



**FAITH FORMATION CLASS
PARENT POLICY HANDBOOK**

(revised 6/13/18)

**MINISTRY OF EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS
FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM**

4475 Dublin Road, Hilliard, Ohio 43026
Phone: (614) 876-1272 Website: www.stbrendans.net

Dear parents,

On behalf of St. Brendan's and the Ministry of Evangelization and Catechesis, we welcome you to our Children's Faith Formation program!

Each of us is called to be a disciple—to say yes to Jesus' invitation and go wherever he leads us. When we surrender ourselves to the Lord and actively grow in our relationship with him, we discover true purpose for our lives along with the freedom, peace, and fulfillment that we long for so deeply. This call extends to our children and those around us, to whom we play a pivotal role in leading toward Christ and the Catholic Church that he founded. All of us want the very best for our children. We want them to know their worth in the eyes of God, to make good choices, to live out the truth, and to be authentically happy both now and forever. This is why we strive to help them discover the timeless truths of the Catholic Faith and to experience a real, personal encounter with our Lord who never ceases to call us to himself.

As a parent, no one plays a more influential role in a child's life than you. Trends demonstrate that when parents develop their own faith and model it to their children, their children are much more likely to follow their footsteps and continue practicing their faith as they grow into adulthood. Today, as younger generations are facing unprecedented challenges to their faith and morals, there is a tremendous need for this. As your child goes through the most formative years in their faith development, the most valuable thing you can do is continue to invest in your own faith as an adult. This in turn, will provide a deeper contribution to your child's faith than our children's faith formation programs ever could. We want your children's faith experience to take root in their lives—and know that you do too—which is why we invite each parent to join their child in faith formation by committing to the following:

- 1) To live out your Catholic Faith by attending weekly Mass, as well as engaging in daily prayer and frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- 2) To grow in your Catholic Faith by proactively investing in your own faith formation within our parish community. St. Brendan offers a number of worthwhile opportunities for adults that take less time per week than watching a movie—these programs include Walking with Purpose, Adult Bible Studies, That Man is You, and weekly Eucharistic Adoration.
- 3) To serve others in our parish community through offering your time, talent and treasure. The mission of St. Brendan is one we all share together—when each of us contribute to this mission, everyone benefits and our parish thrives!

We are blessed to have an amazing team of volunteers and staff who are dedicated to leading the youth of our parish closer to Jesus Christ and helping them build a life-long foundation for their faith. Our goal is to support parents in their role as the primary educators of their children by presenting an opportunity for children to discover the truth and joy of the Catholic Faith while building lasting friendships with their peers. We are grateful for your commitment to your children and our parish community. Know that you and your families are in our prayers!

In Christ,

The Ministry of Evangelization and Catechesis Staff

Why do I need to read through this handbook?

Think of this handbook as your guide to this coming year. We've taken the most important information you need to know and condensed it into one document, which means whether you are a new or returning parent, you'll want to carefully read through the following pages. If any questions come up during the year, this is the place to check first.

Within this handbook you'll find updated information about:

- Communications – How do I stay in the know and receive the latest updates? Who do I go to if I have questions?
- Fees – how much do the programs cost for each grade?
- Requirements & Assignments – what do my child and I need to do to advance through the program? How can we make the most of our faith formation experience?
- Attendance – What do I do if my child or I have a scheduling conflict?
- Sacraments – What does my child and/or I need to do to prepare for and receive the Sacraments?

