



Saint Clare of Assisi

CATHOLIC CHURCH

2020-2021 Pre K-5th Grade Faith Formation Handbook

Our mission:

To help you form your children into disciples of Christ.

This is the mission of all our faith formation activities.

† Welcome and Congratulations!



You and your family have made the decision to educate and form your child(ren) in the ways of loving, knowing and following our Savior Jesus Christ. You do so through the fullness of the Christian faith, that is, the Catholic Church. As your parish family, we stand with you and by you to encourage, support and love you. We all want to be pleasing to the Lord and accepting of his

WE'RE
HERE
FOR YOU

holy will. Let us all strive to become saints!

This handbook outlines the policies and procedures for our Faith Formation program for grades Pre-K through Fifth. If you have questions or concerns, please let us know.

God's many blessings to you and your loved ones!

Father Gregory West, Pastor

† Catechetical Experiences at Saint Clare of Assisi

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Level one for ages 3-5 years

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori-based religious education program. It was derived from the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori who was a devout Catholic and who dedicated a lifetime to observing the natural development of the child. She emphasized the need for a specially prepared environment and hands-on learning experiences to aid children's learning. To this day, Montessori schools can be found throughout the world, offering a different type of educational philosophy.



After her death, her methods were perfected and formed into the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) program. CGS is used worldwide by the Missionaries of Charity, the Dominican Sisters, and thousands of parish communities. As Catholics, we believe that each child has an innate spirituality and a unique relationship with God. The adult should assist the growth of this relationship but is directed by the Spirit of God within the child. In CGS, we give the child a space of his/her own (called "The Atrium") where he/she is encouraged to foster this relationship through the use of hands-on materials. The child is shown how to "work" (setup and manipulate) the materials and then given the opportunity to experience them as long as he/she wants. In this way, he/she is not just memorizing information, but truly contemplating the mysteries of our Faith.

Clare's Kids

Clare's Kids is a youth ministry-style faith formation program for grades 1-5. Students enjoy worship, games, music, prayer, fellowship, fun, and service!

Part of our new CLAREity night for families and others who desire to engage in learning and worship together, Clare's Kids integrates fun and formation with worship and service, discipling our

children and preparing them to take their place as active members of the body of Christ. Every month starts with an intergenerational Mass in which the children and youth are active participants and leaders. The second and fourth weeks the children engage in age-appropriate learning and fellowship activities, and the third week they focus on worship and prayer through adoration, reconciliation, rosary and other prayer experiences, and preparation for their roles in the monthly Masses. When we have a fifth Wednesday, opportunities for family fun, such as a game or movie night, are offered. Content is not focused on individual



formation, experience, and benefit alone. Clare's Kids, with the Edge nights for middle school youth and the adult formation opportunities for adults, emphasizes each person's responsibility to the body of Christ and the mission of the Church in the world. Faith formation is tied to service through integrated service projects and encouragement for children, with their families, to participate in Service on Saturdays (SOS) opportunities.

While attendance at Clare's Kids is not mandatory, and we don't have a maximum number of absences, the more your student attends, the more fun they will have and the more they will learn about our faith and what it means for they way they live, act, and serve as part of the body of Christ.



Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

Our parish requires a two-year preparation program for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Generally speaking, year one preparation is for first grade students in non-Catholic school, and year two is for second grade students in either Catholic school or non-Catholic school. We also offer a class for older students to receive the sacraments. First and second grade students in sacramental preparation are encouraged to participate in the rich and formative Clare's Kids program as well!

We offer an approach that is centered on the family and their journey with the child in sacramental preparation and faith





formation. Rather than weekly classes in a classroom setting, parents guide their children in weekly study for 30–45 minutes in a home setting. A complete curriculum and resources are provided to each family, and a parish *catechist-shepherd* is available to you to answer questions, to guide you in making this special time with your children fruitful and enriching, and to track the progress of your child through the preparation.

Once per month, at least one parent and their student are required to attend class with the catechist-shepherd and other families in your group where special topics are emphasized, fun activities are included, assignment assessments collected for the month, and opportunity is given to ask questions and share experiences.

A mandatory First Communion rehearsal will still be held for all year two students.

A family-centered approach deepens the role the domestic church plays in the faith formation of each child, providing opportunities for the entire family to learn, pray, and grow in relationship with Christ. Providing flexibility for instruction in the home with fewer class sessions is also intended to reduce the burden on busy families for whom weekly classes can become more a burden than a joy. The support of your catechist-shepherd and other families in your group offers opportunities to connect your experiences as a family with the body of Christ and to find resources to assist you as you prepare your child for their encounter with Christ through the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

Non-Catholic School Students

Students enrolled in non-Catholic schools receive their preparation for the sacraments through weekly sessions in a family setting and monthly classes with their catechist-shepherd. We hold the monthly sessions for year one and year two students on Sunday mornings.

