

CHRISTIAN FORMATION HANDBOOK



St. Andrew's Church
631 North Jefferson Street
Roanoke, Virginia 24016-1401

Dear Parents,

The Christian Formation program of St. Andrew's Church is vital to the faith enrichment of your children. Its goal is to lead each individual young person in our community to a mature and lasting faith. All catechists involved in this ministry depend on your support, not only in prayer, but also in deed. The term "Christian Formation" includes all efforts that help form the community into the Body of Christ.

Catechesis "corresponds to the period in which conversion to Jesus Christ is formalized, and provides a basis for adhering to him." The objective of catechesis "is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ." (General Directory for Catechesis 63, 79)

Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. (CCC 2223) Our Christian Formation team of catechists aims to assist families in this endeavor. The **Good News** did not come from a textbook, but in the person of Jesus Christ. **Regular attendance at Sunday Liturgy, family prayer, and daily living of the Gospel message are the best ways of passing on our Catholic Faith to our children.**

We thank you for the opportunity to help guide your children in Christian Formation this year.

In Christ's Love,
St. Andrew's Church
Office of Christian Formation

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COMPONENTS OF CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Catechetical ministry must be understood in relation to Jesus' threefold mission. It is a form of the Ministry of the Word, which proclaims and teaches. It leads to and flows from the ministry of worship, which sanctifies through prayer and sacrament. It supports the ministry of service, which is linked to efforts to achieve social justice and has traditionally been expressed in spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The curriculum, which makes up our Christian Formation Program at St. Andrew's, derives its source from the United States Conference for Catholic Bishops 2005 document, *National Directory for Catechesis*. As stated above, our content consists of three basic areas and is supported by a nurturing community.

Word - The Word contains the proclamation of the message of Jesus Christ, His life, His teachings, the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, our sacramental life, our moral life. These basic elements are presented in an ordered fashion through grades K through 5 and then developed in a more cognitive and experiential fashion on the adolescent level. Content is not repeated one year after another. Some basic concepts are repeated yearly such as the mercy and forgiveness of God, Eucharistic themes, and the power of the Spirit in our lives. *It is important that our young people participate in Christian Formation sessions on a regular basis each year. Sporadic attendance or "skipping" a year or two leaves great gaps in the presentation of the faith to the children.*

Worship - There is a close relationship between catechesis and liturgy. In the liturgy, we come as a praying community, giving praise and thanksgiving to God, and seeking reconciliation. In our catechetical program, we not only teach our young people about Liturgy, and about the sacraments, we celebrate them. It is here that our young people find both an expression of faith and a means for deepening it. These opportunities prepare them for full and active participation in liturgy by helping them understand the rituals and symbols and allow them active roles.

Service - Integral to the Gospel is the challenge to reach out to others, to take the Word that we are learning and experiencing and share it with others. "The Church's social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, but it is not merely a series of documents. Rather, it is a living tradition of thought and action." (NDC 43) We are challenged in our catechetical programs at St. Andrew's to help our young people develop a "critical sense" which enable them to reflect and then act on society and its values. Our catechesis is based on the sources of our Church's teaching taking its roots in the Old and New Testament.

Opportunities for service may be incorporated into the curriculum. The emphasis is different for each particular level. On the children's level, service will be age appropriate to the curriculum. On the adolescent level, opportunities outside of the regular curriculum through Youth Ministry will be offered, challenging our young people to give of themselves in terms of service.

Community - All three of the above elements are presented in the context of a nurturing community, our parish community at large, our family communities, and more specifically, the young people themselves gathered in community. We hope with social events, with grade level gatherings and with a nurturing, supportive group of catechists and volunteers we can help our young people to know that they have a real and valued place at St. Andrew's.

THE FUNDAMENTAL TASKS OF CATECHESIS

According to the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) and the National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), the fundamental tasks of catechesis are helping to know, to celebrate, and to contemplate the mystery of Christ. Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church. The fundamental task of catechesis is, therefore, to form Disciples of Christ and to send them forth in mission. The fundamental tasks of catechesis are:

Promoting knowledge of the faith – By deepening knowledge of the faith, catechesis nourishes not only the life of faith but equips it to explain itself to the world. The meaning of the Creed, which is a compendium of Scripture and of the faith of the Church, is the realization of this task. (GDC 85, NDC 20)

Liturgical education – Communion with Jesus Christ leads to the celebration of his salvific presence in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. The Church ardently desires that all the Christian Faithful be brought to that full, conscious and active participation which is required by the very nature of the liturgy. (GDC 85, NDC 20)

Moral formation – Catechesis must transmit to the disciples the attitudes of Christ himself. The Sermon on the Mount is an indispensable point of reference for the moral formation which is most necessary today. (GDC 85, NDC 20)