Communications & Contact Information

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that they stay current with the correct information and news about Faith Formation. If your contact information changes during the year (email, phone, address), you will need to contact us so we can make sure your information is updated in our system. There are several communications sources that families will need to access throughout the year:

- **Flocknote**
 - News and updates will be mainly sent out through our parish email service called Flocknote. **Each Faith Formation family is expected to sign up for flocknote if they are not signed up already.** To sign up for flocknote visit: <https://stbrendans.net/keeping-in-touch> . If you are already signed up for flocknote, make sure your email address is updated and your settings are correct.
- **Website**
 - *The following information can be found on our website at <https://www.stbrendans.net/childrens-faith>*
 - Weekly lesson plans for classes and home faith
 - All class and home faith registration information
 - Yearly calendar of dates and events
 - Sacramental information

- Volunteer forms
- School & parking maps
- Information about other parish activities

- **The Ministry of Evangelization and Catechesis Office**

- Phone to call during Faith Formation classes: (614) 876-1272 ext. 292 (no voicemail)
- Staff
 - Director of Youth Evangelization & Catechesis: Josh Kilmer ext. 231 or jkilmer@stbrendans.net
 - Assistant to the Director: Bonnie Creeger ext. 233 or bcreeger@stbrendans.net
 - Director of Middle School Youth Ministry: Anna Dick ext. 237 or adick@stbrendans.net
 - Early Childhood Coordinator: Mrs. Teresa Boyne ext. 285 or tboyne@stbrendans.net
 - Administrative Support: Mrs. Lynn Mickey – lmickey@gmail.com

- **Catechists**

- If your child is enrolled in Faith Formation classes, their catechist may also send out periodic email updates and information about class projects.

WEATHER EMERGENCIES & CANCELLATIONS

If St. Brendan School (and Hilliard City Schools) are closed on a Monday, the Faith Formation classes for that night will be cancelled. If the school closes during the school day, the same will hold true. Faith Formation will be closed for that night. St. Brendan Faith Formation Class cancellation notifications will be sent out through Flocknote, as well as listed on the local TV station's closing reports. Do not count on those reports. We call with our closings but the stations do not always post it in a timely manner. This instruction is also listed on the main link of our website.

For special events and Sacramental occasions, please check your email and/or stbrendans.net for cancellations in the event of inclement weather.

PARENT EMERGENCIES

In the event of an emergency where you need to contact the Faith Formation office during Monday evening classes, please call our emergency line at: 614-876-1272 x. 292. For all other calls related to Faith Formation, please contact us during our normal office hours at 614-876-1272 x. 233

Children and Teen Faith Formation Classes

Raising your children in the Catholic faith is both a privilege and a commitment that you made when you brought your child to the waters of Baptism. St. Brendan encourages and supports parents in their vocation through providing Faith Formation programs where children are able to enjoy fellowship together and allow their faith life to unfold during our weekly sessions. Our aim is to offer a faith-engaging experience wherein children can grow in their relationship with God and learn about our Catholic Faith in an age-appropriate and organized manner.

Monday Evening Classes (Grades K-7): begins the Monday after Labor Day & ends in Mid-May

There are two shifts available:

- "A" shift from 4:30-5:45 PM **(for grades K-7)**
- "B" shift from 6:15-7:30 PM **(for grades 1-7)**

Sunday Afternoon Classes (Grade 8): begins the Sunday after Labor Day & ends in Mid-May

- Classes are from **1:30-3 PM** in the School. ***Please notice the NEW TIME.***
- **SAVE THE DATE** for the 2018 Fall Confirmation Retreat: Friday, 9/28 - Sunday, 9/30 at Damascus Catholic Mission Campus. More details to come in August!

Program Cost:

St. Brendan is pleased to offer reduced (parish subsidized) Faith Formation fees to active parishioners. By Diocesan Guidelines, in order for a family to receive the parishioner rate, they must be acknowledged by the parish as a "participating member". For this to be the case it is necessary that they:

- Are registered in the parish,
- Are recognized by the pastor as a family participating in the sacramental life of the parish by attending mass on Sundays and Holy Days,
- Contribute time and talent to the ministries of the parish,
- They regularly contribute an appropriate portion of their annual income to the financial support of the parish.
- Parishioners who do not meet this criteria will be charged the same cost as non-parishioners (see below).

Early Registration is July 2-15. Regular Registration is July 16-August 1. Fees are per child.

