



Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
Religious Education Handbook 2023-24

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Blessed Sacrament Church Religious Education Calendar 2023-2024

Week #	Sunday 10:30-11:45 AM	Wednesday 7-8:15 PM
1	September 10- First Day	September 13- First Day
2 <small>SAFE ENV LESSONS: 1st,5th- 8th</small>	September 17	September 20
3	September 24	September 27
4	October 1	October 4
5	October 15	October 11
6	October 22	October 18
7	October 29	October 25
8	November 5	November 8
9	November 12	November 15
10	November 19	November 28
11	December 3	December 6
12	December 10	December 13
13	January 7 Return	January 10 Return
14	January 21	January 17
15	January 28	January 24
16	February 4	January 31
17	February 11	February 7
18	February 25	February 21
19	March 3	February 28
20	March 10	March 6
21	March 17	March 13
22	April 7 Return	March 20
23	April 14	April 10 Return
24	April 21	April 17
25	April 28 FINAL CLASS	April 24 FINAL CLASS

- **Confirmation Retreat:** Sat., Oct. 7, 1-8 PM
- **Confirmation Rehearsal** Sun., Oct. 22, 6:30 PM/ **Confirmation Mass** Mon., Oct. 23, 7:00 PM
- **First Reconciliation** Saturday, January 27, 2024, 9-11 AM
- **First Communion Rehearsal** Sunday, April 14, 6:00-7:30 PM
- **First Communion** *(opportunity to select choice of date will be given in January 2024)* OPTION 1: Saturday, April 20, 10 AM **OR** OPTION 2: Saturday, April 27, 10 AM

Faith Formation Mission

“[T]he definitive aim of catechesis is to put people...in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ...” – Catechesis Tradendae, John Paul II, ¶ 5

We thank you for entrusting us with forming your child in our Faith. We recognize that as parents, you are your child’s primary teacher of Faith, and we are honored to collaborate with you in putting your child in communion with Christ.

Be assured that our program is faithful to Christ’s teaching, relying upon the Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and guided by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church (the Magisterium). We ensure that the Faith is delivered without error, in its entirety and unity. Our catechesis is Christocentric, Theocentric, content-based, integrative, age-appropriate and community-oriented as it informs the Catholic identity of our diverse students. Furthermore, our program fosters an appropriate faithful environment which cultivates a personal relationship with God, through diverse methodologies, teaching aides, and curriculum materials.

Scope of Faith Formation K-8

Adapted with permission from Spirit of Truth Series summaries

Kindergarten: The Blessed Trinity & Holy Family Introduction to the loving goodness of the Blessed Trinity, Holy Family, & Saints. Additionally, why virtue is good and sin is bad, and how to speak to God in prayer.

Grade One: God is Love

Students develop an awareness of God as our Father in Heaven, who created them in His image and likeness, and who loves them unconditionally. Additionally: intro to Mass parts, and reality of sin in connection with the Sacrament of Confession. Continued emphasis on prayer.

Grade Two: Our Life in Jesus

Students focus on how much children are loved by Jesus Christ, and how His death and Resurrection has opened the way to Heaven.

Additionally: parts of the Mass, lives and lessons of the saints, more ways to pray, special focus on the Sacraments of Confession and Eucharist.

Grade Three: Kingdom of God & The Church

Students learn about the Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit and how He guides Her, and how Jesus continues His mission through Her.

Review of the Trinity and all seven Sacraments, prayer and living as children of God, Jesus' Parables of the Kingdom, and Mary as the Mother of the Church.

Grade Four: Jesus Teaches Us How to Live

God's plan to save his people from sin (Salvation History), how we participate in that plan, and the many ways God helps us in our pilgrimage on earth to Heaven through His word, His law, and his Church.

Grade Five: The Sacraments

This year provides an in-depth exploration of God's grace in the Sacraments, with a focus on what a Sacrament is and why Jesus instituted them.

Grade Six: Sacred Scripture

Students spend this year immersed in God's Word in the Sacred Scriptures, and explore how the Bible communicates God's plan of salvation to us.

Grade Seven: Living as a Disciple of Christ

This year includes four units in which middle school students explore the topics of: (a) Jesus and the Gospel message: unifying themes in Scripture and an in-depth examination of the four Gospels; (b) personal growth: the origin, dignity, and destiny of the human person; (c) each of the Seven Sacraments; (d) prayer: its elements, qualities, and challenges, ways of praying, and Mary and the saints as models of prayer. Confirmation prep is begun in this year.

Grade Eight: The Communion of the Faithful

This year includes five units for middle school students to build on their understanding of: (a) personal growth: our vocation to love and our responsibilities to God and each other; (b) morality: conscience formation through prayer and God's gift of an objective moral standard; (c) the Citizen and Government: the natural rights of all persons and the purpose of government; (d) God's Plan for Marriage and the Family: our identity as male and female, purposes and abuses of sexuality, and resisting temptation to avoid sin and grow in virtue. Youth are confirmed in fall of the eighth grade year.

Safe Environment

All program employees, staff, and volunteers who have direct contact with children are subject to a background check and the completion of a VIRTUS seminar.

As part of its policy, the diocesan Office for the Protection of Children & Youth mandates certain lessons regarding safe environment be conducted each year in grades 1, 5, 6, 7, 8. These lessons are conducted in fall of the program year, and we use the Circle of Grace program. Prior to the lessons' being taught, parents for those grades are notified and provided an Opt-Out form if they do not wish their children to participate in the lessons.

