

Church of Saint Mary



Faith Formation
Program

Welcome to the Church of Saint Mary Faith Formation Program

“My friends, I beg you to listen as I teach. I will give instruction and explain the mystery of what happened long ago. These are things we learned from our ancestors, and we will tell them to the next generation. We won’t keep secret the glorious deeds and the mighty miracles of the Lord”. (Psalm 78:1-4)

Church of Saint Mary

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St. Mary's



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Dear Parents and Guardians,

When you brought your children to Church for their Baptism you received and accepted the responsibility of raising them in the Roman Catholic Faith.

You have carried out this serious responsibility in many ways over the years. You have taught your children their prayers. You have told them the story of Jesus' birth at Christmastime and how He died and rose again at Easter. You have taught them about forgiveness, concern for others and so many other aspects of our Catholic Faith by the way you live and share your lives at home each day.

To further deepen their understanding of our Catholic Faith, you have enrolled them in our Faith Formation Program.

It is important that you support and reinforce the efforts of the Faith Formation Program at home by reviewing the weekly class work with your children.

Please make the weekly attendance at the Faith Formation classes a priority in each child's life. Sports and other activities should be planned around religion classes.

As the Eucharist is the center of Catholic life, it is most important that your family participate in Sunday Mass each week throughout the year. Sunday Mass and daily prayer are a critical part of every Catholic's life.

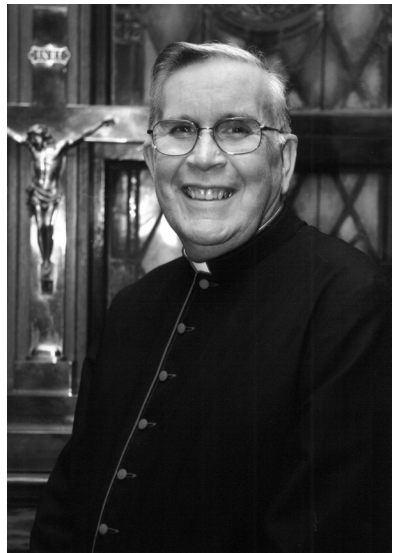
I pray that in the coming months your children will grow in wisdom, grace and age as they come to know Jesus better and deepen their understanding and appreciation of our Catholic Faith.



God Bless!

Monsignor John J. McCann

Pastor





Admission

Parents or guardians must be registered in the parish before seeking to register children in the Program. Upon enrollment, a copy of each child's baptismal certificate must accompany the registration form. Those transferring from another faith formation program must include a letter from that parish indicating the years of previous instruction and sacraments received.

Children who have not received previous instruction will be evaluated by the program director to determine placement.

Issues of Custody

Parents must inform the Faith Formation Office staff if there are any custodial issues. You need to provide a copy of any pertinent court documents.

Registration & Placement

Registration and re-registration occurs in May and June each year. Forms can be downloaded from **www.stmary.ws/religiously** or obtained from the Faith Formation Office. All children are assigned to a class by the Faith Formation Office. Catechists may not accept a child into class without authorization from the Office.

If your child has any special needs such as allergies or learning disabilities, please download the appropriate form from **www.stmary.ws/religiously** to advise the program director of all necessary information. Regarding medical issues, no medication of any kind may be given to a child by a catechist.

If program modifications are necessary, parents should discuss these with the director. Any modifications will follow diocesan guidelines.

Home Study (Grades 3-5)

In special circumstances, such as medical or special education needs, parents may request to teach their own child/children. According to diocesan guidelines, a letter explaining the reasons for the request should accompany the registration form. Parents will attend catechist meetings during the year. Children will meet for prayer and discussion of the material in January and May to ensure that progress is being made.

Registration Fees

These fees are used for the books, supplies, speakers, and office needs of the Program. Special sacramental fees are also required in grades 2 and 8. Families experiencing financial hardship can contact the Office concerning necessary modifications.

Schedule of Classes & Arrival/Dismissal Policies

Grades 1 through 5 meet on Tuesdays or Thursdays from 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Parents may register their children for either Tuesday or Thursday sessions. The Office will notify parents if available classrooms are filled and no further registrations can be accepted for a particular day.

