

St. Andrew Catholic Church



Faith Formation: Lifelong and Ongoing Information and Guidelines

“The Church's catechetical mission aims to help the faithful of all ages to grow in both human and Christian maturity, enriching the whole of life with the leaven of the Gospel.”

*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan
for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*



Fr. Leo Hodges, Pastor

ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC COMMUNITY



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Principal

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Dear Parents of children in Faith Formation and Sacramental Preparation:

The Catholic faith has been around for more than 2,000 years because it has been passed down from one generation to the next. People just like you and I have experienced the importance of having a faith, a belief system in God, and by word and example have passed down those values to family and friends, much like the first followers of Christ. Can you name the people in your life who have witnessed the Catholic faith for you?

One of the most important responsibilities we have at St Andrew is continuing the long legacy of passing on the faith and evangelizing the next generation. The structure in which we evangelized and catechized was once called CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) or Religious Education; it is now called Faith Formation. As we move closer to starting another year of Faith Formation, I need your help so this legacy of sharing our faith may continue.

Faith Formation starts at home. It is important to remember that the Church is there to help and assist parents, but nothing and no one can replace the influence of the example of a parent on the spiritual life of a child. I encourage you to develop a habit of praying with the family, even if it is just a few minutes at mealtimes, or at the end of the day. Also,

- make Mass a priority in your week.
- talk about what happens at Mass with kids and why we attend.
- use the faith to explain to kids why we do some things and do not do others.
- go to confession as a family.

Doing these things helps children to see faith not just for Sunday morning or Wednesday evening at religious education class, but as a way of life. Most

importantly, your child will mimic your attitude about church, and your attitude will speak much louder than your behavior.

We live in a very material and very busy world, and sometimes faith formation can get put on the back burner to school, sports, household busyness, etc. Many stop learning about their faith once they get confirmed, which normally takes place in 9th grade. Yet, we would never think that a 9th grade education provides enough information to maneuver successfully in this world; the same is true with our faith.

The church will always have sacraments. There is not a correct age for your child to receive a sacrament. What is imperative is that you and your child have the freedom in your schedule to take the necessary time for preparation for the sacrament. If your schedule and/or your child's schedule is not conducive (good) for the time commitment, then it is not time for your child to experience the sacrament. On the other hand, if you can make time in your schedule, then it is time for your child to experience the sacrament.

Stopping Faith Formation after you or your child receive a sacrament does not provide the wisdom or spiritual fortitude to be peaceful and less anxious in a more and more complex society. That is why lifelong faith formation is so important—it is the gift the church gives you so you can live in and like Christ.

Remember that when you register your child/youth for Faith Formation, you are saying that you understand that their participation in Faith Formation Ministry depends upon your willingness to make a spiritual commitment to their religious formation and a financial commitment to pay tuition.

Please take time to read this document. If I can be of any help to you, please contact me. Know that I pray for you and your children.

In Christ I am,



Fr. Leo Hodges, Pastor

Nous sommes un en Christ • We are one in Christ • Somos uno en Cristo



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Lifelong and Ongoing: From Womb to Tomb

Faith Formation is the term that the church uses to invite and enable ongoing conversion to Jesus, to promote and support active membership in the Christian Community, and call and prepare adults to act as disciples in Mission to the World. This includes classes, book studies, retreats, preparation for sacraments and alike. It is continuous, from “womb to tomb”, from our birth to the natural end of our lives. God invites us to deepen our relationship with Christ throughout our entire life. The Church has a clear vision and hopes for each phase and stage of a lifelong journey of faith.

We at St. Andrew Catholic Church believe that God calls everyone (children, youth, adults, and seniors) to continue to learn about their faith and spiritual journey. Learning about our faith is not just for children! It is for everyone! Every Catholic is invited to walk with Christ in his or her daily life, to gather faithfully on Sunday at Mass, and to grow in wisdom and knowledge about the faith. When adults—parents—grandparents—single—old and young—adults of all cultural backgrounds—participate in faith formation, we mature together in our faith as a community, and we are better equipped to help the children and youth of our community to grow in faith.

Parents as Faith Formatters (Catechists)

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues....

Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 2223

As parents, we are responsible for the moral and faith formation of our children. You are their first and most important teacher (catechist).

