



FAITH FORMATION

A JOURNEY FOR LIFE

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2017-2018



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Faith Formation Classes are held at
Sacred Heart North Campus
3515 North Florida Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33603
Sunday – 10:30 to 11:30 am
Wednesday – 6:00 to 8:00 pm

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MISSION STATEMENT

Upon saying His final farewell to His apostles, Jesus gave His new church the task to evangelize, that is, to bring the message of the Gospel to all the world (Acts 1:8). The Bishops of the United States have pointed out that the first goal of evangelization is to “bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others” (Go and Make Disciples). The family, then, is the first forum in which the mission of evangelization takes place. Hence, parents are recognized as having the primary responsibility for training their children in the practice of the faith (Gaudium et Spes #48).

Parish Faith Formation sessions assist in this sacred duty by providing opportunities for parents and children to develop their prayer lives and their formal understanding of the faith.

The gift of faith, celebrated in Baptism, must be nourished throughout the entire life of each Christian. The family is rightfully called “the domestic church” and, as such, is the foundation of the wider church community. Religious Education within the Diocese of St. Petersburg serves all the domestic church by offering the guidance and instruction whereby each individual can come to his/her full potential as members of the People of God. Sincere cooperation between the parish and its member families will bring about the goal of evangelizing youth and children; namely, that they grow in understanding and accepting Catholic Doctrine, in their active participation and in awareness of Catholic Liturgical and Sacramental Life, their embracing of the fundamental principles of Catholic Morality and the life of Catholic Prayer (Catechism of the Catholic Church).



REGISTRATION/FEEES

Faith Formation Sessions

1. Faith Formation has an open registration policy throughout the year.
2. Families who wish to enroll children in Faith Formation must be registered parishioners.
3. Parish registration card must be filled out at the time of registration, if not already a registered member.
4. If Sacraments will be received this year, a copy of the Baptismal certificate must be provided at the time of registration, if not already on file.
5. Faith Formation participants must be at least 4 years old by September 1 of the year in which the child is enrolling.

Faith Formation Fees

The cost of the program is as follows:

Registration received:	04/23/17 –	\$63 per child/youth
	06/30/17:	
	07/01/17 –	\$70 per child/youth
	08/31/17:	
	09/01/17 or later:	\$95 per child/youth

The fee pays for the books and supplies and offsets the cost of the teachers' manuals, DVDs, resources, Catechist training and background screening.

Sacramental Preparation Fees

The fee for the materials for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation/Eucharist is \$70. The fee pays for the books, workshop and take home materials, retreat days, certificates, reception and other incidental expenses.

The fee for the materials for the Sacrament of Confirmation is \$110. This includes a fee of \$70 for workshop and take home materials, textbook, certificate, reception and other incidental expenses, and a fee of \$40 that pays for the overnight retreat at the Bethany Center in Lutz, Florida.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 0-6 years | Contact the Parish Office for more information regarding Baptism. |
| 7-17 years | Contact the Director of Faith Formation for more information regarding RCIA Adapted for Children. |
| 18+ years | Contact Fr. Zack Elliott, OFM for more information regarding RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). |

The process of Sacrament Preparation at Sacred Heart is consistent with the guidelines established by the Diocese of St. Petersburg. For those 7 years of age or older, the process consists of no less than one year of Faith Formation sessions, followed by a second year of immediate preparation for reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. Placement in all Sacrament Preparation processes is based on the following criteria in accordance with diocesan guidelines.

First Reconciliation/First Eucharist/Confirmation

1. Families with children 7 years of age or older who have not received First Reconciliation/First Eucharist are eligible to enroll for Sacrament Preparation.
2. Families with children in the eighth grade or older who have not received Confirmation are eligible to enroll for Confirmation preparation.
3. Families of candidates must be registered in Sacred Heart Parish.
4. Proof of Baptism must be provided at the time of enrollment in the Sacrament Preparation process.
5. Children must have completed one year of faithful participation in Faith Formation sessions or Catholic Parochial School **immediately prior** to enrollment. Concurrent enrollment in a Catholic Parochial School or Parish Faith Formation session is required.

POLICIES

Mass Attendance

Parents, when you had your child baptized, you agreed to raise them in the Catholic faith. That means you have the responsibility of attending Mass with your child every Sunday. Faith Formation sessions do not give your child all the knowledge they need; they need the knowledge and grace that is received from Mass. "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God." CCC 1074



Attendance at Faith Formation for Grades PreK-4 through High School

Since each grade level of our Faith Formation Program has its own curriculum focus, children enrolled in the Faith Formation Program should attend every session. Our calendar for the year takes into consideration holiday weekends which allows for family time. If, however, due to illness or family commitments it is necessary for students to be absent, parents should notify their child(ren)'s catechist in advance. In the event of an absence, children and/or parents should check with the catechist to see what was missed. In a non-sacramental year, four absences or more are considered excessive. If a child misses four consecutive sessions without prior notice, he or she will be considered withdrawn from the program unless parents notify us otherwise.