Catholic School Children

Students receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation in their parish and not in the school they attend. Since much of the catechetical preparation is done while in Catholic school, students in Catholic schools meet four times in their grade two year for sacrament preparation, joining the other students and their families for important sessions with their catechist-shepherd.

Students needing preparation for Baptism, First Reconciliation and/or First Holy Communion in grades three to five, please contact the parish office.



† Attendance Policy

Mass

Weekly participation in Mass is a fundamental and necessary factor in deepening your child's faith and equipping him/her for discipleship. Parents who sign up their children in our Faith Formation program commit to living this out as a family.

Weekly Faith Formation at Home

Central to your child's formation are the weekly sessions that will be completed at home. The provided curriculum includes assessments for each session that are focused as much on helping your child reflect on their growing relationship with God as they are on assessing their knowledge, and it is very important that they are completed and reviewed with them. The weekly assessments are to be submitted to your catechist-shepherd before or at the monthly Family Faith Formation sessions. **Failure to complete and submit any more than five assessments on time may result in the need for the student to repeat the year.**

Monthly Faith Formation sessions

Rather than weekly classes, **enrolled students and at least one parent are required to attend a session held once each month.** These sessions provide focused instruction, engaging activities, and an opportunity to share experiences and ideas and to ask questions to help you with your formation at home. Because the number of monthly sessions are limited, our parish observes the following attendance policy:

1. A maximum of two absences is allowed per year for any reason.
2. Students who miss more than two classes per year for any reason will be required to repeat the year.
3. If a student misses a class due to travel plans or vacation, the absences go toward the two allowed absences and are not considered excused.
4. Missed classes for sports or other extracurricular activities, even with advance notice, is not considered excused.

ATTENDANCE POLICY SUMMARY

Mass—every weekend and Holy Day of Obligation. It's what God expects.

Faithful faith formation at home—30-40 minutes each week following the provided curriculum. **All home sessions must be completed and the assessments submitted to the catechist-shepherd at or before the joint session for that month.** Failure to complete and submit any more than five assessments on time may result in the need for the student to repeat the year.

Family faith formation sessions with the catechist-shepherd (monthly)—all sessions are mandatory. Because there are fewer class sessions each year, only two absences are allowed. If a known conflict exists, arrangements must be made to submit the written assessment from the weekly home sessions to your catechist-shepherd. If the session is missed unexpectedly, arrangements should be made to submit those assessments as soon after the monthly family session as possible.

First Communion rehearsal for year two students—mandatory.

5. In the event of a prolonged illness that results in several absences, please contact the parish office.
6. Parents may choose to opt out of the required "Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety" class. Absence from this class is not counted among the five absences.

Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety—this class is required for all Faith Formation Classes by the Diocese of Charleston. Parents may opt out of the class. Refer to instructions when completing your registration.

Children and parents arriving up to 15 minutes late are marked as tardy. Three tardies equal one absence. Children and parents arriving more than 30 minutes late are considered absent.

First Communion Rehearsal for Year Two Students (mandatory)

Our First Communion rehearsal will start 12:15 pm and will end at 1:30 pm in the Bishop England PAC (Performing Arts Center) where Mass is held. The First Communion rehearsal is a **mandatory** part of our First Communion prep program for all Catholic school and non-Catholic school students in year two. **Each child and one parent is required to attend the rehearsal.** Missing the First Communion rehearsal could result in a child's delay of the reception of the sacrament.



Special First Communion Year Two Requirements for Catholic School Students

Catholic Students are required to attend only four specific monthly Family Formation sessions, which are mandatory for **at least one parent and the enrolled student.** A schedule of those four sessions will be distributed to enrolled students and their parents with their registration and posted to the parish web site.

Because only four sessions are required for year two Catholic school students, **Catholic school students can miss only one class. If the student misses more than one class, they may be required to repeat the year.**

† Registration

Registration is available online at clare.church. Payment is due at the time of registration and can be paid online. Baptismal certificates must be on file in the parish office for every child enrolled in Faith Formation. If you have not yet submitted a copy of the certificate, there is a place to upload on the registration form.

Online Orientation

With registration, an online orientation with video and other orientation materials is provided and mandatory. You will be directed to where you can access the orientation videos and complete a small form confirming that you have received the orientation information.