Teaching to pray – Adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication, and awe for God's glory are summed up and reflected in the *Our Father*. When catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit. (GDC 85, NDC 20)

Education for Community Life – Christian community life must be taught by educating and must be apprenticed. The Gospel of St. Matthew recounts the teachings of Christ on community life. (GDC 86, NDC 20)

Missionary Initiation – Catechesis equips the disciples of Jesus to be present as Christians in society through their professional, cultural and social lives. Jesus sent his disciples on missions, which catechesis recognizes and nourishes as evangelical attitudes. (GDC 86, NDC 20)

CLASS POLICIES FOR CHRISTIAN FORMATION SESSIONS

REGISTRATION

- A. Registration for Christian Formation (Grades K through 12)
 - 1. Families of students being enrolled in any of the Christian Formation programs must be registered parishioners of St. Andrew's parish.
 - 2. Currently enrolled students must re-enroll by August 1 of each year.
 - 3. Students enrolling after the start of the catechetical year will begin class as soon as they can be accommodated.
 - 4. Kindergarten students can enroll by calling the Parish Office, or by responding to registration forms mailed out in the summer.
 - 5. Families completing a new parishioner form in the parish office will enroll new students.
- B. Registration for Sacramental Preparation Programs (First Communion, Reconciliation, Confirmation)
 - 1. Registration forms for each program will be available for eligible students beginning in May of each year.
 - 2. The First Communion program is for those students enrolled in Sunday morning Christian Formation, and for our Roanoke Catholic School students who will join in the sacramental preparation portion at the appropriate time.
- C. Christian Formation Fees
 - 1. All fees are due at the time of registration.
 - 2. Families with financial need may confidentially inquire with the Office of Christian Formation for book fee assistance.

ATTENDANCE CREDIT

To receive credit for the class, a student must attend at least 80% of the scheduled classes. (Example 23 out of 29 scheduled sessions), excluding excused absences.

CONDUCT/DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

- 1) Unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated and may result in asking you as parent to instruct your child at home.
- 2) Disciplinary action will be taken for the following actions.
 - Talking out of turn.
 - Lack of respect for the catechist or other students.
 - Use of inappropriate or foul language.
 - Coming unprepared to class or lack of willingness to participate.
 - Repeatedly coming late to class.
 - Defacing or destruction of Roanoke Catholic School or St. Andrew's Church property.
 - Any behavior that disrupts class and takes away others' right to learn.
- 3) Unacceptable behavior will be handled on an individual basis.

- 4) Cell Phone Policy – Cell phones brought to class by students must be turned off and kept out of sight, unless their catechist instructs them to use their phone for class. Calling and texting during class will not be tolerated.
- 5) Dress Code - St. Andrew's Christian Formation Committee has established a dress code for those students participating in its programs. Young men are to remove their hats when entering classrooms and buildings. Young ladies are to adhere to modest attire – this means no short skirts, no spaghetti strap tops, etc. Students not following the dress code will have their parents contacted. Your cooperation is appreciated.

CANCELLATION DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

Christian Formation class cancellations will be posted on our Parish Website (www.standrewsroanoke.org), on our Facebook page (St. Andrew's Catholic Church in Roanoke, Virginia), and on Twitter (@standrewroanoke). You can also call the Parish Office at 344-9814 and choose menu option "8" to hear weather related cancellations. Cancellation decisions will be made by 8:00 AM Sundays. If driving conditions in your neighborhood appear to be hazardous, please use caution. The safety of our students comes first.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES

Class time is from 10:15 to 11:15 AM. Young children are to be walked in to Roanoke Catholic School by an adult and taken directly to their classroom. Per a request from Roanoke Catholic School, children are not to be left unattended in a classroom. At dismissal time, children in grades K-3 are to be picked up at their classroom door by their parent or the designated guardian. Children in grades 4-8 will be dismissed by their catechist at the front door of the lower school. Please review these procedures with your child prior to the first class. It is important that they know who is picking them up and where. Please have your child adhere to this policy to ensure that all of our students can be safe and accounted for. Also, we ask that you please not open classroom doors before dismissal time. Our instructional time is short, and our catechists need every minute of it to finish their lesson with the children. The catechist will open the door to signal the end of the class and dismissal.

Older students are expected to arrive on time by themselves, and are responsible for meeting back up with their families at dismissal time. If your 10th grade Confirmation student drives to Christian Formation class, please review class time, traffic routing, and parking with them.