1. Attendance records are in keeping with diocesan policies and help determine eligibility for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation.

2. **Faithful attendance to all scheduled sessions is expected. For Sacramental Programs, regular attendance is required for successful completion of the process.**
3. Children and families are expected to make up any missed work due to absences.
4. Tardiness is a distraction to children, parents and catechists and robs everyone of valuable faith sharing time. Children and parents need to be respectful when entering a group that is already in session.
5. All absences require either a written excuse presented to the catechist or phone call to the Faith Formation Office. Absences can be considered excused only if oral or written communication is provided to the Faith Formation Office.
6. Children who are chronically absent without speaking to a catechist or Director will be dropped from the program.
7. **Regular attendance at Faith Formation sessions is at least as important as regular attendance at school.**

Attendance during Sacramental and Preparation Years

Regular attendance is expected for all grade levels and a special emphasis is placed on attendance during sacramental preparation years, **including the year of remote catechesis prior to the year of sacramental celebration. Attendance is monitored closely.** It is in the best interest of the children preparing for sacraments that all classes be attended without absence.

Please note: Children who do not regularly attend sessions during these years will be considered to not have properly prepared for the reception of sacraments and will be advised to begin the preparation process at a later time when they can make a commitment necessary to be well prepared to celebrate the sacraments.

Arrival and Dismissal

SUNDAY FAITH FORMATION – All children should arrive promptly to class with all necessary texts and materials. All children should be picked up from their classroom no later than 5 minutes after the end of class.

On Sunday mornings, all children in PreK-4 through 12th grade must be escorted to and from their classrooms by a parent/guardian.

If someone other than the parent/guardian will be picking up a student, written notice must be issued to the Faith Formation Office from the parent/guardian granting permission for release from the classroom to the adult.

No child will be permitted to walk to the parking lot unattended.

Any child who is not picked up by 10 minutes after dismissal time will be taken to the Faith Formation Office to wait for his/her parent/guardian. In order to help our fellow parishioners who volunteer their time and talent as catechists and classroom aides, we ask that all parents pick up their children on time.

WEDNESDAY FAITH FORMATION – Sessions begin promptly at 6:00 pm. Families gather in the North Campus Auditorium then break into smaller groups. Families will be dismissed from their group at the conclusion of the workshop.

Dress Code

Children/Youth attending Faith Formation sessions are expected to adhere to the dress code standards outlined by the Hillsborough County Public School system.



Behavior

1. Children/Youth are expected to model their behavior after Jesus Christ who instituted two Great Commandments: "You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind; and to love your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)
2. The following are some guidelines for behavior based upon these simple principles:
 - a. Keep hands feet and other objects to yourself.
 - b. Talk respectfully, no name calling, teasing, cursing, etc.
 - c. Follow directions the first time.
 - d. Bring required materials, supplies and completed assignments to each session.
 - e. Behavior or language that intimidates, belittles, harasses (including harassment of a sexual nature); inappropriate references of physical harm to oneself or others will result in disciplinary action.
3. The fact that a child has been registered in Faith Formation at Sacred Heart Church indicates that its rules and guidelines have been read by parents/ guardians, have been reviewed with the child(ren) by the parents/guardians and have been accepted by the parents/guardians and children. It is to be understood by the parents/guardians and children that severe disruptive behavior by a child will result in disciplinary action and/or a parent/catechist conference and/or removal from the program. Severe disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Refusal to obey directions of catechists or other staff members.
 - b. An established pattern of behavior which is disruptive to the learning environment of the session.
 - c. Threats, assault, battery or physical injury to other children and/or staff members.

- d. Use of profane or abusive language.
- e. Possession or distribution of obscene pictures, magazines, books, music.
- f. Theft, damage or misuse of Sacred Heart Parish property including the North Campus.
- g. False fire alarms.
- h. Possession or use of tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, drugs or narcotics.

In the event a child engages in inappropriate behavior, any or all of the following may occur:

- a. Parental notification of infraction.
 - b. Meeting between parents and catechist and Director of Faith Formation.
 - c. Removal of child from Faith Formation process.
4. The Director of Faith Formation is responsible for ensuring that all sanctions against children are implemented in a fair and consistent manner by the Faith Formation Office and the volunteer staff.
 5. In the event that a parent/guardian is not satisfied with the action taken by a catechist, they may contact the Director of Faith Formation.
 6. If the parent/guardian is unsatisfied with the Director of Faith Formation's action, the matter may be taken to the Pastor for resolution.

Other policies

1. The Faith Formation Office keeps records of a confidential nature: attendance, discipline, last grade completed, address, telephone number, date of birth, sacraments received, marital status of parents, disabilities and emergency contact information.
2. The Faith Formation Office abides by the Privacy Act and will not disclose personal information to third parties without written

permission from the persons involved. Parents and/or guardians have a right to review any records kept by the Faith Formation Office pertaining to their child for any reason.

