

St. James the Less Faith Formation

2024-25



Welcome!

We are blessed to be chosen for your place of religious formation.

Our hope for everyone is a personal relationship with
Jesus Christ and an understanding of His message to the world.

Through the cooperative effort of parents,
catechists, and students, our children and families
will grow in their love for God
and knowledge of their Catholic faith.

9640 Kennedy Avenue, Highland, In 46322
(219) 924-4220, #2

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WELCOME TO OUR PROGRAM

Dear Families of St. James the Less Faith Formation,

When children are Baptized, the parents and godparents make a promise to raise the children in the practice of the Catholic Faith. Fulfilling this promise involves several different things from the parents/godparents. Firstly, practicing the faith yourself so that you provide an example of faith which the child can imitate is of great importance. Secondly, teaching your children about God and Catholic belief is a necessary step in fulfilling this Baptismal promise as they grow older.

Registering your children in our Parish's Faith Formation Program to have them continue to learn about the Catholic Faith and to complete their Sacraments of Initiation helps in fulfilling this baptismal promise of handing on the Faith to your children. Thank you parents for making good on this responsibility of raising your children in the Catholic Faith. I am sure you will find that our program will help your entire family grow in their relationship with God and with the Church. Be assured of my prayers for all of you.

God Bless,
Fr. Gregory Bim-Merle

Thank you for bringing your child to our Faith Formation Program.

The goal of our program is to not only hand on the teachings of the Catholic faith as taught by Jesus Christ, but also to teach for understanding and growth in a personal relationship with Him.

We are looking forward to this year ahead and are excited to accompany your child on this journey of faith.

In Christ,
Emilija Lapas
Director of Religious Education

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In the Sacramental Rites of Marriage and Baptism, the Church clearly affirms that parents bear the responsibility to teach and practice the faith with their children. Parents are the most influential factor in a child's faith formation. Parents teach by their words, actions, attitudes and example. Prayer and participation in weekend worship are necessary for children to grasp the essentials of our faith.

All families registered in our Faith Formation program are expected to regularly participate in Saturday/Sunday liturgy (Mass) and, as their schedules allow, other parish activities.

FORMATION PROGRAMS

• **TRADITIONAL (Grades K-8):** This program offers a traditional classroom approach to teaching the essentials of the faith. It is taught by a Catechist with the use of a textbook and bible. Our textbook series is Walking with Jesus by Sophia Institute. Walking with Jesus aims to engage young people with the Catholic Faith while following the liturgical year. The overall goal of teaching liturgically is to connect students with the universal Church. The Church celebrates the saving work of Christ on feasts throughout the year to live in step with Jesus. In this way, they will grow in faith as they walk with Jesus from the Annunciation to His Resurrection, Ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit. These classes meet once a week for 1½ hours on Mondays at 5:30.

• **FAMILY (Grades K-8):** The "Family" option will allow you, the parent, to be the primary teacher. In this option you will work at home using the Faith & Life series by Ignatius Press, with your child during the month. Once a month, all the families in this program will meet together after 9 AM Mass. This will be the only form of home schooling that will be offered. **To become a part of the Family option, the family will need to meet with the director before admittance is granted.**

• **CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS) (Level I-Preschool & Kindergarten, 3-6 year olds)**

NOTE: As our program grows, we hope to be able to offer Level II (Grades 1-3, 6-9 year olds) & Level III (Grades 4-6, 9-12 year olds) in the future.

