

St. Pius X Parish
Religious Education (RE) Program
Parent Handbook 2024-2025

Parents & Parish
Handing on the Light of Faith

Religious Education is a lifelong, holistic, developmental process that happens primarily in the home and is supported by the Wednesday evening Religious Education Program at St. Pius X Parish.



Wednesday evenings: 6:30 PM – 7:45 PM

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Religious Education Office: 402-558-1898

Program Overview

Family Formation Model

Religious Education in the parish uses a family formation model and materials based on the understanding that parents are the first teachers of the faith – in your walk and in your talk. What children learn from you is fundamental to how they will develop a relationship with God and live out the faith in their own lives.

The level 1-6 curriculum is lectionary-based and has a general topic for each month, so families will be learning about a topic, often in relation to the Sunday Scriptures. Materials encourage discussion of the readings the children will hear at Mass, and will enrich their experience of the Liturgy of the Word.

The curriculum for levels 2, 7 and 8 specifically focuses on preparing children for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Communion, and Confirmation and how those sacraments change us.

Family Packets Levels 1-6

Each month, on the first Wednesday of the month gathered session, each family will get a packet with talking points, activities and prayers for the upcoming home sessions. The third Wednesday of each month, families are invited to work on a home session in the Parish Center. This gathered session helps families stay on track and serves as encouragement to each other.

The materials we will use have been developed over 30 years of family formation in the parish of St. Paul's of Ham Lake, Minnesota. **In a world that craves sizzle and glitz, you will find these materials to be plain and simple.** For the home sessions, parents are not conducting a "class", but rather talking about and doing activities together following the suggestions in the packet. Older children and other adults in the home can be great contributors to the discussions, and perhaps even choose to go deeper than what's provided.

Home Sessions – Set Aside Wednesdays!

Set aside Wednesday evenings specifically for Religious Education. Include all children in the preparation and clean-up of dinner. Use prep time and the time at the dinner table to read the scripture passage, talk about the week's topic or to plan/reflect on the month's work of mercy.

Group Sessions – In Person 2x Monthly

The Religious Education participants will meet in-person about twice monthly, first with peer groups and catechists, then with family groups:

1. On the first Wednesday of each month, all families will come together for a session with peers. Parents will meet in the school library for a presentation on the month's topic. Children will meet in grade-level groups led by a catechist.
2. On the third Wednesday of each month, youth in Levels 7 & 8 meet as a group with catechists.

Families who are using the Family Faith Formation materials for Levels 1-6 are invited (not required) to come on campus and work individually as families or in small groups to do the "home" session for that evening. These group sessions are intended to provide accountability and encouragement for parents who may not yet recognize that God gives them the grace they need to hand on the gift of faith.

Program Details

Registration Fee

- The tuition is **\$120 per family per year**, \$25 of which is due at the time of registration.
- The remaining fees may be paid in full at the time of registration or in monthly installments. If special payment arrangements need to be made, please contact the Religious Education Office.

In-Person Peer Group Sessions –School Classrooms and Library

First Wednesdays – all Levels youth and adults

First & Third Wednesdays for Levels 7 & 8 (Confirmation preparation)

- Religious Education group sessions **begin promptly at 6:30 pm and end at 7:45.**
- **Enter the school through the east school doors.** Ring doorbell and wait to be admitted if late.
- **Children meet with catechists at grade level** in classrooms.
- **Adults go to the school library** for the adult presentation.
- The RE calendar has session and sacramental meeting dates for the year. Please get them on your family calendar!
- It often occurs that RE is in session during the weeks of Fall and Spring breaks for District 66, OPS and Millard.
- There are no formal RE sessions during Holy Week.

Optional In-Person Family Sessions – Third Wednesdays – School Cafeteria

- **Group sessions begin promptly at 6:30 pm and end at 7:45.**
- Families meet for their “home” session at tables in the Cafeteria. Families can work independently or together on the week’s activities. This session is optional, designed for those who find it easier to focus on the lesson when not at home.