Yet, many parents feel less than adequate to teach their children religion. Perhaps this is partly because of a misguided presupposition that “religion” is just a school subject. It is, of course, but it is so much more. It is true that what we call “catechesis” is a process of instructing people in the knowledge and practice of the faith. It includes prayer, moral teaching, the sacraments, and the teaching of specific content involved in the creed that we profess. Nothing and no one can replace the influence of the example of a parent on the spiritual life of a child.

Faith is a way of living. By taking the time to pray—both at home and in Church—families show their children the importance of a God-centered life. Opportunities for prayer are as varied as the experiences of life: before and after sleeping, eating, traveling, playing, studying—even shopping or acquiring things! Yes, it is not a bad idea to pray for the wise use of our material resources when there are so many temptations to waste them on non-essentials that do not bring lasting happiness. However, no prayer surpasses attending Mass, especially on Sundays.

The decision to bring the whole family to Church every Sunday, in addition to being an occasion to be nourished by the Gospel and the Body and Blood of Christ, communicates to children that life is more than work or sports, important as both activities are. Sunday Mass communicates the message that we are more than what we do, that we have a Savior who wants to come to us and give us something we cannot get from anywhere else: total forgiving mercy and eternal life.

Faith Formation for Children, Youth and Adults

Faith Formation at St. Andrew Catholic Church is for children K-12th grade and adult parents, guardians and parishioners wanting to continue to grow in their faith and in relationship with God.

Everyone who signs up for Faith Formation must be registered in the parish and be willing to attend Mass on a weekly basis.

Faith Formation sessions for children K-12th and adults are on Sundays from August through May. They begin with Mass at 11 AM followed by age-appropriate gatherings after Mass until 1:30 PM. Youth Ministry sessions for youth in 7th through 12th grade are mostly all year long.

It is expected that parents/guardians with children in Faith Formation grades K-12th attend adult faith formation sessions while their child/youth attend their session. The adult sessions are open to everyone in the parish, regardless of whether they have children in Faith Formation. Adult Faith Formation sessions are offered in English, Spanish and Creole.

Registration and Attendance

You must sign up your child/youth every year for Faith Formation including and especially if they are in a second year of preparation for a sacrament. You must use the most recent sign up form for that year. Forms will be available on the Church's webpage in July or August of every year. It is expected that registration forms will be submitted by August 15.

Registration as a parishioner at St. Andrew is NOT the same as registering (signing up) for Faith Formation.

Attendance at Sunday Sessions

Attendance for Mass is taken at Faith Formation sessions every Sunday. If your child/youth misses too many sessions during the year, they will need to repeat the year. If your child/youth does not attend Mass regularly (meaning at least 3 times a month), they will also be asked to repeat the year even if they have perfect attendance at Sunday sessions. Both Mass attendance and Faith Formation attendance are required.

If your child is signed up late for faith formation, the dates that they miss during the beginning of the year will be counted as absences for the total attendance at year-end. For example, if faith formation starts late August and you sign up your child/youth in October, the sessions that happened between August and October that they did not attend will count as absences and taken into consideration at year-end evaluation.

If you are transferring from another Catholic parish where your child attended Faith Formation, you must request a letter of attendance from the pastor of your previous church and bring it to the church.

Circle of Grace

The Diocese of Orlando has implemented a child abuse awareness, prevention, and safety program in all parishes and Catholic schools as mandated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This program is called Circle of Grace.

There will be two to four Circle of Grace sessions that your child cannot miss. You will be notified when these sessions happen in the year; please make sure your child is present.

Sacramental Preparation

Sacramental preparation refers to sessions specifically designed for children, youth, and adults who are preparing to receive a Sacrament. In addition to attending Sunday Faith Formation sessions, children, youth, and adults preparing for the Sacrament of First Reconciliation, First Communion, and/or Confirmation must attend preparation sessions some Wednesdays—the number of sessions varies depending on the Sacrament.

Attendance at First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation Sessions

Attendance at all sacramental preparation sessions is mandatory. Please contact Kathy Morgan or Martha Lushman-Zayas, if there is a problem attending a session.

There are 5 sessions for First Reconciliation second year preparation, 5 sessions for First Communion second year, and 12 sessions for Confirmation second year preparation. All sessions will be on Wednesdays. All sacramental preparation sessions are mandatory.

When registering your child to receive First Communion, you must submit their baptism certificate. If they were baptized at St. Andrew, you do not need to do this--just indicate on the form that they were baptized at St. Andrew.