Classes assigned to the Elementary School will wait in the vestibule of McCann Hall until their catechists arrive. At dismissal time children will be escorted by their catechists to these locations—grades 1 & 2 in the area between the Convent and Elementary School, grade 3 in the upper parking lot by the Elementary School staircase.

Classes assigned to Immaculata Hall will wait at assigned tables in the cafeteria (downstairs by the gym). At dismissal time, catechists will return students to these tables to await a parent/guardian.

Parents are asked to pick up younger children first and then proceed to Immaculata Hall for older siblings. The family can exit directly into the parking lot from the Second Street exit.

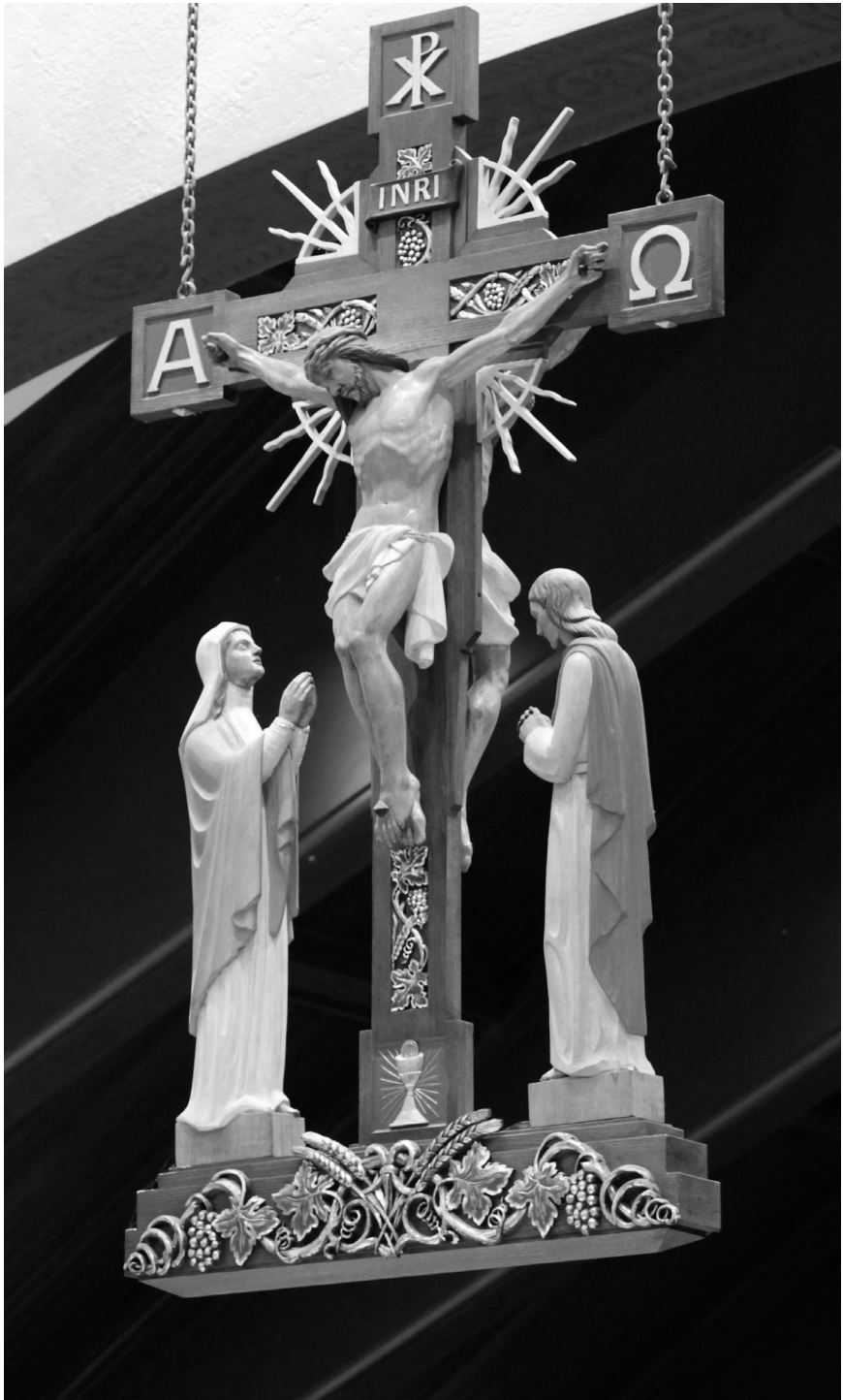
Grades 6, 7 and 8 meet on Mondays from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m. The 6th grade meets in the Elementary School, the 7th grade meets in Immaculata Hall, and the 8th grade meets in Marist Hall.