Home Lesson Family Packets (Levels 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6)

- Each family (Levels 1-6) will get a monthly packet for the home lessons with talking points, activities and prayers for the upcoming home sessions. To help families stay on track, one of these home sessions can be done at the Parish Center with other families.

Home Sessions - Sacramental Preparation (Level 2)

- Each family with a child in Level 2 will use materials in the Blessed series by Dynamic Catholic. There is one book for each sacrament and online videos. Children in Level 2 will stay with their families during the second in-person session of each month (unless their catechist requests to have them practice for sacraments).

Attendance – Children AND Parents

- Regular attendance helps to build community and habit among both children AND parents. It also offers the fullest benefit of the program’s religious formation for both adult and child.
- Please notify the RE office in advance if your child will be absent.

Child Care for Group Session?

- If you have children who are too young for the program, or teens who have aged out of the program, please consider working with Colleen to arrange a child care option during the first gathering of each month.

Behavior and Conduct

- All catechists promote an open, inclusive, youthful and Christ-filled environment. Parents are asked to discuss expectations of what cooperation and good behavior look and sound like.

- Disruptive behavior disturbs the environment for both the children and the catechist. In the event of disruptive behavior, the catechist will inform the child that the behavior is disruptive. If the disruptive behavior continues, the parent will be asked to sit in on the remainder of the session.

Digital Responsibility and Courtesy

- Participants in remote sessions are asked to observe the Online Meeting Guidelines in the Addendum of this handbook to keep remote sessions productive.

Catechists

- Parents are the first catechists of their children, but your children will also be led by fellow parishioners who will share their faith with the children as catechists.
- Adults and young adults, who demonstrate that they are qualified through faith development, experience, and training, are accepted to teach as catechists or assist as aides.
- All adult catechists and aides who work with children are required to be Safe Environment certified through the Archdiocese and undergo a background check.
- By law, St. Pius X staff and catechists are mandatory reporters. They are required to notify Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement officials if they have reasonable cause to believe a child has been subject to abuse or neglect. The parish cooperates fully in the investigation of such cases.

Sacramental Preparation

- Children are prepared for the reception of the sacraments through the combined efforts of the parent/guardian, parish priests and catechists.
- Parents/guardians, as the primary educators of their children, have the foundational role in working with catechists to determine if their child is ready for reception of a sacrament.
- Parents/guardians are expected to attend the Parent Sacramental Meetings for each sacrament and to be actively engaged in the activities for preparation.
- Children are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist during Level 2 and for Confirmation during Levels 7 and 8.
- It is best that children attend Religious Education sessions in both 7th and 8th grade levels in order to be prepared for Confirmation, which is conferred in December, usually, of their 8th grade year. If a child transfers into the program in the 8th grade year, an evaluation will be made to determine the child's level of spiritual development and the best immediate preparatory plan for reception of the sacrament.

Media Authorization

- We will take photos and possibly videos of the children and families during sessions and at special events to include in the end of year photo retrospective and for occasional use in reporting and promoting St. Pius X Religious Education program and events. If you object to your child being photographed, please notify the Director at colleenc@stpiusxomaha.org so we can honor your wishes.
- The Archdiocese asks that all remote sessions be recorded and made available for Safe Environment audit purposes for a year. We will record any Zoom sessions to the best of our abilities using the technology and resources available.

*Flexibility is essential during these times of unpredictability and change.
Be positive. Assume good intent. Love one another. Pray for one another.*

Program Materials

All Levels –2024-2025 Family Discipleship Diary

Each family will get a small journal with monthly ideas for putting the works of mercy into action as a family. These ideas and opportunities will help your family practice and reflect on mercy in the home, community, and world today.

Levels 1, 3, 4, 5, 6: *Family Faith Formation – St. Paul’s of Ham Lake, MN*

The Lectionary-based Family Formation Network materials for grades 1-6 are designed to equip parents to teach their children of all ages about their faith. Families get a monthly packet of materials with readings, memory verses from Scripture, talking points, and games, quizzlets and activities to learn about and share the faith. It is a very low-tech, low key approach that may offer a break from fast-moving and noisy screens.