Your child will not move up to their second year of First Communion until we receive their baptism certificate.

First Communion (includes First Reconciliation)

The Sacrament of First Communion includes preparing for the Sacrament of First Reconciliation. Those preparing to receive their First Communion must have their first confession prior to receiving their First Communion. There are five sessions for preparation for First Reconciliation. These sessions will be in late Spring.

According to the Catholic Church, children should receive the Sacrament of First Communion at the age of reason. While the custom has been that children in second grade are of the age of reason, there is no hard-and-fast rule for determining the age of reason: it is a judgment call on the part of parents, pastors, and teachers—the ones who know the child the best to determine when the child is ready to celebrate the Sacrament.

First Communion begins with children in second grade or above and it is at **minimum** a two-year process depending on the maturity of the child and their knowledge and understanding of the Sacrament. If the child, youth, adult knows their prayers, attends Mass regularly and has an age-appropriate understanding of the Sacrament, the Catechist will recommend them for celebration of the Sacrament at the end of the second year. If not, the child, youth, adult will be asked to prepare for an additional year. First Communion is celebrated in the summer of the second year of preparation. Children should be in third grade or higher.

First Communion Preparation for Children in Catholic School

Preparation for First Communion for children attending Catholic School is a one-year process if the children:

- have continuously been in Catholic School for the last **two** years.
- attend Sunday Mass regularly.
- attend Sunday Faith Formation sessions during their year of preparation.
- attend all Wednesday sessions for First Reconciliation and First Communion during the year of preparation.
- submit all necessary paperwork including baptism certificate.

Sunday Mass attendance, Sunday Faith Formation sessions, and Wednesday/Saturday (Confirmation only) Sacramental Preparation classes are mandatory for the preparation of the Sacrament.

Confirmation Process

Confirmation preparation is a process that begins in 8th grade or above. However, prior to beginning the two-year process of preparation for Confirmation, the child/youth must have attended at least three consecutive years of faith formation.

Unfortunately, it has been our experience that when youth have signed up for Confirmation without years of consecutive faith formation, they are lacking in crucial information, basic catechesis, church experience, and preparation to begin the confirmation process. This is why we require the child/youth to be attending faith formation for three consecutive years prior to beginning preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Once admitted into the first year of preparation, the Sacrament is celebrated in the summer of the second year.

Here are some scenarios that will better explain this:

1. A child has not returned to faith formation since having their first communion in 3rd grade and they are now in 8th grade. Because of their absence from faith formation in grades 4-7, they missed crucial information about their faith and spiritual formation. They are not prepared to begin the two-year Confirmation program until they have learned information and experienced the religious and spiritual growth that happens in consecutive years of Faith Formation. Therefore, the youth will be admitted to the two-year Confirmation program in 11th grade after completing three consecutive years of faith formation in 8th, 9th and 10th grades. They will in turn receive their Confirmation in 12th grade.
2. A child stopped coming to faith formation in 5th grade and returns in 8th grade. Because of the child's absence, they missed crucial information about their faith and spiritual formation. They are not prepared to begin the two-year Confirmation program until they have learned information and experienced the religious and spiritual growth that happens in consecutive years of Faith Formation. The child will be admitted in the first year of preparation for confirmation in 11th grade (after the three consecutive years of faith formation in 8th, 9th, and 10th grade) and will receive the Sacrament at the end of the second year of preparation, in this case, 12th grade.
3. A child has regularly and consecutively attended faith formation after celebrating their first communion so the child will be admitted into the Confirmation process in 8th grade and will have their confirmation in 9th grade.

Obviously, the best choice is #3.

In addition to the three years of consecutive attendance in faith formation prior to be admitted to preparation for Confirmation, the youth must be attending Sunday Mass regularly, Sunday faith formation during both years, must attend all preparation sessions on Wednesdays, must know the prayers, and **must want to experience the Sacrament.**

Confirmation Preparation for Children in Catholic School

Confirmation preparation for youth/children attending Catholic School **is two years provided:**

- They have continuously been in Catholic School for the last **three years.**
- attend Sunday Mass regularly.
- attend Sunday Faith Formation sessions during the two-year preparation.
- attend Wednesday sessions for Confirmation in the second year of preparation.
- perform all community service hours.
- attend all confirmation retreats.
- submit all necessary paperwork including baptism certificate, First Communion certificate, and sponsor form.