Expectations for Our Collaboration

Parish Staff--

- Ensure that volunteer catechists and staff are recruited & trained to create a Christian environment for conducting faith formation
- Ensure that background checks in compliance with diocesan policy for child safety are conducted
- Manage medical, behavioral, or other problems as they arise

Parents--

- Ensure the child's excellent attendance, either in person or online
- Communicate special needs or circumstances to the DRE and/or catechist
- Are encouraged to serve a vital part of the child's faith formation
- Lead a sacramental life by attending Mass or if not possible, by attending Mass virtually

*Faith Formation does not replace the need for the Sacraments--in fact, it is intended to form your child for his/her fullest participation in them. **Your child is still expected to attend Mass**; it is a grave responsibility for all Catholics who have received first Communion to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.*

Students--

Are entitled to receive catechetical instruction which adheres to authentic Catholic teaching.

It is expected that students will abide by the **Code of Conduct**:

- Demonstrate good attendance
- enter ready and eager to learn.

- Show respect to all adults and other students.
- Use only appropriate language at all times
- Respect the property of others
- Participate in class, whether online or in person
- If a student's conduct repeatedly presents concerns which are not improved by simple reminders, the parent will be contacted for assistance. If the conduct in question persists, a conference including the DRE, parents, and (if age-appropriate), the student will be held to determine the path forward. "Expectations for Our Collaboration: Students" lists specific expectations.
- It is assumed that, by consenting to the conduct policy on the registration form, the parent will cooperate with parish staff and volunteers regarding standards of behavior.

Catechists--

- Create a faith-filled, faithful environment for learning
- Will be prepared to catechize the curriculum for the given level, and teach it
- Will be a Christian role model
- Communicate with the parent regarding the child's development in faith

Attendance

Four (4) absences are permitted during sacramental prep years (1st, 2nd, 7th, & 8th grades).

We respectfully request that good attendance be maintained in every year of faith formation. Our catechists are volunteers who plan carefully with the needs of students in mind. Students who regularly miss class tend to have, at best, spotty knowledge of the Faith. Our goal is that they know it well and love it!

Dress Code

Students are invited to dress for comfort. Jeans, sneakers, and sweatpants are fine.

Leggings may be worn if the top is long enough to entirely cover the buttocks.

"Short shorts," low hanging pants, t-shirts with inappropriate language or images, or shirts which are tight or bare the midriff or cleavage are NOT permitted.

Registration

In order to attend the faith formation classes, the family must be registered in this Parish. Please contact the parish office for assistance if you have any questions regarding parish registration.

Registration for faith formation classes is available via the Google Form, available on the parish website. Hard copies are available upon request. Please note that, if you are registering your child for the first time, both birth and baptismal certificates are required. Class registration is on a first-come-first-served basis. All paperwork (proof of Sacraments, registration forms) and registration fees must be submitted for the student to be officially admitted to the program. Scholarships are available.

Classes Age 3 – Grade 8

Children will have to be registered with the Religious Education Office (in the Parish Offices). A fee is charged at the time of registration, and scholarships are available. A copy of the child's baptismal certificate and the dates of any other Sacraments that the child has received should be submitted at the time of registration.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is based on Montessori principles, tapping into the child's natural potential for Faith. Our atrium, Level I, is for ages 3-6. It is only offered on Sundays.

2-year Sacramental Preparation Classes

In order to receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist in Second Grade, the child must have been enrolled in either a Catholic school or FAITH FORMATION program for the First Grade. We conduct a two-year program that begins in the Fall of their First Grade and culminates in the Spring of their Second Grade.

In order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in Grade Eight, the student must have been enrolled in Grade Seven the prior year in either a FAITH FORMATION program or a Catholic school.

Rite of Christian Initiation for Children "Special Sacraments" Classes

This two-year program is designed for children of catechetical age (7 years or older) who have not yet been baptized and who need to receive the Sacraments of Initiation, or for baptized children in grades 3-8 who have not yet received Confession/Penance and Eucharist. If you are planning on enrolling your children, there will be some necessary paperwork required. Children who have been baptized Catholic and "missed" receiving 1st Confession and 1st Communion should attend these classes.

Drop Off/Pick Up Procedures

Names of adults (other than parents) who have permission to pick up your child(ren) may be added to the registration form.

SUNDAY

Please plan to drop your child off no earlier than 10 minutes before class time.

Entry is at the front door of the school. Dismissal is through the same. Children aged fourth grade and older may be dismissed from the classroom with parent permission only, which may be indicated on the registration form.

WEDNESDAY

Please plan to drop your child off no earlier than 10 minutes before class time.

Entry is at the back door of the school, close to the playground. Dismissal is through the same. Children aged fourth grade and older may be dismissed from the classroom with parent permission only, which may be indicated on the registration form.

Emergency Contact Information

Should you have an emergency during a faith formation session and need to contact the Director of Religious Education, please call the parish office at 703.998.6100. The office staff will then contact the DRE.

Inclement Weather Policy

In the event of inclement weather, Blessed Sacrament follows Alexandria City Public Schools for closures. Once the announcement is made, parish staff emails parents and the website is updated, in that order.

Safety Procedures

The Faith Formation program has established procedures for emergency scenarios. Drills for each scenario are rehearsed once a program year, at a minimum.

Fire: Every room has posted an evacuation route for exiting the building. Volunteer catechists lead the students out according to that route, in silence, and all classes proceed to the soccer field (no classes proceed to parking lots, as indicated on some posted routes).

Tornado: Every room has posted a designated area to which the adults and students are to proceed in the event of a tornado.

Bomb Threat: Volunteer catechists lead students out of building, following fire drill evacuation route, and proceed across Braddock Rd to the area behind the Scottish Rite Temple.

Lockdown: Volunteer catechists immediately close blinds for any windows, and ensure that students are as far away as possible from windows. Windows on doors are also covered. The door is locked from within the room, and all remain silent until the “all clear.”

Photo/Video Consent

Parents are given the opportunity to opt out of their children’s being photographed or videographed on the registration form.