Sixth grade classes will wait in assigned spaces of the first floor hall of the Elementary School until their catechists arrive. At dismissal time catechists will escort students to the Church for pick-up.

Seventh grade classes will wait at assigned tables in the cafeteria of Immaculata Hall (downstairs by the gym). At dismissal time, catechists will escort students to the small parking lot using the Second Street exit.

Eighth grades classes will wait at assigned tables in the cafeteria. (Enter at South door and go downstairs). At dismissal time catechists will escort students outside for pick-up in front of Marist Hall. No students are to cross Clapham Ave. for pick-up in the 6th or 7th grade areas of the Church parking lot.

For all Grades: If someone other than a parent/guardian is picking up your child/children, a written authorization must be given to the catechist and the Faith Formation Office. No student is permitted to leave the building early without a parent. A written note should be given to the Office in advance and the parent must sign the student out at the hall monitor's desk.



Attendance

Consistent attendance at class demonstrates to your child the importance of learning about God and developing a Christian way of living. Therefore, all students are expected to attend scheduled classes unless prevented by illness.

A copy of our Calendar is available at www.stmary.ws/religioused

Please call the Office if your child will be absent. It will be the responsibility of the student and the parent/guardian to make up the work missed. More than four (4) absences during the school year are considered serious. Excessive absences may prevent a student from advancing to the next grade. Please ensure that your child arrives on time. Latecomers should sign in at the hall monitor's desk.

Sunday Mass attendance is not only a precept of the Catholic Church, it is also a loving response to Jesus' request at the Last Supper, then, taking bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying: *"This is my body to be given for you. Do this as a remembrance of me."* (Luke 22:19) Prayerful reception of the Eucharist affirms our belief that this truly is the Body of Christ. Our spiritual life and union with Jesus grows with our reception of the Eucharist.

St. Mary's parish offers a Family Mass on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. and a Children's Liturgy of the Word on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. Other weekend Mass times include: Saturdays at 5:00 p.m., Sundays at 7:30 and 10:30 a.m., Noon and 5:00 p.m.

Cancellation of Sessions

Families will be notified of any cancellations by E-mail. Cancellation announcements will be broadcast along with school closings on 1010-WINS and News12.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

In the event that parish Faith Formation classes have to be evacuated for any reason, children will be escorted to the Church by catechists. Parents will be contacted and instructed to meet in the northwest corner of the Macy's parking lot on Northern Boulevard. Classes will be escorted to that area by walking as a group.

Student Conduct & Responsibility

As a Catholic community we foster Christian principles of respect and courtesy toward all adults and children. It is expected that all students will obey all program procedures and the rules set forth by their catechist. Parents will be notified of any inappropriate language or behavior. Persistent problems will be addressed at a meeting of parent, child, and program director.

For their own safety, students will follow arrival and dismissal procedures.

All students are required to bring their textbook and a pen/pencil to class each week. Assignments should be neatly done and handed in on time. If a book is lost, a new one must be purchased.

Due to the alarming number of food allergies, students may not bring food or drink to class. This includes eating candy or chewing gum.

Dress Code

Appropriate clothing for the season and place of instruction (School or Church building) should be worn. For safety reasons, students should not wear flip-flops or sneakers with wheels in them.

Property

All students are expected to respect the School and Church property, especially the personal items of both St. Mary's Elementary and High School students who also use the facilities. Families will be responsible for the repair of any serious damage caused by their child.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices, such as iPods and MP3 players, should not be brought to class. Cell phones may be brought to class, but must be turned off while the Program is in session.

Sacraments

First Penance and First Holy Communion

Candidates must attend two years of instruction prior to receiving first sacraments. Adequate formation in prayer, presence at Sunday Mass, and Christian living is fostered at home and in class. Our classes provide basic instruction on the sacraments. This usually occurs in grades 1 and 2. If a child enters our program at a later age and needs to receive the sacraments, a two-year program is still required.