Parents are asked to fill out a permission form indicating who is allowed to pick up their children after class. You will also be asked to provide emergency contact information and phone numbers, as well as any medical information that will be helpful to staff. We ask that you fill it out and return it to your child's catechist or the Christian Formation office as soon as possible. This is necessary to ensure the safety of all of the children in the program.

Catechists should be informed if someone other than the parent would be picking up their child. Realizing that these sessions occur on Sunday mornings between

Masses, we ask that you do not let children cross between St. Andrew's Church and Roanoke Catholic School unaccompanied by an adult.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

In a recent communication from Francis DiLorenzo, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, we were given the required Diocesan policies for the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. St. Andrew's is in compliance with these general principles and policies that have been mandated. Participation in the sacraments is a shared responsibility of parents, catechists, and the church itself, which is the assembly of believers united in Christ. The following is a general overview of how this process occurs within our parish. In the event that your young person has not completed preparation and/or received a particular sacrament, and you are concerned, you should contact the assigned coordinator. It is your responsibility to contact these individuals for further instructions.

FIRST COMMUNION

The program/process consists of three major focuses: Catechesis, Liturgical ritualization, and Community involvement. During the period of formation, the child is catechized both at home and by participating in faith formation sessions led by a member of the parish community. The parish also affirms and recognizes parents as the primary catechists of their children. To assist parents in this role and foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Eucharist, the parents participate in adult faith formation sessions. Additionally, the child participates in rituals designed to introduce the children to the riches of the Eucharist and the life of the Christian community. Finally, members of the parish faith community support the children through prayer.

Children preparing for these sacraments should be concurrently enrolled in Sunday morning Christian Formation, or at Roanoke Catholic School. Preparation for sacraments is offered in addition to the above mentioned faith formation. Please see the Christian Formation calendar for specific dates. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church "Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time." (CCC 1457) Readiness for children to **begin** preparation for First Communion is determined in part by:

- Has been baptized
- Has reached the age of reason (7 years old)
- Is interested in receiving the sacrament
- Feels like they belong to the Catholic community
- Participates in Sunday Mass
- Prays at home and at Mass
- Has the ability to relate to Jesus as one who loves
- Has prepared for and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation

POLICIES

In compliance with diocesan policies, the parish has the following policies.

- 1) The family must be active and registered members of St. Andrew's Church.
- 2) Children must be registered and attend the regularly scheduled Christian Formation sessions during both first and second grades. Please note the parish attendance policy: To be considered as having attended formation sessions, a child must have been present at least 80% of the scheduled sessions. (Example: 23 out of 29 scheduled sessions)
- 3) Roanoke Catholic students must register for sacramental preparation, which is separate and distinct from any other religious education they receive in a Catholic school setting.
- 4) Parents will attend the scheduled Parent Formation sessions. Initial sessions with the parents coincide with the sessions with their children and their catechists. The parents are provided with materials and guidance to help them with their children's formation at home.
- 5) At the second grade level, group sessions with the children and their catechists are in addition to and distinct from the religious education programs provided by the parish or in the Catholic school.
- 6) Candidates for First Communion must provide proof of baptism in the Catholic Church.

RECONCILIATION

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation will emphasize that it is a ritual celebration used as a means of worship, and very much a part of their sacramental lives. The concept that Reconciliation is an opportunity to celebrate and thank God, is something that your children will appreciate and understand. They will learn to see the connection between the admission of human weakness and the praise for a forgiving and merciful Father who is always ready to welcome them back.

Readiness for children to **begin** preparation for Reconciliation is determined in part by:

- Has been baptized
- Has reached the age of reason (7 years old)
- Can distinguish between right and wrong
- Can distinguish between mistakes and accidents
- Is able to express sorrow for sin
- Has the ability to forgive others
- Prays at home and at Mass
- Is able to relate to Jesus as one who forgives

POLICIES

In compliance with the Richmond Diocese, the policies governing the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are the same as those used for the reception of First Communion. Preparation classes for Reconciliation must be completed before preparation for First Communion can begin. According to the *National Directory for*

Catechesis, “In the Latin Church, children must receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for the first time prior to their first reception of the Eucharist.”

CONFIRMATION

A faith development program for high school students will be used for preparing those who are to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. The program is based on a theology that sees Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation, which is intimately connected with the other two initiation sacraments, which are Baptism and Eucharist. Confirmation is seen as a celebration of the process by which young men and women come to accept the gift of faith.

The catechetical basis for the program utilizes two of the fundamental principles of the National Catechetical Directory:

- Total catechesis always includes sharing in the faith-life of a community.
- The entire parish community is responsible for the catechesis of its members.

