

# Student-Parent Handbook



2024-2025 Season

## **Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish Office of Faith Formation**

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4 June 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As your family currently prepares for the Summer, we offer an eye to next year's season in Faith Formation since Registration for 2024–2025 opens on June 4.

There are many new things on the horizon for Faith Formation in our parish in 2024–2025. First among these are the significant changes made to our calendar. As you'll discover, we have limited the number of consecutive on-site sessions to three-in-a-row, interspersing the year with two home projects and opportunities to attend liturgies on Wednesday evenings in our beautiful Church.

New for this year is a Sunday class schedule for grades 1, 2, 7, and 8. Paralleling the Wednesday program offering and calendar for sacramental years, these classes will meet weekly in the Browning Center from 9:50 am to 10:50 am. Also new for this year is our weekly *Family Faith Experiences* program, meeting in the Browning Center following the 11:00 am Sunday Mass. These are 30 minute experiences of Jesus together as a family, suitable for families with children of all ages, are open to the entire community including Palmer Catholic Academy students and families! You are encouraged to experience the beauty of Sacred Scripture and our Faith, leaving equipped to bring the Faith into your home!

We wish you a happy, healthy, and rejuvenating Summer and look forward to seeing you at our regular weekend liturgies during this time. Lastly, please be assured of the ongoing prayerful support and interest of all within the parish staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Msgr. Keith R. Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Msgr. Keith R. Brennan, Pastor

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## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Office of Faith Formation is to inspire our parish community to live a life cultivated in relationship with Jesus Christ and firmly rooted in the values and teachings of the Gospels, a life strong in faith, joyful in hope, and active in charity.

## **Vision Statement**

Our vision is to nurture and perpetuate a Gospel-centered, loving, caring, faithful community that bears witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ through active participation in liturgical celebrations, stewardship, Catholic education, and evangelization.

## **Role of Parents in Faith Formation**

As mentioned earlier, your child's Faith Formation is a “team effort”, including parents and catechists. The following are some guidelines for both to follow –

Parents support the formation of their child through:

- Attend weekly Celebration of the Eucharist with their children. Mass times at OLSS are Saturday: 5:00 pm and Sunday: 7:30 am; 9:00 am, 11:00 am and 5:00 pm.
- Pray daily with your child.
- Ensure that children attend Faith Formation class regularly.
- Ensure that children are prepared for class by completing assignments and by bringing their textbook to class each week.
- Communicate special needs or significant changes that effect your child or family to the DRE.
- Be an active participant in your child's faith formation – review and talk about lessons with your child and review any homework assignments.

## Role of Catechists in Faith Formation

- Be a Christian role model.
- Communicate regularly with and involve the parents/guardians in the faith development of their children.
- Prepare and teach approved curriculum, supplementing lessons with fun, interesting activities using resources available per grade level.
- Provide a loving, Christian atmosphere within the learning environment so that the children will be able to grow in their faith and deepen their relationship with Our Lord.
- Be willing to sign-up for professional growth opportunities to further their knowledge of our Faith and Traditions, and to share this knowledge with our students.

## Registration Information

Registration is offered to children aged 5 who are entering Kindergarten through the Eighth Grade.

**All registrations are now online! You can also pay the registration fees online (see below)**

### ■ FOR ALL FAMILIES:

Register with the Parish at:

Website: [olsspvb.org/childrens-religious-education/](https://olsspvb.org/childrens-religious-education/)

Complete electronic forms – *All Families*

Complete Payment

Send in Baptismal Certificate (imperative), other sacrament certificates and, if applicable, a letter of transfer from a previous parish attn: Office of Faith Formation

### Fees:

The fee for Faith Formation is \$65.00 for one child and \$25.00 for each additional child.

Registration for Faith Formation will begin on June 1, 2024. **A late fee of \$25.00 PER CHILD will go into effect on August 1, 2024.**

**You can pay online at the end of your electronic registration process.**

## Class Options

**OPTION #1: CHILDREN ONLY: Wednesdays** Kindergarten through Eighth Grade **4:30 pm - 5:30 pm**

**OPTION #2: CHILDREN ONLY: Wednesdays** Kindergarten through Eighth Grade **6:00 pm – 7:00 pm**

**NEW FOR THIS YEAR:**

**OPTION #3 CHILDREN ONLY: Sundays** Grades 1, 2, 7, and 8 from **9:50 am – 10:50 am**

Parents may select the time they wish their child/children to attend class.

