

FAITH FORMATION HANDBOOK

Our Lady of Grace Church
School of Evangelization
385 Avenue W
Brooklyn, New York 11223
718-375-0404

Our Lady of Grace Faith Formation Program welcomes you back to another year of learning, sharing and growing in our faith. For those who are registered with us for the first time, we are glad that you have decided to begin your religious education this year and with your corporation it will be a year of preparing your child for a journey in faith.

The Faith Formation program ministers to children in the public schools from grade 1 through grade 8, offering religious instruction based on the guidelines established by the Diocese of Brooklyn. Our goal is to bring children, together with their parents, to a more loving and personal relationship with God, and help to build the foundation of faith, which will last throughout their lives.

This is an eight-year program, with one year building on what is learned in the previous year. Children are prepared to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation at the proper grade levels. There is also a class for children who are past the usual age of the reception of the sacraments. Children who have not been baptized are also prepared for the sacraments and given an understanding of what it means to become part of the Christian community.

Our catechists are men and women of the parish who give of their time, their faith and themselves to instruct the children of our parish. Instruction for catechists is provided through the Catechist Courses, which is offered by the diocese. All our catechists are VIRTUS trained. Our Lady of Grace Church complies with all Safe Environment mandates that are set forth by the Diocese of Brooklyn and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. All volunteers who are in contact with children must attend a Virtus session, sign a code of conduct and submit to a background search.

We hope and pray that you will continue each year to be part of your child's catechism enrichment. We are a small part of your child's faith formation. You, the parent are the most important part of faith formation. Your child depends on your daily spiritual nourishment, taking part in the celebration of the Sunday Mass, praying in the home, visiting our Adoration Chapel to honor Jesus in the

Most Blessed Sacrament and living the Christian life. Your child cannot do this alone.

The Faith Formation program and Our Lady of Grace Parish is here to assist you and your child's journey of faith.

Mission Statement

Our goal is to bring the message of Jesus to children and share with them our love and knowledge of God in the Catholic Faith. Through our classes, we explain God's relationship with us, and our relationship with God. We teach our children to pray, and attend the celebration of the Eucharist, and we prepare the children for the sacraments. We hope that *along* with their families, we can set an example of how to lead a good Christian life through a safe, fun, and enriching environment.

An Overview of the Faith Formation Program Process

Each grade and level of the program introduces new themes and builds on themes presented in the previous year. Each grade enhances the religious experience of the student. Each grade is not isolated and therefore, grades cannot be omitted. Students must complete all grades in their proper order. Each grade is not always comprised of students of the same academic level. The program requires:

- Completion of 1st and 2nd grades for a child to be eligible for First Eucharist
- Completion of 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grades for a child to be eligible to be placed in the Confirmation preparation program
- Completion of 7th and 8th grades for a child to be eligible to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation

Promotion to the next grade level is determined by the completion of:

- Continues Mass* attendance before and after the reception of the sacraments
- Completion of homework and class work
- Attendance in class and prompt arrival to class
- Evaluation by the catechist which will be reflected on report cards
- Cooperation with all policies concerning appropriate behavior
- Performance on tests

*Mass attendance is required for all grades. Faith Formation is the cooperative effort of parents/guardians and parish community. In order for the students to understand the Catholic faith, it is important that they attend the Liturgy (Mass) every Sunday and Holy Days.

Mass attendance slips are available in the church each week to the students and are collected at the end of each Mass by the Priest or Deacon. Mass attendance records are kept weekly. If you attend a different parish, a bulletin from that parish must be submitted to your teacher the following week in class. Please provide your child's name and grade on all bulletins and slips. No credit will be given if information is missing.
* Please note that Altar Servers must also submit an attendance slip at the end of Mass.

Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

All children are expected to participate fully in the parish program. If you are new to the parish, we encourage you to register in the parish and become an active member of our faith community. We ask parents/guardians to see that their child

- Arrives on time for class each week
- Attends all classes faithfully
- Spends a reasonable amount of time reviewing material covered in class
- Completes all homework and make-up assignments
- Reinforce proper behavior towards teachers, administrators and other classmates
- Reinforce proper behavior in the classrooms and in Church
- Anti-Bullying. ANY STUDENT THAT BULLIES WILL BE DISCHARGED FROM THE PROGRAM.
- Respect the rights of others and their property. DO NOT TOUCH SCHOOL PROPERTY, TEACHERS DESKS OR DESKS OTHER STUDENTS IN THE CLASS ROOMS AND IN THE SCHOOL HALLS.
- Communicate with the Director and/or teacher if there is an issue to be addressed.
- Participate in parish functions and events.
- Attend Mass weekly and Holy Days of Obligation

It is the consistent teaching of the Church that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children. Our program is designed to assist you and to supplement the religious experiences which you provide as a family. We rely on your cooperation and live your faith at home for success.

Assembly

All students will enter Our Lady of Grace School through the doors on Avenue W and East 2nd Street. Students assemble in the school cafeteria. Parents are allowed to accompany their child/children into the school cafeteria. Parents are to remain with their child until the teacher or administrator is present. Classes are assigned tables at the beginning of the school year. Each week they are to go to their assigned table and wait for the catechist to bring them to the classroom. Students are not permitted to wander through the building, run or go to their classrooms without the catechist.