3. Catechists are provided limited access to personal information as is necessary for them to perform their ministry. Such information would include: last grade completed, disciplinary records, address, phone number, emergency contacts, disability and other information when it is appropriate.
4. The Faith Formation Office abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, we will provide the non-custodial parent with unofficial copies of records when such records are requested. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information give, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide the Director of Faith Formation with an official copy of the court order.



Communication



The Office of Faith Formation will use email as the **PRIMARY** means by which information will be communicated to parents. To ensure delivery of emails to your Inbox, please add us to your Safe Senders List or Address Book.

The Faith Formation office, along with the Church Universal, strives to maintain open communication with all who participate in Faith Formation sessions. We also encourage catechists and parents to keep each other informed of a child's progress through informal contact at the beginning and end of each session.

From time to time, it may be necessary for parents to discuss issues of concern with the catechist or the Director of Faith Formation. In keeping with Church teaching and the Biblical tradition of subsidiary, issues of concern should be resolved at the lowest possible level. Parents/guardians should attempt to resolve any issues with a catechist by first contacting the catechist and discussing the issue.

If satisfactory progress is not made, the parents/guardians may contact the Director of Faith Formation to discuss the issue and request that action be taken. If the parent is not satisfied with the Director of Faith Formation's action, the matter should be taken to the Pastor for resolution.

Hurricane Plan for Program Cancellation

Should a tropical storm or hurricane be forecast to hit our area over a weekend, it may be necessary for Faith Formation sessions to be cancelled. The decision to cancel sessions will be based on the Hillsborough County School System's decision to cancel public school classes the Friday prior to Faith Formation sessions or the Monday after Faith Formation sessions.

Safety

The safety of children is most important to all involved in the Faith Formation sessions. Please cooperate with the following procedures:

1. Fire Safety
 - a. Fire drills will be conducted twice a year. All children, youth and adults will depart the facility.
 - b. In case of a real emergency, children and youth will be taken to a prearranged evacuation area.
 - c. There is a map posted in each room with the preferred exit route and gathering place outside the building.

2. Natural disasters

In the event of a natural disaster (tornado, hurricane, etc.) occurs, catechists will be warned (if possible) of the approaching danger. Children, youth and adults are to move to the center of the building away from windows.



Photos/Videos

During various activities, the children in the Faith Formation Program may have their photo taken. Permission release forms for the use of photos or videos must be signed by a parent/guardian for each child. As always, the parent/guardian has the right to opt-out of his/her child's photo being used. If you choose to opt-out, please provide the Office of Faith Formation with a recent head shot of each child for the sole purpose of identifying by our editing staff which individuals are to be excluded from any photo placed in the bulletin, the parish website or other media.



Right to Amend

This handbook is primarily a means of communication. It is meant to provide you, the parent/guardian, with helpful information on how we intend to go about our ministry. Sacred Heart Church Faith Formation Program reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified in writing if changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this handbook.

Prayers/Doctrine to Know/Learn

Children and youth of every grade level in Faith Formation at Sacred Heart Church are taught the importance of developing an active, daily prayer life. They are taught to pray both formally and informally and to pray *always*.

Formal prayers which have already been learned should be prayed frequently and parents/guardians should help their child(ren) to learn new prayers by praying with their child(ren). Parents/guardians should also help their child(ren) to understand the meaning of the words to these prayers and to know what it means to *pray from the heart*.



PreK-4	Sign of the Cross, Simple Meal Prayer
Kinder	Hail Mary, Glory Be, Guardian Angel Prayer (and all of the above)
1st	Our Father, Simple Meal Prayer, Sacraments - Baptism (and all of the above)
2nd	Act of Contrition and Mass Prayers (i.e. Penitential Rite, Gloria, Profession of Faith, Acclamation, Breaking of the Bread), Sacraments - Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation (and all of the above)
3rd	Apostles' Creed, Stations of the Cross, The Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, Sacraments - Marriage, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders (and all of the above)
4th	The Great Commandment, The Ten Commandments, The Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary (and all of the above)
5th	The Seven Sacraments, 20 Mysteries of the Rosary, Hail Holy Queen, Corporal Works and Spiritual Works of Mercy (and all of the above)
6th	St. Francis' Prayer before the Crucifix, Hebrew Scriptures (and all of the above)
7th	Christ in the Liturgy
8th - HS	Life in Christ Jesus