- Assignments to class are on a **first come, first served** basis. **Once a class has reached a maximum capacity of 22 students**, any other students wishing that time slot will be placed in an alternate session.
- You will be notified which class/time your child has been assigned. If the class time you requested is at capacity when you return your paperwork, you will be notified as soon as possible that it is no longer available.

## Curriculum

- Kindergarten through Eighth Grade Text “Christ In Us” by W. H. Sadlier Inc.
- Eighth Grade Sacramental Supplement Text – by W.H. Sadlier Inc.
- Intergenerational Materials curated from multiple sources including W.H. Sadlier Inc.

## Sacraments

***As per diocesan policy, students are required to be enrolled in Faith Formation for two years prior to celebrating a Sacrament.*** (For example: students preparing for Reconciliation and Eucharist must have completed Grade One and be enrolled in Grade Two; students preparing for Confirmation must have completed Grade Seven and be enrolled in Grade Eight. Exceptions to these requirements would need to be discussed with the Director of Faith Formation and the Pastoral Associate.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: For sacramental preparation years (grades 1,2, 7, and 8): Missing more than three classes** (roughly 10% of the entire years’ worth of curriculum) and without a professional’s note will result in either a repeat of the same grade level or a delay in reception of the sacrament by a year, requiring dual enrollment in both a regular faith formation class and eight separate early Sunday afternoon sacramental preparation classes scheduled throughout the *following* year. Any absence must still be made up via the catechist’s assignment and submitted online via the Christinus.com Sadlier portal.

If your child is ill and unable to attend class, please notify the Faith Formation Office at 904-567-1960 or at the following email address: [emitchell@olsspvb.org](mailto:emitchell@olsspvb.org) OR [dre@olsspvb.org](mailto:dre@olsspvb.org). Please refer to the provided calendars to keep up with the schedule of lessons.

## Special Sacramental Preparation Classes

This program is for children who intend to receive sacraments in 2025 but are in advanced grades (3-8). It is a concurrent enrollment, meaning if your child is in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and needs to receive Reconciliation and Eucharist, they attend 4<sup>th</sup> grade on Wednesday as well as 8 special 1 hour classes on Sundays from 12:15pm-1:15pm

This program also provides instruction for children catechumens (those who will be baptized and fully initiated into the Church at the Easter Vigil on April 19, 2025). See the calendar section for all the dates and more information.

### Important Sacrament Dates:

#### ***SACRAMENTS OF RECONCILIATION AND EUCHARIST - Grade 2***

- A **Reconciliation Retreat** for Second Grade Students and at least one parent will be held on Saturday, November 2, 2024, beginning with 8:30 am Mass and ending at 12:30 pm. Failure to attend this retreat will necessitate you finding another parish to participate in their retreat. The retreat experience is mandatory and is a requirement of the Diocese.
- A **Eucharist Retreat** for Second Grade Students and at least one parent will be held on Saturday, March 1, 2025 beginning with 8:30 Mass and ending at 12:30 pm. These dates and times are posted a year in advance so that you may plan accordingly. If, for some reason, you encounter a schedule conflict that cannot be ameliorated, you will be responsible for having to find a retreat experience at an alternate parish before the celebration of the sacrament at our parish. The sooner you make these arrangements, the better. Please contact the Director of Faith Formation in the event you find yourself in this situation. Failure to attend this retreat will necessitate you finding another parish to participate in their retreat. The retreat experience is mandatory and is a requirement of the Diocese.
- **First Holy Communions** will take place during the four Sundays of the month of May 2025 at the 9am, 11am, and 5pm Masses. Stay tuned for announcement in January 2025 regarding selection of dates and times.

## **SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION – Grade 8**

- A **Confirmation Parent Meeting** will be held on Sunday, Oct. 13, 2024 (12:15 pm- 1:15pm Cultural Ctr) **or** Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2024 (7:15 pm – 8:00 pm Browning Ctr Room 1). *Attendance at one of these two meeting times is expected for parents.* At this meeting, the entire packet of forms and materials necessary to complete the process of Confirmation will be explained. Students may attend. Q & A at end.
- **Confirmation Retreat on Saturday April 12, 2025 (10 am – 4 pm) is Mandatory for students only.** These dates and times are posted a year in advance so that you may plan accordingly. If, for some reason, you encounter a schedule conflict that cannot be ameliorated, you will be responsible for having to find a retreat experience at an alternate parish before the celebration of the sacrament at our parish.
- **Confirmation Rehearsal** will be held on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 6:00 pm.
- **Confirmation Mass** will be held on Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 5:15 pm.
- **Service Hours:** Confirmation Candidates are required to complete a minimum of **30 service/stewardship hours over a two-year period.** Our students begin volunteering in their faith community and their residential community at the end of their Faith Formation for 6th grade class, allowing two school years to complete the 30-hour requirement. Information will be sent home later and is also available outside the 8th grade classroom. The deadline for eighth graders to submit their service hours is April 23, 2025.