First Penance is celebrated within a communal prayer service. Weekly reception of Communion and regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance deepen our desire to live as followers of Christ as Jesus strengthens our ability to do so.

Confirmation

Confirmation preparation is a parish based process which proceeds over two full years. It builds on the consistent catechesis received from grades 1 through 6.

The Goals of the Confirmation process are that all confirmandi:

- a. Be empowered to make a commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church and a Catholic Christian way of life.
- b. Be able to understand, appreciate and articulate the basic doctrines of the Catholic faith and the principles of personal and social morality.

Sixth Grade—Parents will be able to enroll their children in the Confirmation preparation towards the end of the year. Each sixth graders knowledge of their faith will be assessed before entering formal Confirmation classes.

Seventh and Eighth Graders—In addition to regular weekly instruction, parents and sponsors will be able to journey with candidates through experiences of prayer, liturgy, service, and reflection on their faith. A workbook will be provided each year, to work on as a family. Eighth graders are required to attend a retreat and to dialog with a parish adult about their faith life and Confirmation preparation in order to demonstrate readiness to receive the Sacrament.

Program Volunteers

St. Mary's Faith Formation Program requires assistance in many ways:

- **Catechists:** volunteer teachers and substitute teachers who commit themselves, their time, and energy to prepare and learn what they need to hand on the faith to our young people.
- **Coordinators:** often catechists themselves, these master teachers assist in the administration, communication, and planning for a grade level and its meetings. They mentor other catechists.
- **Catechist Assistant:** For the safety of the students, another adult is present during the class. He/she can help with projects, or assist should a child become ill. High school students can obtain community service hours this way.
- **Hall and Attendance Monitors:** assist in providing safety and security for our young people when they are in class. They assist in matters of attendance and are able to provide necessary communication links in emergencies.
- **Traffic Monitors:** assist in directing traffic in the parking lots to ensure the safety of children being dropped off and picked up.
- **Clerical Volunteers:** at home and in the office assist in varied support services from stuffing envelopes to assembling booklets, sorting materials for classes, or helping to make absence calls on class days.

Diocesan Child Protection Policy

The Diocese of Rockville Centre is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all children. The Diocese of Rockville Centre will do all in its power to create a safe environment for children and young people, to prevent their physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect ... (*Diocesan Child Protection Policy, 2003*).

All volunteers are mandated to complete a background check and take part in ***Virtus: Protecting God's Children***, a program which provides training in the prevention, recognition and reporting of child abuse. According to diocesan guidelines, when a complaint of sexual abuse of a child or minor is reported to any

person working for the Church, the following should occur. They should inform the pastor and director of the program; urge the complainant to notify the legal authorities and assist them if they need help; and notify the diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Young People at 516-678-5800, ext. 573.

Catechists

Those called to faithfully and authentically echo the work of God in each age and to each generation are called "catechists". Catechists are charged with the ministry of promoting and educating in faith everyone "whosoever believes". (Mark 16:16 General Directory for Catechists, 220)

Responsibilities of a Catechist

- Acquaints herself/himself with the parents of those entrusted to her/him and communicates with them on the conduct and progress of their child.
- Prepares and executes weekly lessons and prayer.
- Maintains a safe environment for all children (Two adult policy, Virtus training).
- Attends meetings and strives through personal reading and study (Adult Education courses) to be well-equipped to perform the sacred duty of Catechist.
- Obtains basic catechist certificate from the Catechist Certification Program: "Echoing the Word from the Centre".

The Diocese of Rockville Centre recognizes the important role Catechists have in helping parents pass on the Catholic Faith to their children. Catechists need ongoing formation in theology, methodology and spirituality to deepen their own Faith life and enable them to help children recognize and appreciate the many ways God is and has always been present and active in our world and in our personal lives. Therefore, the Diocese created "Echoing the Word from the Centre" as a certification process. All catechists are expected to attend these sessions and become certified.

Right to Amend

The Catechetical Leader and the parish Faith Formation Program reserve the right to amend the Parent/Catechist Handbook for just cause. Parents/Catechist will be notified in writing if changes are made.



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The Faith Formation Calendar is available at www.stmary.ws/religioused