THE ROLE OF THE CATECHIST

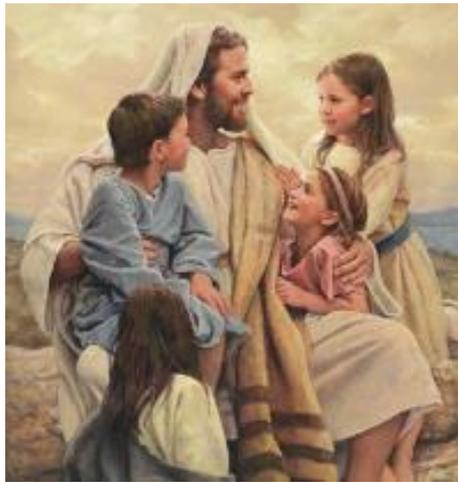
The role of our volunteer catechists is central to the ongoing life of our church. To catechize means “to echo or resound.” Our catechists are members of our faith community who have experienced God’s revelation and have responded to His call to see life through the eyes of faith. They lovingly give their time, talents and treasures to our faith community in order to partner with the parish and the parents of our children. As members of our faith community, parents/guardians are invited to offer assistance to our catechists and/or the Faith Formation Office for the arising needs of our ministry. Please come and join this awesome ministry of loving and serving the Lord and His people.

A Catechist is faith, hope and love attached to arms, legs, aches and pains, family duties and not enough time.

A Catechist is an ordinary person who is extraordinary because he or she teaches as Jesus did.

A Catechist is faithful to the past, open to the future, but especially dedicated to deepening the faith of the present generation.

~ from the poem, “A Catechist Is” by Monsignor John Francis Murphy



(revised January 1, 2010)

Introduction

The Catholic Church in west central Florida is blessed with a great diversity of persons created in the divine image. We respect, honor and celebrate the Image of God revealed in human uniqueness, dignity and diversity, as suggested in Genesis 1:27: "On the sixth and last day of the creation, God created a man to His own Image: to the Image of God He created him".

We believe that every child is a gift from God from the moment of conception. We believe that the children enrolled in our schools, parish religious education programs and other programs must be treated with dignity, respect and care, as described in "A Sacred Trust, The Safety of Our Children" (National Catholic Education Association, 2003).

An adult involved in any role of a program is must be at least 18 years of age, post high school, and approved to work with young people by the pastor, principal, community organization leader or a designate. We serve all young people without regard to gender, creed, national origin, age, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, political beliefs or disabilities. All adults working with youth in any capacity must be approved through the proper background checks and be Safe Environment Program trained as required by the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

This code is not intended to otherwise limit the expectation of staff, children, students, and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebrating, participating in and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the sacraments, other liturgies, worship services, and ministries. This code is used in conjunction with existing diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and is not intended to supersede them.

Professional Role

1. Adults recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that are disrespectful to anyone of any group.
2. Adults work collaboratively with the pastor, supervisors and associates in community, ministry, or school programs. These adults distinguish their own private opinions from those of the Catholic faith or their profession in all publicity, public announcements or publications.
3. Adults have a responsibility in all relationships to witness the chastity appropriate to their vocation in life, whether celibate, married, or single.
4. Adult leaders are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities working with youth. They are to be made aware of all diocesan policies for working with youth.

5. Adults are aware they have considerable personal power because of their position or ministry. Therefore, they will sustain respectful relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power.
6. Adults maintain appropriate professional boundaries, e.g., physical, sexual, relational and emotional. Appropriate use of time for working with, speaking with and engaging with children and youth is an important boundary. Adults are not to be available 24/7, but rather work within normal expected time frames.
7. Adults model healthy and positive behaviors with young children, adolescents, and other adults.

Professional Accountability

1. Adults must never engage in sexual intimacies or overt sexual behaviors with children and/or youth. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, covert or overt seductive speech or gestures that sexually abuses, exploits, or harasses another person.
2. Touching should be age appropriate and based on the need of the minor and not on the need of the adult. An adult is to avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. If a minor initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper.
3. Procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with youth is inappropriate and unethical.
4. Adults should never possess or use alcohol or drugs while supervising and/or participating in a youth activity.
5. Adults always meet with young people in areas that are visible and accessible.
6. One-on-one meetings with a young person are best held in a public area, or if that is not possible, then the door to the room is left open. Another adult is to be notified about the meeting whenever feasible. Notify parents of meetings.
7. It is always a preferred practice to have two adults present in the area where youth are present.
8. Driving alone with a young person should be avoided.
9. Adults are not to be alone with minors in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, other closed room, or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
10. Audiovisual, music, and print resources used in programs must be screened prior to use to ensure their appropriateness for the participants. It is never appropriate to use an "R" rated movie without parental consent or without screening for sexual content, nudity, language, violence, and themes or content which harm the dignity of the human person. Even "PG" movies should be reviewed carefully. Movies with ratings

stronger than "R" are never appropriate. Music lyrics should also be reviewed to ensure their appropriateness. Parents should be informed of movies that will be used in conjunction with any program.