### ***Before Coming to Faith Formation Each Week***

For various and sundry reasons at various points during the year, your child's class may have a last minute reminder or even a notification of cancellation. The entire program might even be shut down for the week at a moment's notice. Under normal circumstances, we will attempt to reach you by phone with the notification. However, our primary communication medium to reach all of you most efficiently is via email.

**It is therefore imperative you keep your email current with us *and check it before you head to Faith Formation each week.***



## **Arrival Policy**

We encourage children to be *on time* for the beginning of class, but *no earlier than 5 minutes prior to the start of their session*. Habitually arriving late is a source of distraction that is discourteous to the volunteers and the other children.

Children in grades K-2 should be walked to their classroom. Please be sure the Catechist is present before leaving your child.

Children in grades 3-8 parents are welcome to walk their child to class. If you choose, you may drop your older child off once they are comfortable doing so.

Classes for students in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade are held in the Palmer Catholic Academy Preschool Building located on the church grounds.

Classes for Fifth through Eighth Grades are held in the Browning Center on the Church grounds directly next to the Preschool.

## **Dismissal Policy/Sign Out**

We require all registered students to be signed out from their classroom by an authorized adult/guardian. Please complete the enclosed "Authorization for Pick-Up" Form that is in the attached forms file. Please list all the adults that you wish to pick up your children from class, their relationship to your child and their phone number. Adults not known to the Catechist or Staff will be asked for a photo I.D. Students who are not picked up in a timely manner will be brought to the Faith Formation Office (located in the Browning Center) to wait for their parent or guardian for sign out. If you need to add or eliminate names from this form throughout the year, please either stop by our office during Formation or send the director an email requesting the change. Please allow two weeks for changes in data to be processed.

Please be on-time for pick-up. We all have busy schedules – including our wonderful volunteers! They did not sign-up for "babysitting." Consideration and courtesy are expected from participants in a religious education program, so timeliness is important.

## **Early Sign Out**

We understand that on occasion, it may be necessary to sign your children out before classes normally end. In an emergency, this is done by entering our faith formation office door located in the parking lot facing the South side of the church. See page 17 for new policy update.

## Attendance Policy

The aspects of Faith Formation that share much in common with general education are centered around the art of teaching and the gift of learning. Concepts such as Creation, the Blessed Trinity, and Sacraments (especially the Eucharist), are conveyed in a scope and sequence that builds upon prior knowledge. *This is why it is so vitally important for you to have your children enrolled in our program year after year.*

In order for your child to stay on top of the materials and gain the most from his or her formation experiences over time, you are encouraged to follow the accompanying weekly calendar and utilize the online portal of our curriculum if your child misses a session. Even if they do not have their book with them, the online portal provides access to their book and its accompanying activities. Excessive absences may result in considering having your child repeat the grade level.

Please make every effort in your power to schedule any extracurricular activities, such as sports, dance, or gymnastics, etc. after class or on a different day.

**IMPORTANT ATTENDANCE POLICY NOTICE: For sacramental preparation years (grades 1,2, 7, and 8), missing more than four classes (roughly 12.5% of the entire years' worth of curriculum) will result in either a repeat of the same grade level or a delay in reception of the sacrament by a year, requiring dual enrollment in both a regular faith formation class and eight separate early Sunday afternoon sacramental preparation classes scheduled throughout the following year.**

If your child is ill and unable to attend class, please notify the Faith Formation Office at 904-567-1960 or at the following email address, [emitchell@olsspvb.org](mailto:emitchell@olsspvb.org) OR [dre@olsspvb.org](mailto:dre@olsspvb.org). Use the provided Calendar for keeping on track with Wednesday lessons.

