

# Parent Handbook



**ST HELENA'S CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
950 Grove Avenue, Edison, NJ 08820

**Rev. Anthony M. Sirianni, Pastor**  
**Ms. Lynne Soltys, DRE**

*OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION ~ 732.549.4660*  
[www.sthenaedison.org](http://www.sthenaedison.org)

*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 mission of evangelization calls Catholic children  
"to be formed into disciples through the family's faith life  
and religious education."*

## 2010-2011

Dear Parents:

***Welcome to our Children's Faith Formation Program at St. Helena's Parish!***

You have selected a Roman Catholic faith formation program for your child where the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church will be taught, upholding current documents, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church and utilizing Diocesan programs to train catechists.

Religious education is much more than passing on facts - it is about *formation*. The life of every Catholic, from childhood to adulthood, is about being formed in the image of *Christ*. Such a process of formation is *always* new and never ends! One hour and fifteen minutes each week in a religious education class simply are not enough for formation. Sunday liturgies, daily prayer, conversation about Jesus and reading Scripture are essential. *The primary instruction of the Catholic family takes place at Sunday liturgies. Living in a world with conflicting values, we need the Eucharist to help us stand firmly with one another in our faith and become the followers of Christ that we are called to by our baptism. The family 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 (Vatican II, The Church in the Modern World.)*

It is the vision of this office to assist you in faith formation by providing opportunities for parents and children to develop their prayer lives and their formal understanding of the faith.

We are required by the Office for Catechesis of the Diocese of Metuchen to provide you with this handbook outlining the guidelines and expectations of our program, and to have your signed acknowledgment of receipt (found on the last page). Please read this handbook with your child so that you will both become familiar with its contents. Then, keep it in a convenient place for reference throughout the year. You are *always* welcome to contact this Office for additional assistance and clarification.

God Bless You

Lynne Soltys, DRE  
*Director of Children's Faith Formation*

# Our Philosophy

St. Helena Parish Children's Faith Formation (CFF) sees its primary role as actively participating in the universal mission of the Roman Catholic Church. Taking seriously the Gospel directive mandated by the Risen Christ to His disciples "to go, therefore and teach all nations," St. Helena Parish CFF seeks to give continual witness to the "Good News" of Jesus Christ.

We are committed to awakening in our students "an appreciation of the faith dimension of their lives, an understanding of the Faith Community both locally and globally, and a realization that service to the world community is an important part of the Gospel message."

The role of St. Helena Parish Children's Faith Formation is to complement parental training. Although it is the parents' duty to educate their children, working together, we can build a stronger faith for children and families.

We strive to provide a safe environment for learning and to bring quality religious education to all our students by offering a curriculum approved by the Diocese of Metuchen. Ultimately we call our students "to believe in God's love, to live it, and to spread it. (*Rule of life, Brothers of the Sacred Heart*)

The following objectives flow from this philosophy:

1. To proclaim Jesus, His person, His words, His teachings and He reveals them to us through Sacred Scripture and through Apostolic Tradition, "as interpreted by the successor of Peter, the Church's supreme pastor." (*Second Vatican council, Ad gentes, 5*)
2. To proclaim and witness to the infinite love of God for each of us.
3. To integrate faith and Christian living by strongly encouraging participation in the parish Mass and parish community.
4. To provide the student with an opportunity for growing in his/her personal prayer, and for participating in the spiritual life of the Parish.
5. To provide opportunities for the students to be of service to others.
6. To aid in the development of self-discipline and responsible behavior.
7. To provide continuous religious education and sacrament preparation.
8. To provide opportunities for parents to strengthen the faith-life of the family.

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OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION**

950 Grove Avenue  
Edison, NJ 08820  
732.549.4660

Website: [www.sthenaedison.org](http://www.sthenaedison.org)

**Rev. Anthony M. Sirianni, Pastor**  
**Rev. Joseph Lukose, C.M., Associate Pastor**

**Lynne Soltys, DRE, Director of Children's Faith Formation**  
**cffoffice@sthenaedison.org**

**OFFICE HOURS:**

**Monday to Friday – Please call for an appointment.**

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:**

**Monday Evening - Grades K - 8 6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.**

**FEES:**

\$85.00 per child will be assessed to cover the costs of books and materials.\*

\* A child will not be refused religious education due to the financial inability of a family to pay the fee. Prior arrangements must be made with the Office of Children's Faith Formation.