11. The computer and Internet are acceptable and common means of communication and entertainment. Adults must never engage with sexually explicit and/or pornographic materials or chat rooms with children and youth. They should not use any computer software, games or any form of Internet personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents.
12. Adults are trained to be aware of the signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.
13. Adults are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and will make appropriate referrals.
14. Adults agree to adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy and procedure for reporting abuse, suspected abuse or neglect.
15. Adults are aware of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, harassment, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

<http://dosp.org/safe-environment/code-of-conduct-for-adults-working-with-youth/>

The first premise of this code is that children and youth function best when behaviors and expectations are clearly defined. It is accepted that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children in all aspects of their development. This experience aims at developing upright citizens and good Christians, following the new commandment Jesus gave His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

In Timothy 4:12, we read "Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity." Timothy is urged to rely on the gifts he has received from God. This code urges our children and youth to rely on God's gifts to them, especially charity, chastity and purity. This calls the young person to acknowledge and promote one's personal dignity and the rights that go with it.

It becomes important for children and youth to know the difference between "right" and "not right" relationships. "Right" relationships foster personal, spiritual, and emotional growth, e.g., the ability to communicate, to forgive, to show affection, to be honest, vulnerable, dependable, etc. "Not right" relationships become harmful and hurtful, and even abusive. Abuse occurs when someone does not respect another's boundaries, uses power, tricks, threats, or violence to cross or change another's boundaries, or inflicts hurtful or unwanted behavior (physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual) on another person.

This code is used in conjunction with existing local or diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and is not intended to supersede them.

When engaging in formal and informal activities, functions, and programs, children and youth are expected to behave appropriately at all times, respecting the rights of others.

1. Christian behavior is expected at all times.
2. Respect for individuals, the community and facilities being used is required.
3. Cooperation and self-control are necessary when participating in programs and activities.
4. Dress must be in accord with the activity and appropriate for a Christian environment.
5. Unacceptable behavior and lack of cooperation will not be tolerated, but will be addressed appropriately. Examples of unacceptable behavior are as follows, though not limited to:
 - a. disrespect for adults and peers
 - b. use of vulgar language or gesture, use of racial slurs
 - c. damaging of property
 - d. fighting or intent to injure others

- e. constant disturbance of others at work or in an activity
 - f. cheating
6. Possession of weapons, possession, sale or use of alcohol or drugs are forbidden.
 7. No child or youth has the right to treat another in any manner that will cause physical or emotional pain. Therefore, harassment of any kind is unchristian and unacceptable.
 8. Coercion or threats to do something physically hurtful or for the purpose of exposing someone or something about another is unacceptable behavior.
 9. Chastity is a virtue to be held in high esteem and promoted in practice. Sexual abuse of any sort, coercing a person to engage in sexual acts against her or his will, physically touching the sexual parts of another's body, treating a person like a sexual object are unacceptable and abusive behaviors. Consensual sex between students or initiated by minors to adults must never occur.

References:

Diocese of Omaha, NE (2002). Sample Youth Code of Behavior.

Diocese of Orlando, FL (2002). Code of Conduct, Bishop Moore Catholic High School. Code of Conduct, Annunciation Catholic Academy.

Diocese of Orlando, FL (2002).

McCarthy, Robert J. (2002). Protecting Young People, National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers, Washington, D.C.

23rd General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco (1990). Educating Young People to the Faith.

Third Draft 03.06.03

<http://dosp.org/safe-environment/code-of-conduct-for-children/>

INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of St. Petersburg is committed to the well-being of those served by the Church. The People of God have a right to be able to trust those who minister to them in God's name. The violation of this trust through Sexual Abuse by any Church Personnel is a source of great physical, mental and emotional pain for those involved and for the entire Church community. The Diocese published its first policy for the protection of Children and Youth on June 10, 1991, which required both Employees and Volunteers who work with Children and Youth in any parish or Catholic School program to complete written employment or Covered Volunteer applications respectively for service with accompanying references. Beginning April 15, 1992, the diocese required background screening and fingerprinting of all Employees who have the care, responsibility, and/or supervision of Children and Youth. In July 1997, the Province of Miami required all dioceses to add Vulnerable Adults to the protected classes of Children and Young People. Background screening, reference checking, fingerprinting, and written employment and Covered Volunteer applications were now required of those desiring to work or volunteer with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults. In November of 2001, contractors and vendors were added to the list of those requiring background screening. In June 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Charter)*, which required background screening and Safe Environment Program training for all who may have the care, responsibility, and/or supervision of Children and young people. The USCCB obtained confirmation by the Holy See for the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies* dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by priests or deacons in November 2002. The Diocese of St. Petersburg revised its policy to comply with the *Charter* and the *Essential Norms* in December 2002 and again in May 2006 in response to the first revision of the *Charter* in 2005. The diocese publishes this revision as a response to the second revision of the *Charter* in 2011 and of its current policy as part of a continuing commitment to its pastoral responsibilities and to the gospel. This revised policy in combination with procedures and guidelines provides for the implementation and enforcement of a safe environment for our Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults.