- **Kindergarten:** Early Registration is \$145. Regular Registration is \$160.
- **Grades 1-6:** Early Registration is \$185. Regular Registration is \$205.
- **Grade 7:** Early Registration is \$260. Regular Registration is \$290.**
- **Grade 8:** Early Registration is \$260. Regular Registration is \$290.**

- Confirmation Fee: \$125 (includes 2-night confirmation retreat, bus fare, and Sacramental expenses)

** If students are missing any books needed from the previous year, additional fees will apply.

- **Non-parishioners** will pay the full cost of Faith Formation. **Early Registration** is \$315 per child & **Regular Registration** is \$350 per child. You must also submit a letter of permission from the Director of Religious Education of your parish to be approved for registration.

8th Grade Confirmation Requirements

8th grade is a pivotal year as students ready themselves for Confirmation and prepare for high school. This is why 8th grade students are asked to meet certain requirements before they can be confirmed. These requirements are intended to help students deepen their faith and grow in their relationship with Christ. Each 8th grade student in Faith Formation Classes, Home Faith, and the School commits to the following:

- **Attending the 8th Grade Fall Confirmation Retreat:** 2 night retreat hosted at *Damascus Catholic Mission Campus*, CYSC's brand new high-adventure camp. Past retreats have been a huge success that made a positive impact on the rest of the year. This year, the retreat will take place on Friday, 9/28 - Sunday, 9/30. More details to come in August.
- **Completing 13 service hours** during 8th grade year (hours may begin to be applied at the beginning of the summer after 7th grade). Service hours need to be completed by April 1st. It is best for service hours to be completed through a ministry or event at St. Brendan Church. Our office will periodically send out volunteer requests throughout the year. If needed, students may also complete their service hours through other types of service activities within the community as long as they are not paid to do it and the service falls in line with the Catholic Faith. Service Hours will need to be recorded on a Log Sheet available at: <https://stbrendans.net/confirmation-1>
- **Attending 1 out of 4 of the Living the Faith Series.** Living the Faith is a speaker series that consists of one-hour faith-based talks hosted throughout the year at either St. Brendan or St. Brigid. As part of their preparation, each Confirmation student will be required to attend 1 of the 4 talks and are encouraged to attend more if they would like. Parents are also encouraged to attend but not required. Dates and locations will be listed at: <https://stbrendans.net/confirmation-1> .
- **For parents**, there is a required Confirmation parent meeting in the fall. Dates and details will be sent out closer to the beginning of classes.

Sunday morning Children's Liturgy of the Word (ages 4-7)

- Over the course of the school year, Children's Liturgy of the Word is typically offered at the 8:45 & 10:30 AM Masses (open to ages 4 to 7 years old). For a schedule, please see: <http://stbrendans.net/childrens-liturgy-of-the-word>.
- *Children's Liturgy of the Word* is a wonderful way to complement Faith Formation classes at no cost. It aims to help engage children in the Mass and teach them how to participate (note that it is not a substitute for elementary Faith Formation though). Children are not required to attend children's liturgy of the word but are very welcome to try it out. Most children love it and parents do too! Parents do not need to sign up their children for Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- *How it works:* During the first part of Mass, children are invited to go off to a separate area in the church where they will hear about the Mass readings and receive a lively teaching that is geared toward them. Then, when the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins (during the offertory), children will re-join their families.

FAITH FORMATION ATTENDANCE POLICY

From the day-to-day values taught in the home, you know that consistency is a key element in the mental and spiritual growth patterns of children. We hold the same mindset regarding your commitment to faithfully having your child attend our weekly sessions. Consistency is important in the continuing spiritual development of your child, and we see it exemplified in two ways: 1) the way in which you ask about and reinforce the lessons taught in the home following class and, 2) on the value you place on faithful attendance in class.