Each month focuses on a different topic with scriptural foundations for each topic. Different presenters will offer adults insight into the topic in the monthly adult group session while children learn about the topic with their grade-level peers.

Level 2: *Blessed Reconciliation & First Communion Preparation by Dynamic Catholic*

The highly engaging materials published by Dynamic Catholic provide a workbook for Reconciliation and Communion as well as videos online. Catechists will use their monthly sessions to prepare children specifically for receiving the sacraments at St. Pius X. Catechists may plan extra group sessions in addition to the first Wednesday group session to ensure that the children are adequately prepared to receive the sacraments.

Prayer emphasized: Prayer of Sorrow

Levels 7 & 8: *Decision Point by Dynamic Catholic*

Decision Point is a catechetical journey for teenaged Confirmation candidates. This program is designed to provide the essential intellectual and spiritual catechesis that is so vital to sacramental preparation. Catechesis is different than academics, which seeks to impart knowledge about a given subject. While the catechist certainly teaches, the goal of catechesis is to bring about an encounter with Jesus Christ. It is teaching conversion. The end result of effective catechesis is not a classroom of smart students, but a community of disciples. These levels meet twice monthly with their catechists.

Level 7

During the Level 7 year, your child will complete half of the *Decision Point* curriculum and study the Commandments, the Beatitudes and the seven sacraments. The youth will also explore who the person Jesus is and who their Confirmation saint and sponsor will be.

Prayer emphasized: Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Level 8

In the first semester of Level 8, your child will continue preparation for reception of the sacrament of Confirmation. The curriculum will focus on the person of the Holy Spirit, the Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit, the recognition of the Church both worldwide and in the parish, the Confirmation liturgy, and life-long faithful discipleship to Jesus. Your child’s Discipleship Group service experiences will help make the meaning of faithful discipleship concrete.

Second semester will continue to develop faithful discipleship and relationship with Jesus. Youth will spend time understanding what it means to be Catholic by exploring the Mass, working together to present a prayerful experience of Stations of the Cross (or other Lenten experience) and considering retreats, missions and pilgrimages as spiritual revitalization on their journey of discipleship.

Prayer emphasized: Apostles’ Creed

St. Pius X Religious Education (SPX RE)

Addendum A

Online Meeting Guidelines

It is not expected, but if we should have to resort to distance learning for some reason, St. Pius X Religious Education catechists and disciples may participate in synchronous online meetings and/or in video chats using Zoom as a way to connect and communicate with each other. This document outlines our expectations for disciples, parents, and catechists for participation in online meetings and other video communication.

Procedures

- **All online meetings are hosted by the Director of Religious Education (Colleen) using breakout rooms for individual levels.**
- **Online meetings will be recorded by the catechist in the breakout room.**
- **Disciples in grades 1-3 must be accompanied by a parent for online recorded meetings.**
- Online recorded meetings may be held with grades 4-8, without parent presence.
- Zoom is the online meeting platform that will be used by catechists and disciples at SPX RE.
- Join the Zoom using the link provided by a catechist or Colleen.
- Links to Zoom meetings should only be shared with disciples through private platforms, such as email. They should not be posted on public websites.

Disciples

- During an online meeting, your computer or device should be set up in a common area of your house, such as your living room, dining room or kitchen, with a school-appropriate background. If it is not, you will be asked to leave the online meeting and change locations before rejoining.
- Please wear clothes you would normally wear in public. If you are in pajamas or other inappropriate clothing, you will be asked to leave the online meeting and change into appropriate clothing before rejoining.
- The same location and dress guidelines apply when you are making a video to be shared with the catechist or other disciples in a live meeting.
- Disciples should never share links to meetings to anyone outside the RE group.
- Disciples should never invite or approve outside users to a video conference or meeting.