POLICY AND SCOPE

Policy to Protect. The Bishop of the Diocese of St. Petersburg will make every reasonable effort to prevent Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, and to respond promptly to all credible Allegations of abuse. As such, the Diocese of St. Petersburg will comply with all obligations of civil and canon law and will promote healing where it is needed, provide education, training and guidance when it is appropriate, and endeavor to prevent any Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults with firm justice and mercy towards all. No person, including Clergy, who has been determined to have engaged in Sexual Abuse of a Minor or Vulnerable Adult, will be allowed to remain in active ministry. Such actions violate Christian principles and are outside the scope of duties and employment of all Church Personnel. The diocese will not tolerate such behavior. This policy applies to all diocesan entities and their Contractors and Vendors to include parishes, schools, early childhood centers, and associated activities within the diocese. Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. When the accusation has

been proved to be unfounded, every reasonable step will be taken to restore the good name of the person falsely accused.

Policy to Respond to Allegations. The Diocese of St. Petersburg will respond promptly to any Allegation where there is reason to believe that Sexual Abuse of a Minor has occurred. The diocese will utilize an objective outside investigator to investigate any such Allegations. The diocese will maintain a Victim Assistance Minister to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who report Sexual Abuse incidents that occurred when they were Minors by Clergy or other Church Personnel. The procedures for those making a complaint are readily available on the Internet via the Diocese of St. Petersburg website at <http://www.dosp.org/safe-environment/how-to-file-an-abuse-complaint/>

Toll Free Contact Number for the Diocesan Victim Assistance Minister: 1-866-407-4505

Policy to Report. The Diocese of St. Petersburg will report an Allegation of Sexual Abuse of a person who is a Minor or Vulnerable Adult to the appropriate civil authorities. The diocese will comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults and will cooperate in the civil authorities' investigation in accord with Florida state law^[1]. The diocese will cooperate with civil authorities about reporting cases even when the alleged victim is no longer a Minor. In every instance, the diocese will advise those who allege abuse of their right to make a report to civil authorities and support this right.

Call in all reports of actual or suspected abuse to the local law enforcement agency (911) or to the state Department of Children and Families (DCF) Abuse Hotline Registry: 1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873). Any person who knows or suspects child abuse, abandonment, or neglect and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so, or who knowingly and willfully prevents another person from doing so, commits a felony of the third degree, punishable by one year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

Policy on the Diocesan Review Board. The Diocese of St. Petersburg Diocesan Review Board functions as a confidential consultative body to the bishop. The majority of its members will be lay persons not in the employ of the diocese in accordance with *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons, 2006*. This board will assist the Diocesan Bishop in assessing Allegations and fitness for ministry, and will regularly review Diocesan Policies and Procedures for dealing with Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults. Also, the Board can act both retrospectively and prospectively on these matters and give advice on all aspects of responses required in connection with these cases.

Policy on Removal of a Priest or Deacon from Ministry. Sexual Abuse of a Minor by a cleric is a crime in the universal law of the Church (*CIC*, c. 1395 §2; *CCEO*, c. 1453 §1). Those who habitually lack the use of reason, regardless of age, are to be equated with Minors (*CIC*, c.99). The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (*Motu proprio, Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, 2001, revised 2010) has reserved this jurisdiction because of the seriousness of this matter. Even after a single act of Sexual Abuse of a Minor— whenever it occurred—which is admitted or established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law and the *Essential Norms*, the offending priest or deacon is to be permanently removed from ministry and, if warranted, dismissed from the clerical state. If an Allegation of Sexual Abuse of a Minor is made against the bishop, the Apostolic Nuncio shall be

notified and the investigation shall proceed according to his direction. The Diocese of St. Petersburg will follow the requirements of the universal law of the Church and the *Essential Norms* approved by the USCCB, along with all state and federal laws concerning the protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

Policy on the Standards of Ministerial Behavior. The Diocese of St. Petersburg will maintain standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for Clergy and for any other paid personnel and Volunteers of the church in positions of trust who have the care, responsibility, and or supervision of Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults. This policy can be viewed on the diocesan website at <http://www.dosp.org/safe-environment/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/Practical-Standards-of-Professional-Responsibility-for-Priests-.pdf>

Policy on Communications. The Diocese of St. Petersburg will be open and transparent in communicating with parish, other church communities, and the public about Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved.

Policy on Distribution. A copy of this policy will be distributed to all diocesan entities in printed form for posting to the general public. This policy will also be posted on the diocesan website at <http://www.dosp.org/safe-environment/policy-for-the-protection-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults/>

Policy on Background Screening. The Diocese of St. Petersburg require that all Church Personnel, candidates for ordination, Contractors, and Vendors who may have the care, responsibility, and or supervision of Children undergo a Level 2 FDLE/FBI Criminal History Background Screening, currently using the Volunteer, Employee Criminal History System (VECHS) and must meet the Diocese of St. Petersburg Minimum Standards of Moral Conduct. Employees must also receive a Level 2 background check as a condition of employment. The Safe Environment Program Office is responsible for administering the background screening function for the diocese.