**TEXT BOOKS/MATERIALS**

*Call to Faith* – Our Sunday Visitor

**Students are required to bring text book, note book and a pen or pencil to class each and every week. If a book is lost, it will be the responsibility of the student/family to pay for a replacement.**

## ATTENDANCE

It is the recommendation of the Diocese of Metuchen, Office for Catechesis, that parish faith formation classes be held twenty-eight to thirty two sessions during the school year and that these sessions be at least one hour and fifteen minutes in length.

The PCL (Parish Catechetical Leader) or DRE (Director of Religious Education) is required to establish a system for notifying parents when a child is absent. (*PCL Handbook, Dio of Met, Pol #3 - 17 May, 2004*). This requirement is essential to keep the parent and the Office of Children's Faith Formation abreast of the child's whereabouts in the event of an emergency evacuation and/or lock down. Attendance will be taken within the first ten (10) minutes of class. Absentees will be reported to the office. If the Office of Children's Faith Formation was not previously notified by a parent of the child's absence, a call will be made to the home to confirm the child's absence.

In addition, there is a definite scope and sequence to the lessons taught each week. We recognize that the children are involved in many *wonderful* activities. However, religious education *must* have a priority. A child should not miss several weeks of class for sports, play or band practice. In addition to your child missing important foundational material, it will also send the wrong message to the rest of the class. Excessive absences hinder a child's progress, especially when preparing for a Sacrament.

IF YOUR CHILD IS GOING TO BE ABSENT, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO  
CALL THE OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION, PRIOR TO CLASS -  
**732.549.4660**  
**or email: [cffoffice@sthelenaedison.org](mailto:cffoffice@sthelenaedison.org)**

If the office is not opened at the time of your call, you may leave a message with your child's name, teacher and class and reason for absence. If you know well beforehand that your child will be absent you may notify the office via email: [cffoffice@sthelenaedison.org](mailto:cffoffice@sthelenaedison.org) or  
Phone 732.549.4660 leave a message.

**THREE (3) UN-EXCUSED\* ABSENCES PER SCHOOL YEAR WILL BE PERMITTED.**

*\* More than three (3) un-excused absences will be cause for repetition of the current level of education ... examples of excused absences might be death in the family, illness, etc. Sports or extra curricular activities do NOT fall into the category of excused absences. (PCL Handbook, Dio of Met. Pol #3 - 17 May, 2004)*

## ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Children are to **arrive** through the St. Helena Hall via the parking lot entrance **behind** the school. Classes will begin at 6:00 PM, please have your child here on time. Children should proceed directly to their assigned classroom. Aides will be available to guide the children.

### ***PUNCTUALITY IS ESSENTIAL***

All children will be **dismissed** from St. Helena's Hall. PLEASE NOTE THAT CHILDREN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO LEAVE THE SCHOOL BUILDING UNESCORTED. A PARENT MUST COME IN. Parents are asked to be **prompt** in picking up their children and are asked not to go into the classrooms to pick up a child. If an early dismissal is required, parents should obtain permission from the PCL/DRE located just outside the school office during class. Our catechists are volunteers and we are indebted to them. Please show your gratitude by arriving on time. As well, the Catechists will be punctual in dismissing your child on time.

## CODE OF BEHAVIOR

Our program continues to grow each year. However, we are totally dependent upon the dedication of our volunteers. As Christians, our behavior should be loving, kind and respectful. We realize that our children work hard and play hard, and may be tired and/or restless after a long day at school. However, we ask you to remind your child to give their utmost attention and respect by behaving in class and respecting the property of others. Children's Faith Formation classes are held in the home room of the St. Helena School students and the desks contain their books and personal belongings. ***It is of utmost importance that the desk contents are not disturbed in any way.*** Failure to respond to this attitude of respect will be handled on an individual basis. *If a discipline problem occurs and/or persists, we will contact you for your assistance.*

## ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT

If a student becomes ill or has an accident during class time, he/she will be brought to Religious Education Office and if the situation calls for it we will phone the child's parents or guardians. Every attempt will be made to reach a parent/guardian. There is no nurse on staff during CFF.

**STUDENT CELL PHONE AND IPOD/MP3 DIGITAL MUSIC PLAYER USAGE**

**CELL PHONES**

Cell phones *may* be brought to a Children's Faith Formation class

*under* the following conditions **ONLY**:

- X Phones must be kept in the **OFF** position and kept out of sight for the entire duration of any and all educational activities including but not limited to classroom instruction, attendance at Church, etc.
- X No cell phones may be used for picture taking.
- X No harassment or threatening of persons via the cell phone is permitted.
- X Cell phones may not be used for game playing, Internet or e-mail access or conversations, gambling or making purchases of any kind.
- X No pagers or other communication devices are allowed.
- X Those who violate any of the rules regarding cell phones will forfeit their privileges of bringing them to class.