Faith Formation classes are in session for 75 minutes each week beginning in mid September and ending in early May. At each class we take attendance using a form provided to each catechist. Because these forms become legal documents in the event they are needed in custody situations, we keep them for a period of 7 years. Our attendance policy is listed below.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

- If the child arrives on time, the child is marked "PRESENT" on the attendance form for that night.
- if the child comes late, the mark on the sheet reads: PRESENT/LATE.
- if the child comes into class after the attendance forms have been collected, the child must come down to the Faith Formation office in the school to let us know he/she has arrived so the mark can be changed from ABSENT to "PRESENT/LATE."
- On the 3rd absence, an email or postcard is sent to the families indicating the date of the absence and the list of other absences along with the invitation to teach at home the lesson missed. Every time there is an absence after that 2nd time, an additional email or postcard will be sent. It is our way of connecting with you letting you know of our concern and asking if circumstances at home have changed, or if the child is/has not been well. We ask you to respond to us. In the event of regular or extended

absences, we will “work” with you giving you options for “at home” make up. Always keep close contact with the child's catechist and our MEC office when conditions like this occur.

POLICY FOR MISSED CLASSES

- If a child is going to be missing a class, please notify their catechist and the Ministry of Evangelization and Catechesis office in advance. Parents will need to make sure their children read through the missed lesson in their books and complete all of the required assignments that they missed.
- If for some reason, a child will be absent for an extended period of time, you have the option of completing the weekly lessons with your child from home during that time. First, you will need to first notify the Ministry of Evangelization and Catechesis office. Then, once approved, you may use the lesson plan outline located on our website, completing the information in the book and returning the completed work to the child's catechist upon the return to class.
- The second option is to transfer to the Home Faith program for the remainder of the catechetical year. See the *Home Faith parent handbook* for more information. You will need to register and purchase books for that program.

If we do not hear from you, a written comment will appear on the child's progress report (issued twice a year). **By the end of the year, if the child has 5 or more total absences they will need to complete makeup work before they can advance to the next grade level. If they have missed up to a third or more of classes, they will need to repeat the grade.** A letter or email addressing the attendance issue will be sent out at the end of the year outlining these options. **Please note that even if a child misses less than 5 classes, he or she expected to makeup missed classes at home by reading and completing the corresponding lessons from their book.** Parents and children will also need to find out from the catechist if they need to do any additional makeup work for the class they missed.

Again, the key to a consistent plan of action is entering into a conversation with the child's catechist and our MEC office.

CLASSROOM CARE

The rooms and spaces we use during Faith Formation are also used by St. Brendan School during the week. Desiring to be good stewards, we ask that both children and adults treat the property with the utmost care and respect. This is why we do not use the school supplies but provide our own materials for faith formation children to use in class. **Please remind your child, especially if they are younger, that they are not to take any supplies home with them unless it is their own personal work (i.e. arts & crafts, etc.)** The destruction, misuse, or stealing of school and parish property will be subject to disciplinary measures.

DISCIPLINE & DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Each week, children come together for 75 minutes of class. This is a time for them to dive deeper into their Catholic Faith with their peers. While children are encouraged to have fun, they are also expected to be attentive, kind, and respectful. Such behavior creates an environment that benefits everyone in the classroom. When a child acts disruptively or inappropriately however, they not only inhibit their own learning experience but also the learning experience of other children.

As such, **disrespect toward a catechist, aide, other student, or any inappropriate behavior or language will not be tolerated.** Incidents will be recorded and parents will be contacted. Since catechists are responsible for their classes, they are authorized to respond to inappropriate behavior. If inappropriate behavior persists, corrective measures will be taken. Depending on the situation, a child may be sent to the faith formation office, or a parent may be asked to temporarily accompany them in class. In certain cases, the child may be removed permanently from class. Catechists are instructed to inform parents about disruptive and/or inappropriate behavior.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

One class per week in no way compares to what you teach by word and example the other six days of the week. Here is a self-assessment guide to help encourage your child's spiritual growth and bring their lessons to life:

- ✓ I become familiar with the lessons in my child's book and engage him/her in conversation on the basic concepts taught each week
- ✓ I ask my child to tell me 2-3 things they learned in class
- ✓ I try to apply what was learned in class to our day to day family living
- ✓ Someone that I love taught me my prayers when I was young: I do the same with my child
- ✓ I often use real-life situations and media to support their faith formation
- ✓ Our family has been blessed in so many ways; I am teaching my child how to give back through service
- ✓ I model an active and vibrant faith to my children by praying daily, attending weekly Mass, and participating in other parish activities like adult Faith Formation opportunities.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

The registration fee collected per child/family helps pay for textbooks, pencils, pens, paper, folders, scissors, glue, construction paper, poster paper, storybooks, felt boards, videos used in our program. Our program also pays a fee to the Parish for the use of the building and its facilities.

PHOTO PERMISSIONS

From time to time, we will take photos at parish and Home Faith events. We sometimes share these photos on the St. Brendan website, press releases, or in marketing materials. We do not include student names with the photos.

If you prefer that your child does not appear in any photos, you have the option to select “do no consent” to the photo release on the online registration form. We maintain a database of parents who do not grant permission for photos.

ARRIVAL, DISMISSAL, AND PARKING LOT INSTRUCTIONS

EARLY RELEASE & DISMISSAL

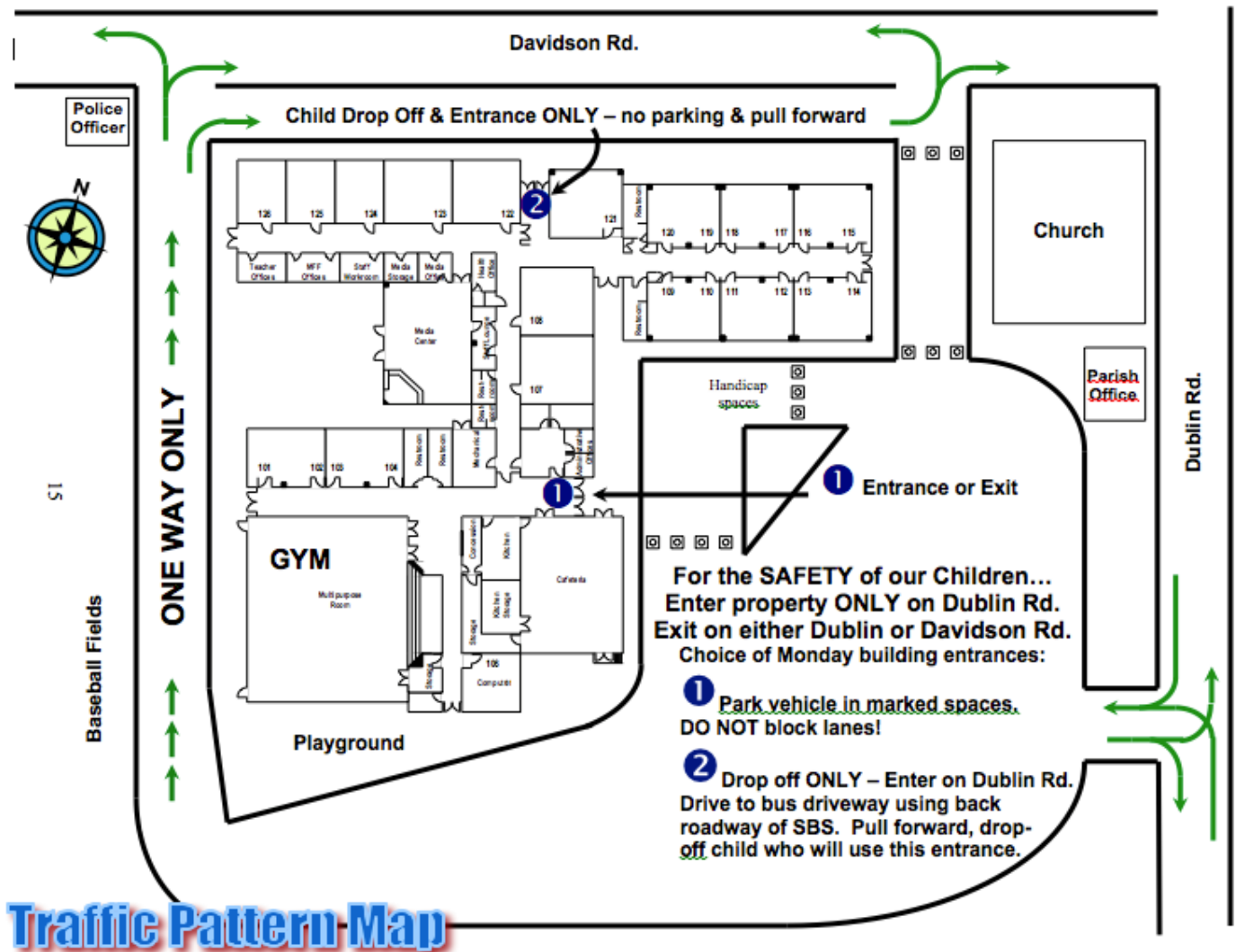
A child's spiritual, moral, and personal development is a top priority, which is why it is important that children regularly come to class and remain there without interruption. Children will only be able to truly learn that God should be a priority in their lives when their experience outside of class reinforces this.