### RETREAT ATTENDANCE:

- **Attendance at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade retreats** (one in the Fall and one in the Winter/Spring) is mandatory for both parents and children.
- **Attendance at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Parent meeting** in the Fall is mandatory for parents; **attendance at the Confirmation Retreat** is mandatory for students. These dates and times are posted a year in advance so that you may plan accordingly. If, for some reason, you encounter a schedule conflict that cannot be ameliorated, you will be responsible for having to find a retreat experience at an alternate parish before the celebration of the sacrament at our parish. The sooner you make these arrangements, the better. Please contact the Director of Faith Formation in the event you find yourself in this situation.

## Communication

### Primacy of Email

The Faith Formation Program prefers to contact families whenever possible by **email** since it is most efficient and can be done quickly by one person. When necessary, we will contact you by phone or through the US Postal Service. **PLEASE CHECK YOUR EMAILS BEFORE COMING TO FAITH FORMATION EACH WEEK!**

### Class Cancellation Emergency Notification

In the event of a HURRICANE *or* TORNADO WATCH, WARNING, OR EVACUATION for the Ponte Vedra Area, classes will be cancelled. **The cancellation will be *emailed* to families.** If there is time, it will also be posted on the parish website and recorded on the Faith Formation voicemail. **Again, please check your email before heading to classes.** Once the determination has been made – even if the weather changes favorably – the decision is final. As always, parents, use your best judgment on whether to bring your child to class if you are concerned about the weather.

Along the same lines, occasions arise when catechists have to cancel last minute and we don't have enough substitute teachers to cover the class. This will necessitate cancelling the class and assigning an at-home assignment. In the event this occurs, we will email you and, if possible, call you. In any event, **please check your email before heading to classes!**

## Medication

Faith Formation Staff and Catechists may not distribute medication of any kind to students. If your child is ill or has a fever, please do not send them to class. Children who appear ill after arriving to class will be brought to the office and the parent will be called to pick them up. If your child takes afternoon medications, please be sure these have been administered prior to Faith Formation sessions.

## Special Needs Students

At Our Lady Star of the Sea, students with special needs are mainstreamed in the Program. Please keep in mind that the majority of our volunteers are not trained in various student exceptionalities, training only specifically certified ESE teachers are versed in.

Parents are therefore asked to identify their child's special needs to the Director and the child's Catechist. The parents, Director and Catechist will work out a plan that best fits the child's

needs, and *these must also be balanced with the needs of his or her classmates*. If teaching and learning become untenable in the classroom as a result of severe emotional or behavioral pathologies, home school options will be offered for families.

## **Stewardship & Service**

Stewardship is the giving of one's time, talent, and treasure to build up God's kingdom here on earth. To each of us has been entrusted a unique set of gifts; it is incumbent upon each of us to unpack those gifts and put them into the service of others.

In the public ministry of Jesus, we have the perfect example of what it means to serve. In fact, by the very nature of our baptismal dignity, we are called to follow the example of Christ. We are anointed priest, prophet, and king at our baptism. All of these roles require of us to serve our community, not just to garner service hours for Confirmation, but to live most fully our baptismal dignity (BTW, see page 8 for Confirmation Service Hour requirements).

Our Lady Star of the Sea parish promotes service to others. To this end, we supply children's envelopes at the beginning of the year so that the children learn the importance of being a good steward. Please have the children record their good deeds and deposit these in the offertory basket. We encourage our catechists and our families to get the children entrusted in our care to become more involved in the welfare of the people of our greater community (Diocese, nation, and the universal Church) as much as our local community (Ponte Vedra Beach, OLSS).

## **Classroom Behavior**

Occasionally a student disrupts class by his/her behavior. Disruptive behavior is not fair to the Catechist or to other students who are there to learn and grow in their faith. If a child is disruptive, he/she will be reminded of expected behavior and the consequences of misbehavior. If the behavior continues, they will be moved within the classroom to a less disruptive area. If inappropriate behavior continues a third time, the child will be brought to the Faith Formation Office and will be interviewed by the Director of Faith Formation. He or she will spend the remainder of class composing a written apology to their catechist and classmates that is delivered by the offending student the following week. This usually ends the cycle. If, however, behaviors continue, your son or daughter will be removed from the class and sent home for home-study for a period to be determined. Failure to rectify disruptive behavior will result in dismissal from the program for the year.