**IPOD/MP3 DIGITAL MUSIC PLAYERS**

Students *may NOT* bring IPODS and/or MP3 digital music players to the St. Helena's School building.

**HEELIES** (Shoes/Sneakers with Wheels)

**FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR CHILDREN THEY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO WEAR  
HEELIES!**

Due to the dangerous nature of the sneakers/shoes containing roller skate wheels (Heelies), children will not be permitted to wear them.

## **RECORDS AND PROGRESS REPORTS**

Permanent records of your child's attendance and progress will be kept in the Office of Children's Faith Formation. If a family moves, at your request, a letter will be provided outlining your child's record. A report of your child's progress will be sent home in January and again at the end of the school year.

## **CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

If a catechist or the Director of Children's Faith Formation suspects a child has been abused, New Jersey State Statutes require that the State Division of Youth & Family Services be notified immediately. Diocesan policy requires that the Director of the Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection (732.562.2413) must also be notified of the suspected abuse.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Cigarette smoking is **not** permitted anywhere on the St. Helena Church/School grounds.

Drugs are **not** allowed in the St. Helena School building and/or on the grounds. If a student is found to be in possession, the student will be detained until the police are notified.

A student will not be sent home with a driver who is visibly impaired. The Director of Children's Faith Formation reserves the right to contact the emergency number provided on your child's registration form for assistance.

## **CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

The Children's Faith Formation program will adhere to the Crisis Management Plan in place for the St. Helena School in order to address crisis or emergency situations such as lock downs and evacuations.

Should conditions go to red alert, no one should be on the roads. However, parents will not be denied the right to pick up their child. A parent will need to sign the child out via special release request.



## SACRAMENTAL FORMATION

It is the policy of the Diocese of Metuchen that children preparing for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation are required to prepare for a period of two years. Please note that Kindergarten is not a required year and cannot be counted as year one of preparation. Thus, a child must attend the first and second levels of religious formation classes to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

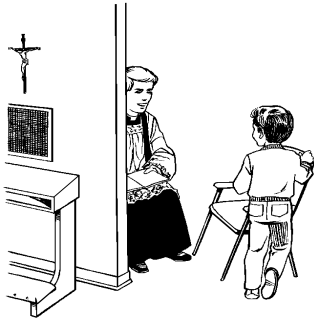


Parents have the right and responsibility to take an active part in the child's preparation for these Sacraments. Parent Meetings will be held to help parents participate more fully in their child's preparation. It is required that at least one parent or guardian attend the meetings. Typically, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be received during Lent and the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist will be received in May.

It is of utmost importance that your child approaches the Sacraments with an awareness of the love and sacredness to which the Lord is drawing them. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate each child's readiness to receive the Sacraments. This will be done on an individual basis and will be handled by the child's catechist, the PCL/DRE and the pastor. Please help your child to gain an adequate understanding of the Sacraments by educating them at home and by *taking them to Mass each Sunday.*

We cannot do this profound work without your *active* involvement and participation in the faith life of your child. *If a child does not express comprehension of the Sacrament about to be received, it will be necessary to delay your child's reception of that Sacrament.*

## **FIRST RECONCILIATION**



The experience of forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel message. Jesus came to show us the Father who is loving and forgiving. THIS is the God whom we wish our children to meet in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents and catechists should always portray the Sacrament as an encounter with a loving and forgiving God, who rejoices with them as they try to live as Jesus did.

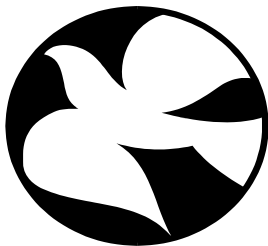
- X Children will be encouraged to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. Opportunities for the Sacrament will be made available within the religious formation program throughout the year.
  
- X No penitential service or confession shall be recorded, photographed or videotaped. This shall apply in a particular way to the celebration of First Reconciliation.

## **FIRST EUCHARIST**

The preparation and reception of First Eucharist should be seen as an opportunity to introduce the children into a fuller participation in God's family of which they are members through Baptism. Their experience of the celebration of the Eucharist, which hopefully has been established by participation at the Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) with their families, will have created in them a desire to participate fully in the sacrament.

It is our hope that parents and catechists will create the child's enthusiasm for total participation in the Eucharistic Liturgy. Children must understand that while the first reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist is special, it is so because it is the beginning of a life-long relationship with Jesus.