The FBI requires that background checks only be used for the purpose intended. Therefore, the diocese does not accept FBI background checks or background checks run by other entities for other purposes. The diocese does not accept proof of Level 2 background checks or letters from other entities certifying a Level 2 background check. All Church Personnel, candidates for ordination, Contractors and Vendors who may have the care, responsibility, and or supervision of Children will be required to undergo a Criminal History Background Screening conducted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the FBI Volunteer & Employee Criminal History System (VECHS) every five years. Church Personnel who move from one entity to another within the Diocese of St. Petersburg with no break in service must submit a personal request in writing to the Safe Environment Program Office asking that proof of his or her background check be transferred from the losing entity to the gaining entity or entities. If there is a break in service, a re-screening must take place. Background Screening Reports and Clearance Letters for employees and covered volunteers will be secured in locked containers at the respective parishes, schools, or other diocesan entities. Only the parish pastor, the school principal, diocesan entity head or their specifically-authorized delegates will have access to these records.

Copies of Contractor Criminal History Records and Background Screening Reports will be kept on file and secured at the Diocesan Safe Environment Program Office.

Contractor/vendor employers will only receive clearance or non-clearance letters for their employees.

Policy on the Diocesan Safe Environment Program (SEP) Training. Under Article 12 of the *Charter*, the Safe Environment Program Office is responsible for the administration of Safe Environment Program Training. The Diocese of St. Petersburg will require SEP training of all Church Personnel, Contractors, Vendors, and candidates for ordination who may have the care, responsibility, and or supervision of Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults. These individuals must complete the required SEP training, which is offered online. This training expires five years from the initial date of training and also qualifies the recipient for employment or volunteer ministries which involve the care, responsibility, or supervision of Vulnerable Adults. SEP training re-certification is required every 5 years thereafter.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound and Pastoral Care Providers who wish to have the care, responsibility, and or supervision of Vulnerable Adults must complete the online Safe Environment Program, in addition to the training required for those who exercise this ministry. This training expires 5 years from the initial date of training and also qualifies the recipient for employment or volunteer ministries which involve the care, responsibility, or supervision of Children. SEP re-certification is required every 5 years thereafter. The diocese does not accept safe environment program training from other archdioceses, dioceses or eparchies because state laws, policies, procedures, and program jargon differ. Individuals coming into the Diocese of St. Petersburg must complete the online Safe Environment Program training. The Safe Environment Program Office will oversee training and education in cooperation with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations. It will require education and training for Children, Youth, parents, ministers, educators, Volunteers, Contractors and Vendors to make and maintain a safe environment for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

The Diocesan Safe Environment Program Office is also responsible for maintaining a central database that will track the training and background screening status on all program participants. Appropriate staff members of parishes, schools and other diocesan entities are to inform those persons requiring 5-year recertification training prior to the expiration of their 5-year certification period.

Definitions:

Adult: An individual who is 18 years or older and who is no longer in high school.

Allegation: A statement or accusation of abuse, especially Sexual Abuse.

Care, Responsibility and or Supervision: Unsupervised access by members of the Clergy and/or Religious Institutes, Seminarians, Lay Persons, Employees, Covered Volunteers, Vendors or Contractors to any Child or Vulnerable Adult participating in any ministry or activity of the Diocese or any parish, school or other diocesan entity. This includes clergy, members of religious institutes, seminarians and lay persons.

Child, Youth, or Minor: A person less than eighteen (18) years of age unless emancipated by law. Minors and the combined term "Children and Youth" are used interchangeably.

Church Personnel shall mean all of the following:

Clergy: All priests and deacons who possess or desire faculties for ministry in the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

Contractors and Vendors: This class of persons shall be understood for purposes of this policy and in accordance with the VECHS User Agreement to include Contractors, Vendors, Licensees, Consultants, and Memo of Understanding (MOU) personnel who have

unsupervised access to Children, disabled or elderly persons for whom the diocese provides care, responsibility and/or supervision.

Covered Volunteer: Any unpaid person who is engaged or involved in any diocesan institution or parish activity, and who is entrusted with the care, responsibility, or supervision of Children or Vulnerable Adults. Covered Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older and are not in high school. Individuals younger than 18 years old are not permitted to assume the primary care, responsibility and/or supervision of Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults, although they may be permitted to assist an adult who meets the criteria to do so.

Criminal History Background Screening: An investigation of an individual's background that may be contained in the public record to include municipal, county, state, federal law enforcement, Social Security and state driving records. The Diocese currently conducts its screening through VECHS but reserves the right to use other third-party professionals.