**This is the allowed time when students are to use the bathrooms before the start of class. Students that use the bathrooms weekly or often during class time will be monitored and parents will be notified unless a doctor's note is submitted to the teacher.*

Parents/guardians are not to accompany students to the classroom. No parent/guardian is permitted to enter a classroom or wonder in the school halls while class is in session. Please note that there are after school programs in session in the school building during the same hours as Faith Formation.

**Permission from the Faith Formation office is mandated for you to pick up your child for early dismissal.*

****Special needs parents are permitted to attend class with their child if necessary.**

Dismissal

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON CLASSES 3:15 – 4:30 PM

Please arrive before 3:15 p.m.

Grades 1 and 2 are dismissed from the doors on East 3rd Street.

Grades 3 and 4 are dismissed from the Avenue W doors.

Please do not enter the school building during student dismissal. Catholic School students are dismissed at 3:55 pm.

Doors will not be open to Faith Formation classes prior to 3:00 pm. due to school safety regulations.

Classes begin promptly and ends at 4:30 pm.

Please note that Faith Formation classes do not interfere with Public School dismissals. Early dismissals slips for Public Schools are no longer necessary for your child to arrive on time. There should be no lateness. After 3:30 teachers will keep record on lateness. Your child's tardiness will affect all students and teachers. Lessons are disrupted, students are distracted and teachers need to stop the lesson to re-take attendance and inform your child on what was missed at the start of class. Please be considered to others.

WEDNESDAY EVENING CLASSES 7:30 – 8:30 PM

Students may enter the building at 7:15 pm. Doors will not be open prior to that time due to school safety regulations. Classes begin promptly at 7:30 pm.

After 7:30 pm the student must report to the Faith Formation Office for a late pass.

Dismissal is at 8:30 pm. from the Avenue W doors.

Parents/guardians must make arrangements for their child to be picked up from class on time. If a child is not picked up from class, we will try to notify the parent/guardian or contact person. No child will be allowed to walk home alone unless signed permission is given on the registration form in advanced or a written note.

***If other than a parent is to pick up your child, you must inform the teacher and have it in writing who that person will be, and that you are allowing that person pick up your child. This applies to both day and evening classes.*

Registration

Registration forms are sent home with the children **before** the end of the school year. Forms are **not** mailed home to the students. Forms are available on line at www.ologchurch.com. and are also available at the Rectory and in Church. Registration takes place in the Faith Formation office during the month of **May** for the following school year. Announcements are made in the parish bulletin. Parents/guardians of students **already** in the program are to **re-register in May** or by **mail**. A late registration fee will apply. If you already have a child registered in the Faith Formation program and have a new child as well to register, you must complete the additional registration forms.

By mail simply fill out the form and enclose your check and mail it to

Our Lady of Grace Church /Faith Formation Office
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A calendar and a receipt of payment will be mailed to you. Registration is on going throughout the summer months. Please do not request change of classes after registration is completed. If it is necessary to change your child's class because of pick-up arrangements, please call the office. Classes will not be changed to accommodate friendships. This is also a time to make new friends.

***CHILDREN REGISTERED IN THE PROGRAM FOR THE FIRST TIME MUST PRESENT A COPY OF THEIR BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE UPON REGISTRATION.**

Absences

Attendance is taken each week and absences are recorded. When a student is absent from Faith Formation class:

- A written note from the parent/guardian is required upon return to class
- Students are required to complete all class work and homework assignments

Parents/Guardians in all grades are to call the office to report an absence. After two consecutive absences there will be a follow-up phone call. Excessive absences affect your child's ability to keep up with the rest of the class. Exams, homework, class work, projects are missed and cannot be made up. Faith Formation meets only once a week and

it does not allow room for absences. Please make every effort to have your child in class weekly. Excessive absences will affect promotion to the next grade and will also affect your child receiving the Sacrament of First Eucharist and Confirmation.

Discipline

Students are required to behave in a manner that promotes a good learning atmosphere. Should a child continually disrupt the class or disrespect a teacher, parents/guardians will be notified by phone. The parents/guardians will be expected to come to the office and pick up their child. **A disruptive child will not be allowed to remain in class.** If a student continuously causes a disruption, they may be removed from the program for the remainder of the school year. An interview with the director or Pastor will be required. Any school property that is damaged or stolen by the student, the parent or guardian of that student will be financially responsible. Bullying will not be tolerated. Any student who bullies will be discharged from the program. Class is one hour. **Cell phones or any other electronic devices are not to be used during class.** The Faith Formation program or school is not responsible for lost cell phones or any electronic equipment brought to class.
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***All students that are permitted to walk home alone are to go directly home and not to remain outside the building after dismissal. The Faith Formation office will be closed after dismissal.**

Report Cards

Report cards are distributed to parents/guardians in January and May. January report cards are to be **signed and returned** or report card envelopes are to be **signed and returned** whichever form is being used, to the teacher the following week. Parents/guardians can discuss problems or concerns with the catechist or director by appointment. Grades and attendance are recorded on the child's report card.

Snacks/Food

There have been issues in the past of children leaving food and spilled drinks on the floor and student desks. We only meet for a short period of time. No time should be taken away from class time for snacks. Snacks **will not** be allowed unless needed for medical reasons and a doctor's note is submitted to the teacher or the office. **Please consume your drinks and snacks outside the school building before entering.**

ABSOLUTELY NO FOOD OR DRINKS ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOMS

It is our goal to provide a safe, prayerful and learning environment. Please make every effort to reinforce the rules and regulations provided to you in this booklet.

ALL GRADES: Please make every effort to check your child's folder weekly for any important letters that may require your response or attention.