The Sacramental Preparation consists of core modules that cover the following material:

- **God's Mission to Us: The Father sends the Son and the Holy Spirit** - This module explores the history of salvation, with a particular focus on the Holy Spirit.
- **The Church: God's Mission Continues** - This module focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in order to prepare the candidate to be joined more closely to the Church, and to her mission, through Confirmation.
- **Confirmation: Initiation into Mission** - This module focuses on Confirmation as a Sacrament of Initiation, which completes and strengthens the grace of Baptism. This module also reviews the signs and symbols of the Rite of Confirmation.
- **The Mission of Discipleship: A Life of Witness** - This module explores the moral and prayerful dimension of Confirmation, including participation in the Church's mission to the world.

POLICIES

In compliance with diocesan policies, the parish has the following policies.

- 1) The family must be active and registered members of St. Andrew's Church.
- 2) The normal time for celebrating Confirmation in the Diocese of Richmond is at the conclusion of the tenth grade.
- 3) The preparation for Confirmation extends over a one-year period. Attendance at Christian Formation sessions and Roanoke Catholic School's Religion Program, as well as the parish's Confirmation program sessions are required to complete the process. Please refer to the Christian Formation calendar for specific dates regarding the Confirmation process.
- 4) Roanoke Catholic students must register for sacramental preparation, which is separate and distinct from any other religious education they receive in a Catholic school setting.
- 5) Parents will attend the scheduled Parent Orientation session. The parents are provided with materials and guidance to help them with their children's formation at home.

- 6) Candidates for Confirmation participate in an entrance interview and a Retreat, as outlined in Diocesan sacramental preparation policy.
- 7) Candidates for Confirmation must provide proof of baptism in the Catholic Church.

OTHER PROGRAMS PROVIDED FOR YOUTH

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD (CLOW)

Celebrating the Word with children on Sundays when the parish assembles is a significant development in the liturgical and Christian initiation movement. This custom of adapting the Scriptures for children reflects a profound respect for the spiritual life of children. At Saint Andrew's we offer the Liturgy of the Word for children ages 4 to 7 at the 9:00 and 11:30 Masses. Children will be invited to participate by the presider prior to the reading of scripture. They will then proceed to the Chapel until the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist at which time they will rejoin the community for the continuation of the Mass.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN (RCIC)

Also referred to 'Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for Children', this is a one year process of initiation of "...anyone who has not been baptized and who has reached the age of reason," (i.e. Catechetical age seven years or more) or has been baptized in a Protestant faith and wished to be initiated into the Catholic Church. It is finding identity within the community, sharing stories, rituals, and values. It is a lifelong commitment. Sacraments of initiation are received based on individual readiness.

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY – LIFE TEEN

The youth ministry program (Life Teen) is open to all St. Andrew's youth in grades 9 through 12. All parish youth from Roanoke Catholic and the Christian Formation Program are encouraged to attend. This program offers a blend of service, fellowship and spiritual opportunities to the parish youth. Life Teen meets regularly every Sunday of the month for catechesis and fellowship. The youth are encouraged to serve both the St. Andrew's and Roanoke Valley communities through various activities. We are active ministers in the Liturgy, and participate in a variety of service projects, both local and otherwise. The Youth Council comprised of representatives from grades 9 - 12, works with adult advisors in planning and implementing the year's events.

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY

The Middle School Youth Ministry is intended for all youth of St. Andrew's Parish in grades 5 - 8. They meet every Wednesday evening – please refer to calendar for dates. All meetings are held in the St. Andrew's Social Hall or in the Youth Room. We encourage middle school students to participate, and to become involved in all aspects of faith, fun, and fellowship. Besides our regularly scheduled meetings, our Middle School Youth Group also plans extra outings, and participates in service projects that benefit the parish community. Parent involvement is always welcome.

LITURGICAL MINISTRIES

Students are invited to become active members of St. Andrew's by participating in Liturgical ministries. Students can be altar servers (grades 4 and up), altar ministers (grades 8 and up), Eucharistic ministers (must be Confirmed), and other liturgical roles (high school age). If your student is serving at the 11:30 AM Mass, their catechist will dismiss them from class early in order to prepare.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions regarding Christian Formation grades K-8, First Reconciliation, First Communion, or Children's Liturgy of the Word, contact:

Kathy Boyer 344-9814 kboyer@standrewsroanoke.org

For questions regarding Christian Formation grades 9-12, Confirmation, or High School Youth Ministry contact:

Megan Gaskin 344-9814 mgaskin@standrewsroanoke.org

For questions regarding Middle School Youth Ministry, contact:

Kris Levy 344-9814 klevy@standrewsroanoke.org

For questions regarding RCIC, contact:

Chuck Frost 344-9814 cfrost@standrewsroanoke.org

For questions regarding Liturgical ministries, please contact the parish office at 344-9814.