Sunday Mass attendance, Sunday Faith Formation sessions, and Wednesday/Saturday Sacramental Preparation classes are mandatory for the preparation of the Sacrament.

Confirmation Readiness

When we were baptized, most of us were too young to speak on our own behalf, so our parents and godparents did it for us. During the baptism, parents promised to raise their children in the practice of the faith, yet sometimes, unfortunately, this does not happen.

When we get confirmed, we are “confirming” the faith and promises that our parents made on our behalf at our baptism. That is, when youth enter the Confirmation preparation process, they are ratifying for themselves the responsibility that parents took at baptism. What their parents promised on their behalf, they are now saying they will do with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is not uncommon that Confirmation students tell us that they are getting confirmed because their parents want them to be confirmed. This is most likely why most of the youth receive their Confirmation and do not return to church when it should be the opposite since they are confirming their faith.

Parents should never force their children to be confirmed. Confirmation students need to decide for themselves if they want to get confirmed or not. They are taking on the responsibility their parents had at their baptism. They should not be forced to do that if they do not want to or are not ready to do it.

Canon law addresses this very matter in Canon 889:

To receive confirmation licitly (outside the danger of death) requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.

Therefore, a child who feels forced or obligated is not properly disposed to receive the sacrament.

The hope is that parents, family members, church educators, and catechists, will help the youth understand the importance of their faith so that they continue to practice it after they have been confirmed; thus, continuing their faith journey after they receive the Sacrament.

Confirmation Sessions

Youth in the Confirmation preparation process must attend 15 confirmation preparation sessions on selected Saturdays and Wednesdays as well as regularly scheduled Youth Ministry sessions on Sunday afternoon and various retreats throughout the year.

The celebration of Confirmation will be contingent on the bishop's schedule. Parents/ guardians of youth must attend scheduled meetings. It is expected that adult candidates, their sponsors, and parents attend all preparation sessions on Wednesdays, join in retreats and service to the Parish.

Sunday Mass attendance, Sunday Faith Formation sessions, and Wednesday Sacramental Preparation classes are mandatory for the preparation of the Sacrament.

Retreat dates will be announced throughout the year.

Confirmation Paperwork Required

In addition to completing a Sign-up form for Faith Formation, we need the youth's baptism and First Communion certificates. If the youth was baptized at St. Andrew, you do not need to submit their baptism certificate. Please indicate on the form that they were baptized at St. Andrew.

The same holds true for First Communion certificates. If the youth received their First Communion at St. Andrew, we would have their certificate. If they do not, we will need a copy of their First Communion Certificate.

Confirmation Retreats, Service Projects and Stations of the Cross

Retreats are a very important part of preparation for Confirmation.

There will be at least two retreats during the year. The retreats are mandatory for Year 2 candidates and optional for Year 1 candidates. Please refer to the Confirmation Schedule for Retreat Dates.

A fully initiated Catholic participates in social justice issues and continues to serve the community in which they belong. We ask that all candidates serve a minimum of 15 hours per year, 30 hours total. You must have at least 15 hours completed and signed off before entering your second year of preparation for Confirmation.

We will offer many ways to receive these hours. Therefore, if they are participating there should not be a problem. They may receive hours for altar serving, ushering, singing, or playing an instrument in the choir, and serving food after Mass. Other service hours will be offered throughout the year.

We ask that all youth participate in the most important times of our church life. It is important that our youth understand what we believe and one way of doing that is to take part in it. They must participate in the liturgical celebrations during Advent, attend the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil) and participate in the "Burial" on Good Friday. There will be no exceptions unless there is an emergency.

Confirmation candidates should also experience a catholic baptism, a catholic wedding, a catholic funeral, a celebration of first communion and go to reconciliation. If they attend Mass on a regular basis, this will not be a problem in the case of baptism, first communion or reconciliation. We will make opportunities available for the wedding and or funeral if necessary.

All activities, including retreats, will need a signed permission form from the parent. Forms will be sent home in advance of activities. Forms must be signed by the parent and returned prior to the activity. Youth without permission forms will not be allowed to participate in the event.

Cell phones & iPads During Confirmation Sessions

Cell phones and iPads are not allowed during Faith Formation Sunday sessions or Wednesday sessions. If your youth has a cell phone or iPad, these must not be seen until the session is over. If they are, they will be confiscated until the end of the session. Youth will be responsible for retrieving them before they leave. If this becomes a habit, we will ask that a parent come to pick it up after the session and we may have to discuss leaving them home.