† Tuition

Tuition schedule for the 2020-2021 school year

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.....	\$75 per student
Year 1 non-Catholic school students.....	\$75 per student
Year 2 non-Catholic school students.....	\$75 per student
Catholic school students in First Communion year 2.....	\$30 per student
Clare's Kids	\$75 per student

† Class Arrival/Dismissal

Your children's safety is of the utmost concern to us. For those classes in which parents are not to join their children, parents are to bring their children **to the classroom** and **pick them up from the classroom**. Children will be released only to a parent/guardian or a designated person. The registration form has a place to enter the name and phone number of additional people allowed to pick up your child.

Parents must sign students in and out.

Please be on time to pick up your children at the end of class. Do not pick your child up before the children are released at the end of class.

† Communications

We use the Mailchimp email platform for important updates. Please check your email's spam folder if you are not receiving our parish bulletin or Faith Formation emails.



† Emergency Closing

If we need to cancel Faith Formation classes for any reason, we will send out an email.

† Cell Phones

Students may not bring cell phones to class. Phones brought to classes will be kept by the catechist and returned at the end of class. We will provide a number for you to call in the case of an emergency.



† Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety

Every parish in the Diocese of Charleston is required to offer a class on "Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety" each year to all students. If parents would like to opt out their child from this class, they must complete the opt-out form online with their registration.

† Expectations of Behavior

Our goals encourage Christian attitudes and growth in self-discipline. We are a community based on the shared acceptance of the message of Jesus Christ. We expect the following from our students:

- Students will be respectful of themselves and others, especially adults. The use of "Yes, Ma'am," "No, Ma'am," "Yes, Sir," and "No, Sir" is expected.
- Students will respect the rights of other students to learn and the catechist's responsibility to teach.
- Students will contribute in a positive manner to the learning environment.
- Students will follow the overall class procedures.

If a student displays conduct disruptive to Faith Formation volunteers or another student, **the catechist will give the student the opportunity to change his/her unacceptable behavior.** If the unacceptable behavior continues, the student will be asked to confer with the catechist and parents after class.

If the unacceptable behavior continues during another Faith Formation class, the parents will be notified of the need for a conference with the Director of Faith Formation. Should the unacceptable behavior continue after the conference, the student will be readmitted to class only with a parent joining them until such time as the unacceptable behavior stops.

† Attire

Students are to maintain a modest appearance. This appearance may be casual, but respectful. Appropriateness of attire will be determined by the catechist in consultation with the Director of Faith Formation.

† Special Child Custody Situations

It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide copies or documents to the parish office related to child custody and restraining orders, if applicable, and to personally make the Director of Faith Formation and catechist aware of any unique concerns related thereto.

† Special Needs & Learning Disabilities

We highly encourage you to share with us if your child has a learning disability or special need so we can best help your child learn while they are in our Faith Formation programs. If you would like, please feel free to arrange a meeting with the Director of Faith Formation to discuss how we can help your child excel in their Faith Formation class.

† Role of the Parents in Faith Formation

We, the parish, alone cannot teach your children everything they will need to become disciples of Christ.

A common assumption in our culture is that the teaching of the faith is mostly the responsibility of the school or parish. However, our faith teaches that **parents are the primary catechists to their children.**

Parents teach not only with their words but often, more importantly, with their attitudes and actions. Children learn about the world, others, and themselves from the ways their parents approach each of these. Recently, a study conducted by the National Study on Youth and Religion found that **the majority of teenagers named their parents as their number one spiritual influence.**



Saint John Paul II often referred to the family as **“the domestic Church”** because parents provide a child’s first and primary example of faith. Catholicism is seen in such a home as a way of life which pervades all moments of one’s day rather than an obligation to be fit into one’s weekend schedule.

When parents present their children to be baptized, the priest or deacon asks if they understand the great role they have.

“You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” The parents answer, “Yes.”

This means that parents **promise** to bring their children to Mass each and every weekend as well as every Holy Day. They **promise** to nourish their children in the faith of the Catholic Church through faith formation and the sacraments.

This Baptismal promise also implies that parents will go as a family to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.

Parents also promise **to be good stewards of this parish**. They will model by their actions and attitudes a sense of joy and charity about sharing their God-given gifts—time, talent, and treasure with the parish community and the community at large. Recognizing that everything we have comes from God, parents understand that we are but stewards (caretakers) of these gifts and our ultimate responsibility is to share them with others. Children will naturally learn this joy of sharing as their parents engender in them and model for them the importance of stewardship.

We want to partner with you and support you in this mission you have taken on in bringing up your children in the faith. All that we offer in both Children's and Adult Faith Formation is focused on this goal.

† Service Opportunities for Parents

Opportunities for service, both in the classroom and outside of it, will be offered each year. Look for those opportunities within each program and in other parish announcements.

**We are excited to see what the Lord
will do this year in your child's life!**

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

-Colossians 1:9-10