### **Cell phones:**

Students are not to use their cell phones during class time. All phones are to be put on silent so as not to interrupt the class. Phones used during class time in any way, (texting, reading texts & gaming, etc.) will be taken from the student and returned to their parent/guardian at the end of class. This policy will be strictly adhered to.

## Code of Conduct for Faith Formation Students

Parents, please read and discuss the following Code of Conduct for Faith Formation Students with the child/children you are enrolling prior to signing the 2024/2025 Parent/Guardian & Student Acknowledgement Form.

The basic premise of this code of Conduct for Children and Youth is that all humanity functions at its best when behaviors and expectations are clearly outlined. Young people need to be made aware of correct and incorrect behaviors as well as the consequences associated with them. Forming good moral consciences in children and youth is a primary role of the family with support and guidance from the local Church community. This code is used in conjunction with existing local or diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and IS intended to supplement them.

### **Student Expectations:**

- Attend weekly Mass.
- Christian behavior is always expected.
- Complete class assignments weekly.
- Bring your Faith Formation textbook to class each week.
- Attend class on a regular basis and complete all homework assignments.
- Respect for individuals, the community, and facilities being used are required.
- Dress must be in accord with the activity and appropriate for a Christian environment.
- For the safety of students, students should not wear flip flops to class.
- No skating or skateboarding on church property.
- Do not bring friends or relatives who are not registered in our Faith Formation Program to class with you.
- Co-operation and self-control are necessary when participating in programs and activities.

**Unacceptable behavior and lack of cooperation will not be tolerated and will be addressed appropriately. Examples of unacceptable behavior are as follows, though not limited to:**

- Disrespect for adults and peers –this includes constant interrupting, speaking out of turn, disturbing others at work or in an activity, attempting to re-direct classroom instruction
- Use of vulgar language, gestures and use of racial slurs
- Damaging of property *including purposefully scuffing floors with athletic shoes and messing up bathrooms.*
- Fighting or intent to injure others.
- Cheating
- Do not touch another student or an adult.
- Possession of weapons, possession and or use of alcohol or drugs are forbidden.
- No Bullying. 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 viewed as unchristian and therefore unacceptable.
- Coercion or threats to do something physically hurtful or for the purposes of ruining another's reputation or good standing is unacceptable behavior.
- Food and drink are not allowed in either building during Faith Formation. Snacks and drinks must be consumed in your vehicle prior to entering the building.
- Cell phones, tablets, and any other electronic equipment should be placed on silent for Faith Formation Class and not used by students during class. These items will be confiscated and returned to the parents directly at the end of class.

Each child that is being registered into the 2024/2025 Faith Formation Program is required to read and to understand and sign the **Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form** the first class they attend. At least one parent is required to sign-off on the Code of Conduct Acknowledgement as part of the registration process.

## ADDENDUM to HANDBOOK 6/4/24:

### TARDY ARRIVALS

Tardies have become a bit of a problem and are extremely disruptive to the other students as well as our volunteer teachers. *Beginning Sunday, Sept. 24th, doors will be locked 5 mins after classes start and will not be re-opened until check-out time.* If you arrive later than five past the hour, please do not come to the office asking to unlock the door or to have your child enter the class late. Your son or daughter will miss class and be marked absent. You should email your child's teacher for make-up work. Remember, absences count and for those in grades 1,2,7, and 8, only three *excused* absences are permitted for the entire year.

### EARLY PICK-UP

Early pick up is also becoming an epidemic. While we realize early pick-up may be necessary *in emergency situations*, it is even *more disruptive* than tardies to students and teachers. Class must be stopped to have a child signed out before the end of class. *Beginning Sunday, Sept. 24th, early sign-outs will be for emergency situations only.* We know you all are trying to juggle so many activities each afternoon, but in our efforts to support your role as primary educators of the Faith, we really depend upon your cooperation in committing a full hour each week to faith formation.

### “CLASS FLOATING”

Since we added Sunday morning sessions for grades 1, 2,7 & 8, we've had many folks registered on Wednesday requesting they come Sunday after missing a Wednesday class and vice versa. We call this “class floating” and *before it becomes “a thing,” I'm asking you all to please not ask us to do this on the fly.* It requires attendance rosters and sign-outs to be adjusted and creates unnecessary confusion when it comes to record keeping. If, however, there arises a long-term schedule issue (like several weeks or months) and we need to temporarily transfer your son or daughter from one day/class to another day/class, then please come into our office to complete a Change of Class/Data form.