Employee: Any lay individual who is employed by or engaged in ministry with the Diocese, Parish, School or other entity affiliated with the Diocese of St. Petersburg, who receives compensation for services (regardless of form) rendered in which the obligation to withhold for payroll tax (FICA, Medicare, and withholding) exists, whether part-time or full-time. All Employees, even those under 18 years of age (14 – 17 years of age) are subject to background screening as a condition of employment. Parental consent is not required in the state of Florida to sign the FDLE VECHS Waiver/Agreement. "Personnel" as defined herein, has reference only to the applicability of this policy and is not indicative of any agency or employment relationship between the diocese and the party whose compliance with this policy is sought.

Pastoral Care Providers: Volunteers who are entrusted with the care, responsibility and supervision of any Child or Vulnerable Adult, who provide various types of service and assistance to the sick and shut-in as a form of ministry. Types of ministry-in-service may include but are not limited to Vehicle Drivers, Errand Runners, Bereavement Ministers, Care Givers, Pastoral Ministers, Health Ministers, Helping with Chores, etc.

Qualified Entity: The Diocese of St. Petersburg is a Qualified Entity within the FDLE Employee, Volunteer Criminal History System (VECHS).

Sexual Abuse: Any act as defined by Chapter 39 and Chapter 415 of the Florida Statutes.

Vulnerable Adult: A person as defined by Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes.

End notes:

[1] The statutory confidentiality of privileged communications established in Section 90.505, F.S., shall be observed when applicable to all reporting required under this paragraph. Section 90.505, F.S. establishes a privilege with respect to communications to Clergy, if made privately for the purposes of seeking spiritual counsel and advice from a member of the Clergy in the usual course of practice or discipline and not intended for further disclosure.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Diocesan Victim Assistance Minister (toll-free):	(866) 407-4505
Diocesan Safe Environment Program Office:	(727) 344-1611, ext. 5377
Florida Department of Children & Families Abuse Hotline Registry (toll-free):	(800) 962-2873
Local Law Enforcement Agency:	911

2017-2018
SESSION SCHEDULE At-A-Glance

For children enrolled in the
SUNDAY Faith Formation Sessions
at Sacred Heart Church

September	10*, 17, 24+
October	1, 15, 22, 29
November	5, 12
December	3, 10, 17
January	7, 21, 28
February	4, 11, 25
March	4, 18, 25
April	8, 15, 22, 29

* Open House in all classrooms

+ Parent Orientation at 10:40 am in the North Campus Auditorium

For children enrolled in the
WEDNESDAY Family Faith Formation Sessions
at Sacred Heart Church

September	13, 27
October	4, 25
November	29
December	13
January	10, 24
February	7
March	7
April	4, 18
May	2

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION
CELEBRATIONS OF
FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST**

Parent Orientation	Tuesday	September	19
Church Search with Parents	Tuesday	September	26
Reconciliation Workshop 1	Wednesday	October	11
Reconciliation Workshop 2	Wednesday	November	8
Reconciliation Workshop 3	Wednesday	December	6
First Reconciliation Retreat	Saturday	January	20
Celebration of First Reconciliation	Tuesday	January	23
Eucharist Workshop 1	Wednesday	January	31
Eucharist Workshop 2	Wednesday	February	21
Eucharist Workshop 3	Wednesday	April	11
First Eucharist Retreat	Saturday	April	28
Celebration of First Eucharist	Saturday and Sunday	May	5 & 6

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION
CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION**

Parent Orientation	Tuesday	October	10
Workshop 1	Wednesday	October	18
Workshop 2	Wednesday	November	15
Workshop 3	Wednesday	January	17
Retreat at Bethany Center	Saturday and Sunday	January	27 and 28
Workshop 4	Wednesday	February	28
Workshop 5	Wednesday	March	21
Workshop 6 (if needed)	Wednesday	April	25



**ANNUAL PHOTO RELEASE
2017-2018**

From time to time, photos are used in the parish bulletin and website as well as in newspapers, television and other media used to portray events occurring at our parish. These may or may not be accompanied by photos or videotape of students. The releases may be prepared by Sacred Heart Church or a media representative.

- I do give permission for my student's name and likeness to be included in such publicity releases.

- I do NOT give permission for my student's name and likeness to be included in such publicity releases.

Parent's Name (Printed)

Parent's Signature

Date

Child's Name

Grade



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I have received, read, understand and accept the policies contained in the Faith Formation Family Handbook including the local Parish Program Policies and Procedures, Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Youth, Code of Conduct for Children and the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

Please check all that apply and print/sign/date in the spaces provided.

- My child(ren) and I/we will attend the Parent/Student Safe Environment Education Program as scheduled by the Parish.
- I wish to receive all additional materials (beyond handbook policies) related to the Parent/Student Safe Environment Education Program.
- I do not wish to receive the materials (beyond handbook policies) related to the Parent/Student Safe Environment Education Program.

Parent's Name (Printed)

Parent's Signature

Date

Child's Name (Printed)

Grade

Child's Name (Printed)

Grade

Child's Name (Printed)

Grade

Child's Name (Printed)

Grade