at Sunday Masses, if not yet done. If you are not participating in the celebrations of the Sunday Mass at Saint Patrick's, please speak with Father Edison asap. Know that what your child sees as important to you, will become important to them.

Immediate Preparation happens on your child's second year of participation in the PLC. Around April and May, you and your child will participate in two retreats, one for First Penance, and another for First Communion. Each retreat is about six hours.

Additional Information

Research is showing that the traditional CCD model of Catechesis is no longer sufficient to form Catholics well. A landmark study of American teenagers lead by Christian Smith of Notre Dame, had the following findings:

The National Study of Youth and Religion Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers (2005) The Research in a Nutshell. This landmark study on the faith lives of American teenagers reveals that while a majority identify with a religious congregation, many adolescents:

1. Lack the ability to speak articulately about their faith;
2. Believe that religion itself is not terribly important to daily life; and
3. Subscribe to a watered-down belief system that the authors call Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

(https://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0042/5177/NationalStudyYout_Religion.pdf)

If we hope for our children to maintain a faith life as they get older, it is up to all of us to shift our understanding of Catechesis. As primary educators of their children, parents are responsible for the formation of their children with the help of the Parish. “CCC paragraph 2223-Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children.” Many parents feel ill-equipped to teach their own children the faith. But the truth is, you have been teaching your child from the moment of their birth! You taught them to love, you taught them to speak, you taught them what’s ok to put in their mouths, you taught them how to walk, and you taught them not jump on their brother or sister. And you can teach them the faith. You will be given resources and support in this journey and the fruit of this model will benefit you all as a family.