## CONFIRMATION



The Sacrament of Confirmation for children of catechetical age is conferred upon those who have been baptized, received the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, have been instructed in their faith and have demonstrated a capacity and willingness to participate in the life of the Church as determined by the PCL and the Pastor. Immediate preparation for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation consists of a minimum of two years of spiritual formation. The Pastor and/or his delegate will determine readiness for reception of the sacrament with the PCL/DRE.

### **SPONSORS**

Ideally, a sponsor is someone who already has been involved in the spiritual formation of the candidate. When possible the Baptismal sponsor should be chosen to show the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation.

#### *Canon Law #874 – for a person to be sponsor*

- X may be 14 years of age & fully initiated in the Catholic Church
- X must not be prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor
- X may be the same sponsor the candidate had at Baptism
- X may be a new sponsor
- X may be either male or female for any candidate
- X may NOT be the child's parent.

Eligibility of the sponsor will be determined by the Pastor. Eligibility for a person outside of St. Helena Parish may be obtained by letter from the sponsor's Pastor.

**The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated in the Spring of 2010 for students who have completed two full years of preparation.**

## RECONCILIATION/CONFESSION

Children, who have previously received the sacraments, will have the opportunity to attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the year, particularly during the Seasons of Advent and Lent. We encourage you as parents to set an example to your child by frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) as it offers a wellspring of grace and peace.

## ATTENDANCE AT MASS

Students who are studying the Catholic Faith need to regularly attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. To avoid this responsibility seriously undercuts any training that can be gained through faith formation. Liturgy feeds the faith and enables students to better understand what they are learning. In the course of the student's class time, Sunday Mass readings will be discussed and Gospel messages reinforced. Mass attendance is particularly serious when preparing for the reception of sacraments.

It is our hope and prayer that your attendance at weekly Mass will strengthen and secure the bonds of your family and bring great blessing to your lives.

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**SPECIAL DATES**

**FIRST RECONCILIATION:                      SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2011**

**FIRST HOLY COMMUNION:                      SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2011**

**CONFIRMATION - DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED**

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**PARENT MEETINGS**

**CONFIRMATION - TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2010 - 7:00 P.M.**

**FIRST RECONCILIATION - MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2011- 6:00 P.M.**

**FIRST HOLY COMMUNION - MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2011 - 6:00 P.M.**

Over the course of the two semesters, preparation meetings will be held for parents of children receiving the sacraments. Parent education is an essential part of sacramental preparation.

*Attendance by at least one parent is requested.*



## **WEATHER EMERGENCIES**

In the event that a class is canceled due to inclement weather,  
it will be announced on **WCTC 1450 AM Radio**.

It will also be posted online at **www.WCTC.com**.

**Please make every effort to check the above sources  
before calling the Office of Children's Faith Formation.**

If classes are cancelled, this office will send you an email as early as possible. *Please be certain the Office of Religious Formation is kept up to date with any changes in your email address and/or telephone/cell numbers. If we do not have a current telephone number or email address, we will be unable to notify you when there is a closing due to a weather emergency.*

**Student Code of Behavior**

1. Students are expected to show respect for all persons in words and actions.
2. Students must conform to the attendance policy as stated in the handbook.
3. Students should comply with the classroom rules set by their Catechist.
4. Students must not cause physical harm to themselves or to another.
5. Students must not destroy, deface or remove any property from the classroom, the desk they sit in, or the building.
6. Students are responsible for completing all in-class homework assignments to the best of their ability and according to the time schedule provided.
7. Students are expected to come to class prepared with textbooks, notebooks, pen and or pencil.
8. Students are expected to comply with all rules and regulations listed in our handbook.

Rules are necessary for the orderly operation of our Parish Religious Education Program. We expect you to contribute to an atmosphere of Christian concern for others. It is the duty of your parents and our Parish Religion Education Program to help you acquire self-control. To this end, you are expected to comply with the rules and regulations of St. Helena Parish Religion Education Program. Deliberate disregard of the policy may lead to: **1)** teacher reprimand; **2)** reprimand by the Office and a call to parents; **3)** parent conference; **4)** dismissal from program.

**AFTER READING THIS HANDBOOK, SIGN BELOW AND RETURN THIS PAGE TO THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS FORMATION NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup>. YOU MAY DROP IT OFF IN PERSON OR MAIL IT TO:**

**St. Helena Catholic Church  
Office of Children's Faith Formation  
950 Grove Avenue  
Edison, NJ 08820**

*I/We hereby acknowledge that I/we have read and understand the contents of this Parent Information Handbook regarding the Children's Faith Formation Program at St. Helena's Parish.*

*I/We agree to abide by the directives contained herein.*

***Please Print:***

Student (S) Name:

\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(please print)*

Parent/Guardian Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(please sign)*

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_