At the same time, there are legitimate reasons for having a child leave class early. In the event that a parent chooses to pick up a child early from class, that parent must come to the Faith Formation office in the school, fill in the needed information on the “sign out form” which lists reason for the dismissal, and accompany the office worker to the classroom who will validate with the catechist permission the removal of the child from the room. For safety reasons, the child will not be released directly from the classroom unless this procedure is followed.

PARKING, DROP-OFF, & PICK-UP INSTRUCTIONS

To relieve congestion, we have two access doors available for entering the school building at the beginning of the sessions:

- ① on traffic pattern map - the main entrance doors for drop off and parking, OR
- ② on traffic pattern map – the door on Davidson Rd. for DROP OFF ONLY – Do Not Park



At the beginning of the year as people are getting used to the traffic pattern, we have a police officer direct traffic. In order to ensure a safe and orderly environments, **parents will need to continue following this traffic pattern throughout the year.**

Until November, or after if a parent chooses, **children in grades 1 & 2 need to be accompanied to the classroom by a parent or older sibling.** After November, when the child is familiar with the building and classroom location, the parent no longer needs to accompany the child to the room. Parents, however, are always welcome in the building.

An automatic bell signals the beginning and end of class.

If you choose to accompany your child into the building, you MUST use the parking lot doors and show your Parent Key Tag to the monitor stationed at the entry. In the event no parent key tag is shown, each parent will be asked for some type of picture identification and to sign the entry notebook located at the front desk.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS

The Office of Evangelization & Catechesis provides formation for the reception of FIRST EUCHARIST, FIRST RECONCILIATION AND CONFIRMATION for all children in the parish enrolled in St. Brendan School and in our Faith Formation program. Our office is charged with the preparation of specific sacraments for our parish children and it is a “charge” we take seriously. The children from St. Brendan School and the children from Faith Formation receive these sacraments together at scheduled liturgies. Our parish children are our parish children regardless of where they receive preparation. Because we are a large parish, we have more than one date or time scheduled for the reception of First Eucharist and Confirmation. Parents choose the time that best suits their needs.

Sacraments are not received in a vacuum. They are celebrated within a vibrant parish community as well as anticipated and valued within family life. Because catechesis and an understanding of each sacrament is essential, children who ask for the reception of these sacraments with no prior catechesis will need the following support before the child is eligible for that sacrament. The guidelines are listed below:

THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST EUCHARIST

We are invited to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist every day of our lives, and do so, especially on weekends. Holy Eucharist is a lifelong, ongoing sacrament. By going to Mass each Sunday, you are actively supporting what your child is learning through Faith Formation and helping them learn by example that nothing is more important than our relationship with God! The reception of this sacrament is the most frequent and common public experience in a church community.

