

St. Patrick

CATHOLIC CHURCH

FAITH FORMATION

Faith Formation Family Handbook 2025-2026

St. Patrick Parish

4 Valley View Drive, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

Parish Office Phone: (712) 323-1484

Parish Web Site: www.stpatrickcb.org

Office Hours: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday

Faith Formation Staff

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We Are Here to Support Your Family You are the Domestic Church

Your home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the Catholic faith; therefore your family's home is rightly called the "Domestic Church." At the time of each child's baptism, parents accept the responsibility and duty of teaching their child in the knowledge and practice of the faith. At St. Patrick we recognize parents are the primary educators of their children, sharing their experiences, values, stories, customs and faith. We believe that the holiness a child experiences begins in the home long before the child comes to the parish for faith formation classes. Parish Faith Formation assists and supports parents and families in this remarkable task. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "the role of parents in education is of such great importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute," Further... "the right and duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable." As partners with parents, we assist in promoting a solid relationship with God, living life as God calls each one to live.



Our Programs for First Grade – High School

Faith Formation – First Grade through Eighth Grade

Our Faith Formation Program meets weekly at St. Patrick Church. To accommodate all grade levels each Wednesday evening, we offer a two-tiered class start and end time.

Our schedule is:

- Grades 1-4 meet Wednesdays, 5:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m., with a 15-minute snack time in the social hall offered beforehand (from 5-5:15 p.m.)
- Grades 5-8 meet Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m., with a 15-minute snack time in the social hall offered beforehand (from 6:15-6:30 p.m.)

The Faith Formation year kicks off on Wednesday, September 24 at 6:30 p.m. with a mass to celebrate children returning to our classrooms and classes formally begin Wednesday, October 1 (see provided schedule of classes).

First Reconciliation & First Holy Communion Preparation

Preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion is offered during the second-grade year, however, the expectation is that the child attend Faith Formation class or a parochial school during their first-grade year. In addition, **Sacramental Catch-Up Classes** are offered for students who have not received sacraments with their peers. Please contact the Director of Faith Formation, Jill Faust, to register your child for sacramental preparation and for a full calendar of all preparation sessions. Information can also be found on the parish website.

High School Faith Formation and Confirmation Preparation

The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred during the sophomore year of high school. Preparation for the sacrament takes place during the freshmen and sophomore years with classes held twice a month. In addition, freshmen are expected to attend the Freshmen Retreat and sophomores are required to attend both the Theology of the Body Retreat and Confirmation Retreat. Handbooks are distributed to all freshmen and sophomore Confirmation candidates at the start of the formation year and the handbooks outline all requirements/expectations for that year.

Freshmen Parent/Candidate Meeting – Wednesday, September 17, 6:30 p.m.

Sophomore Parent/Candidate Meeting – Wednesday, September 10, 6:30 p.m.

****please note that meeting attendance and candidate expectations are required for all public and parochial school students**

Please contact the Director of Faith Formation, Jill Faust, to register your child for Confirmation and for the Candidate Handbook. Information can also be found on the parish website.

Enrollment Policy

It shall be the policy of St. Patrick Church and its Faith Formation Program and sacramental preparation programs that there be an evaluation of any student entering grades two through ten who was not associated with a youth Faith Formation program or Catholic school in prior years. It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Faith Formation to conduct an evaluation of each applicant to determine the student's level of faith formation and to explain the process for completion of the sacramental preparation. (It should be understood by all families/households of the parish of the obligation to enroll their children, grades 1st-10th, in either the parish Faith Formation program or a parochial school each year as part of the ongoing spiritual formation and religious education for the child. *Skipping years between sacraments is an unacceptable practice*).

Registration and Tuition

Faith Formation Registration forms can be accessed from the parish web site and must be completed for children to participate in Faith Formation sessions. Forms are also available in the parish office and can be emailed or mailed upon request.

No family or child will be turned away for financial reasons. Fee assistance and payment plan options are available. Through the generosity of parishioners, a scholarship fund is available to assist families with defraying these costs. Contact the Director of Faith Formation, Jill Faust, for more information.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance is essential for children to gain the maximum benefit from participation in faith formation sessions. Much care, planning and the time of dedicated volunteers and staff goes into preparing for Wednesday evening sessions. Sports, practices and other extra-curricular activities are not reasons to miss Faith Formation classes on Wednesdays. Parents are expected to make this evening a priority. Excessive absenteeism may result in repeating coursework or postponing a sacrament until preparations are completed. Parents will also be required to meet with the pastor. Special circumstances, such as an extended illness, will be excused. If your child must miss, notify Jill Faust, by phone or email, by 5 p.m.

Accident/Illness

If your child becomes ill or has an accident during a Faith Formation session, the parent/guardian or emergency contact will be notified. Basic first aid will be given and an accident report will be filed. Health information is also collected at the time of registration so staff can be aware of important student needs.

Closings & Cancellations

Emergency closings or cancellations will be announced via email and text message. Since our parish families come not just from Council Bluffs but also from a wide range of area communities, families are reminded to exercise caution based on your own area's weather conditions. If on a Wednesday, and classes at Council Bluffs Public Schools are cancelled or an early dismissal is announced due to inclement weather, then faith formation classes at the parish are automatically cancelled as well. If weather conditions worsen later in the day (4 p.m. or after), catechists may also contact families to ensure the message is received by families. Cancellations and postponement of classes and other events are also at the discretion of the Director of Faith Formation.

Catechists and other Volunteer Needs

There are many ways to be involved in our catechetical programs. Parents and other family members are needed to serve as catechists, assistants, substitutes, hall monitors/door monitors and admin assistants. Catechists, and all of our volunteers from the parish community, offer the richness of our Catholic Tradition in a classroom setting. Catechists are expected to be in good standing with the Church. They are required to complete on-line VIRTUS training and a background check to help provide a safe environment for children. Catechists are also encouraged to participate in faith formation opportunities, in-service meetings, and other offerings that enhance their own spiritual lives and catechetical skills. Please contact the Director of Faith Formation to learn more about volunteering.

Cell Phones/Tablets/Personal Devices/Toys

All personal electronic devices must be out of sight and not in use once students enter the building for catechesis. Youth are strongly encouraged to leave these devices at home. St. Patrick Church is not responsible for the safety of these items. Devices that are out will be held by the catechist, hall monitor or director until the session is over.

Discipline/Behavioral Expectations

In order to foster a Christian atmosphere of hospitality, caring and courtesy and to promote maximum learning in the classrooms, the following guidelines are expected from each child: to respect the authority of the catechists and staff; to respect the other students in the class and to not interfere with their learning; to come each session prepared to learn; and to respect all property. No student will be allowed to interfere with the learning and participation of other students. If behaviors are not able to be corrected in the class by the catechist, the student will be removed from the classroom. If a student is removed from class more than once, parents will be contacted by the Director of Faith Formation. Parents may be asked to attend class with the student. Repeated offenses may result in a student forfeiting the right to participate in the program.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of all of our children are of utmost importance. Please remind children about parking lot safety when arriving and leaving the church premises. Also, only one entrance to the church will be the entry point for youth arriving for classes. A door monitor will be in place throughout class to maintain security.