Confirmation Sponsors

Your confirmation candidate will need a Sponsor. The role of the Confirmation Sponsor involves much more than simply standing behind the Candidate as the Bishop confirms him/her. It is the beginning or the continuation of a lasting relationship of mentoring and guidance. The prayers and support of the Sponsor are an important part of preparation for Confirmation and helps the Confirmation candidate live his or her baptismal promises both before and after Confirmation.

Being a sponsor is a lifelong commitment. A sponsor takes on the role of a spiritual parent who “brings the candidate to receive the sacrament, presents him to the minister for the anointing, and will later help him to fulfill his baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit” (Rite of Confirmation 5).

To serve as a Sponsor for Confirmation within the Catholic Church:

- ❖ The individual must be at least 16 years old.
- ❖ He or she must have received the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation in the Catholic Church.
- ❖ The person must have the intention, the ability, and adequate time to be a Sponsor.
- ❖ The Sponsor should attend Mass every weekend and receive the

sacraments of the Church regularly, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

- ❖ The Sponsor should practice the Faith within a Catholic parish community and live a moral life.

Some of the responsibilities of a sponsor to the candidate before confirmation:

- Be a sincere, enthusiastic Catholic who lives a life of faith, and is committed to fulfilling the responsibilities of a sponsor.
- Help the Candidate become aware of his or her reasons for receiving the sacrament of Confirmation.
- Help the Candidate understand and appreciate the sacrament of Confirmation and have the right intention for receiving it.
- Help the Candidate prepare for Confirmation by encouraging him or her to pray, to participate in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and to become actively involved in the life of their parish.
- Attend all the confirmation classes, retreats, or special liturgies offered.
- Cultivate a supportive and encouraging relationship with the confirmand.
- Be involved in the catechetical preparation of the candidate with great heart and dedication.
- Have knowledge of the personal faith of the candidate and share their own faith experience.
- Lead and guide the candidate to a personal relationship with the Lord and to a deeper familiarity “with the Holy Spirit—his actions, his gifts, and his biddings—in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life.”

Some of the responsibilities of a sponsor to the confirmed after confirmation:

- Maintain regular contact with the confirmed by phone, email. Also, sending a card on the anniversary of his/her confirmation.
- Pray regularly for the candidate to be confirmed and when possible, pray with him/her.
- Help the confirmed to learn how to experience a deeper prayer life (e.g., Eucharistic adoration).
- Encourage participation in the life of the Church, especially through his/her parish.
- Continue ongoing catechesis (e.g., sharing good books) and be available for questions.
- Help the confirmed to understand how to bear witness to Christ in the world and to fulfill his/her baptismal promises faithfully through the Holy Spirit.

If you have concerns with any part of this document, please contact Fr. Leo.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will there be adult sessions in all languages?

Grades K-12th will have sessions in English only. Adult sessions will be offered in Spanish and Creole. If there is enough interest, there is a possibility that classes may be offered in English.

What if my child is in 8th grade and I recently moved to the area and did not know about this three consecutive year process before entering preparation for Confirmation?

If your child attended faith formation in his/her parish, then we will need a letter from the pastor of your previous church giving us information as to the time/years they attended faith formation.

If your child did not attend faith formation, your child must start the three-year process prior to entering the two-year Confirmation preparation process.

What if my child attended classes at another church?

We will need a letter from the parish where he attended faith formation giving us the dates that he attended. If they were consecutive years, they will be taken into consideration for the requirements at St. Andrew.

How many classes can my child miss?

Ideally, your child will not miss any classes; however, we do understand that sometimes there are circumstances that prevent parents from bringing the children to faith formation. If your child needs to be absent from class due to an unforeseen situation, you must contact the office as soon as possible or let their catechist know.

The less classes your child misses the better. If your child misses too many sessions they will be asked to repeat the year. We will be monitoring attendance throughout the year but ultimately it is your responsibility to bring the child to class.

What if my Confirmation youth candidate was baptized out of the country and I cannot get his/her baptism certificate?

If this happens, we can accept the First Communion Certificate, since baptism is a pre-requisite for First Communion and your church should have asked you for their baptism certificate.

You can also ask the church where he/she received their First Communion if they kept a copy of his/her baptism certificate and can provide you a copy.