What can I teach my child and how can I prepare at HOME?

Children watch us and often imitate what we do without knowing why we do what we do the way that we do it!! Just as you teach your children HOW to answer the phone, write a “Thank You” note, or complete chores around the house, so must you explain and model for them the gestures and practices we use when receiving the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. As the primary influence in your child’s life, you have the perfect opportunity to do this, but it takes time and a commitment on your part to do it. Ultimately, there is no better way for your child to grow in their appreciation for the Eucharist and prepare for it than by fulfilling your family’s responsibility of going to Mass each Sunday. Just like eating healthy, children may not always want to go to Mass but they need to in order to grow and thrive spiritually! Going to Mass every week can be challenging and children may be resistant, but keep going—your perseverance will pay off over time!

Who is Eligible to Receive?

- Usually received in Grade 2, but can be received at any time after that grade once preparation has been completed.
- **Children must be baptized before receiving First Communion and First Reconciliation.** If your child is not baptized they will need to go through special classes. For more information, please contact our office.
- If the child is enrolled in St. Brendan School in Grade 2, because our Catholic heritage is taught within the classroom on a regular basis, the child is eligible for the reception of First Eucharist in May of that year. If a child enters St. Brendan School in a grade other than Grade 2 and wishes to be prepared for and receive First Eucharist, the parent needs to contact our MEC office so that a plan of preparation and materials for the sacrament can be received and discussed.
- If the child enters our Home Faith Program or our Faith Formation program in Grade 2 where preparation for and catechesis on the sacrament is built into the curriculum for that year, the child will receive First Eucharist the following May once make up work for the year of catechesis that the child missed has been completed. If the child has missed 1st grade they will need to complete makeup work.
- If the child enters our program in a grade other than Grade 2, at least two years of catechesis is required before the child is eligible to receive. He/she will also need to complete “make up” work for the years of catechesis missing, and will receive specific information from our MEC office about the sacrament for understanding and review. It is the parent's responsibility to contact our MEC office, to mentor and prepare the child.
- Any child who has special needs and has the desire to receive First Holy Communion is exempt from the preparation process as noted above and will be eligible for the reception of the sacrament following parent request.

Attendance at the parent First Reconciliation/First Eucharist meeting in the Fall is a requirement.

THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST RECONCILIATION

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of God's greatest gifts to us. Desiring to forgive us, heal us, and restore us, Jesus established the Sacrament of Reconciliation so we could receive from his boundless mercy. Preparing children to receive this gift is an awesome responsibility. It is an opportunity to lead our children to open their hearts to receive the gift of forgiveness with joy and excitement. Like receiving the Eucharist, there is no better way for your child to grow in their appreciation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation than to model it by going yourself (feel free to bring them with you and have them sit in the church while you go). They will learn from your courage as you go to Confession and your joy after you've finished!

- If the child is enrolled in St. Brendan School in Grade 2, because our Catholic heritage is taught within the classroom on a regular basis, the child is eligible for the reception of First Reconciliation in November of that year. If a child enters St. Brendan School in a grade other than Grade 2 and wishes to be prepared for and receive First

Reconciliation, the parent needs to contact our MEC office so that a plan of preparation and materials for the sacrament can be discussed.

- If the child enters our Home Faith Program or our Faith Formation program in Grade 2 where preparation for and catechesis on the sacrament is built into the curriculum for that year, the child will receive First Reconciliation in November of that year. If the child has missed 1st grade they will need to complete makeup work.
- If the child enters our program in a grade other than Grade 2, at least two years of catechesis is required before the child is eligible to receive. He/she will also need to complete "make up" work for the years of catechesis missing, and will receive specific information from our MEC office about the sacrament for understanding and review. It is the parent responsibility to contact our MEC office, to mentor and prepare the child for the reception of the sacrament.
- Any child who has special needs, mental or physical, and has the desire to receive First Reconciliation, although not necessary, is exempt from the preparation process as noted above and will be eligible for the reception of the sacrament following parent request.

Once again, ***attendance at the parent First Reconciliation/First Eucharist meeting in the Fall is a requirement.***

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

It is a general practice that the Bishop of each diocese decides the appropriate age when the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred. In our diocese, it is in 8th grade when a young Catholic teen is confirmed in his/her faith.

Like First Communion and First Reconciliation, children must be baptized before receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. If your child is not baptized they will need to go through special classes that are separate from Home Faith. For more information, please contact our office.

Information about the sacrament and its 2 year preparation cycle is outlined on our web site under the title "Sacrament of Confirmation." ***Attendance at the parent Confirmation meeting in the Fall is a requirement. For more information on Confirmation requirements see page 6.***

See the Columbus Diocese Harassment Policy on the following pages.

COLUMBUS DIOCESE HARASSMENT POLICY

HARASSMENT POLICY

1. Harassment can take many forms. Harassment can occur at any parish activity, and/or can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at programs sponsored by the parish at other locations. It does not include compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability or other protected characteristics.
2. It is the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a spiritually enriching environment, in all programs and activities, free of all forms of harassment and intimidation. No participant, volunteer adult leader, or parish staff member - male or female - should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unsolicited and/or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical.
3. Conduct which constitutes sexual harassment is prohibited. Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - > Offensive sexual flirtations, advances, propositions;
 - > Continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual or gender-based nature;
 - > Explicit or degrading sexual or gender-based comments about another individual or his or her appearance;
 - > The display or circulation of sexually explicit or suggestive writing, pictures or objects;
 - > Any offensive or physical conduct which shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of gender or sex;
 - > Graffiti of a sexual nature;
 - > Fondling oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others;
 - > Spreading rumors about or categorizing others as to sexual activity.

Sex harassment is not limited to conduct that is sexual in nature - it also includes harassment that is based on **gender**. Gender-based harassment, which is also prohibited, is conduct that would not occur except for the sex of the person involved. An example would be referring to a woman by or as a female body part, or a demeaning sex-based term, or treating people differently because of their gender. The same prohibitions apply with regard to inflammatory or offensive comments or conduct which are based upon race, color, age, religion, disability, or national origin. In short, working relationships between employees and volunteers must be based on mutual respect.

Sexual harassment also includes the taking of, or refusal to take, any personnel or other action on the basis of a person's submission to or refusal of sexual overtures. No person should so much as imply that an individual's "cooperation" or submission to unwelcome sexual activity will have any effect on the individual's employment, assignment, compensation, advancement, development, program evaluation, participation in parish programs or activities, or any other condition of employment or achievement.

Not all physical conduct is necessarily considered sexual in nature. (For example, a catechetical leader hugging a child after an accomplishment, a catechist consoling an adolescent with an injury, or physical conduct during an activity to enhance catechetical learning like engaging in movement to accompany liturgical music would not be considered sexual conduct.) However, peer-based sexual harassment is a form of prohibited conduct where the harassing conduct creates a hostile environment.

4. A sexually hostile environment can be created by a parish employee, volunteer, participant, or visitor to the parish activity.
5. Any person who believes that he/she is subject to unlawful harassment or intimidation must contact either the (a) program administrator, (b) pastor, or (c) diocesan director of religious education. A complaint must be filed in writing. In the event that an individual alleges harassment by a program administrator or a pastor, the individual may file the complaint with the diocesan director of religious education. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and the person initiating the complaint will be advised of the outcome of the investigation.
6. Where it is determined that harassment has occurred, the appropriate authority will take immediate disciplinary action against any program administrator, volunteer, or staff engaging in harassment. The response shall take into account the individuals and circumstances. Such action may include, depending on the circumstances, disciplinary measures up to and including termination of services.
7. No retaliation against anyone who reports harassment will be tolerated. The Diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.