CGS is a Montessori-based religious formation program that is rooted in the Bible and the Liturgy of the Catholic Church. The focus of our CGS program is to foster children's personal relationships with God by learning about the life and teachings of Jesus and strengthening an understanding of our Catholic identity and tradition so as to encourage a personal prayer life and fuller participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

• **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION (for the above two programs)**—Preparation begins with the Baptism of your child. As you are teaching prayers, attending Mass and modeling your Christian values, your child is preparing for the sacraments. Immediate preparation for the sacraments will happen as follows: Reconciliation (Confession) in 2nd grade, Eucharist (Communion) in 3rd grade, and Confirmation in 8th grade. **Reconciliation & Eucharist preparation will be held on Tuesday evenings, 5:30-7 pm, in the second semester. Confirmation preparation will be incorporated into the Monday night sessions in second semester.**

Sacramental preparation is a special time and should be given the time and emphasis that it deserves. It is required that at least one parent attend each sacramental preparation meeting for which your child is enrolled. It is important you are aware of the proper format so that you can help reinforce the child's preparation at home.

Reconciliation Requirements

- ▶ At least one year of prior faith formation
- ▶ Have received the Sacrament of Baptism
- ▶ Regular attendance at weekend Mass
- ▶ Parent Meeting & Three Enrichment Sessions
- ▶ Attendance at regular Faith Formation classes
- ▶ Attendance at second semester Sacrament classes—*homework for absences will come from the student's activity book.*
- ▶ Reconciliation practice
- ▶ First Reconciliation

NOTE: If your child has not made their First Reconciliation and is past second grade, please call the director at 924-4220.

FORMATION PROGRAMS

• **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**—con't.

Eucharist Requirements

- ▶ At least one year of prior faith formation
- ▶ Have received the Sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation
- ▶ Regular attendance at weekend Mass
- ▶ Parent Meeting & Three Enrichment Sessions
- ▶ Attendance at regular Faith Formation classes
- ▶ Attendance at second semester Sacrament classes—*homework for absences will come from the student's activity book.*
- ▶ First Communion Practice
- ▶ First Communion

NOTE: If your child has not made their First Communion and is past third grade, please call the director at 924-4220.

Confirmation Requirements

- Two-year program, beginning in 7th grade and completion in 8th grade
- ▶ Have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and Eucharist
 - ▶ Regular attendance at weekend Mass
 - ▶ Parent/Student Meeting (both 7th & 8th grade)
 - ▶ Attendance at regular Faith Formation classes, which includes lessons on the Sacrament of Confirmation.
 - ▶ *Homework for absence from a Confirmation class will be emailed.*
 - ▶ Complete community service as described below

These additional requirements are for eighth grade only:

- ▶ Attend Confirmation Retreat
- ▶ Complete & turn in required documents
- ▶ Confirmation Practice
- ▶ Sacrament of Confirmation

Community Service for 7th & 8th Grade

Service is an important way to help us understand how Jesus wants us to live. When we are a help to someone else, there is something that happens inside of us that lets us know we have shown a little of Jesus to others.

We are asking 7th and 8th graders to take part in the "Giving and Growing" service project program. This program consists of four sessions. The first will be an introduction and discussion on the importance of works of charity as Christians. The next three will be service projects done together. It is important to attend these sessions as they are a requirement for the Confirmation program.

NOTE: If your child has not made their Confirmation and is past eighth grade—or—if you are an adult, have received your other sacraments, and wish to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, please call the director at 219-924-4220, #2 for Faith Formation.

FORMATION PROGRAMS

• **RCIA**—*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for children*: This is a process that invites anyone in 3rd through 11th grade interested in searching the Catholic Faith to discover what the Catholic Church teaches and believes. It is open to un-baptized children, children baptized in another faith, and children who may be baptized but who have not yet received their first communion and have not attended regular religious education classes. It is typically a two-school year process for most children, but every situation is unique and so we like to say that it “takes as long as it needs to take,” and we are here and available to help you and your child discern their readiness. Please call the Director or email ealapas@stjameshighland.org with any questions.

• **ADULT FORMATION**—The General Directory for Catechesis, which is a publication from the Vatican through the bishops, instructs us that Adult Faith Formation is to be a primary focus in each church. It is the ongoing formation that enables the adults to be a better example for the children as well as for others in the community. It is the basis for all other catechesis in the parish. We will be presenting different opportunities for Adult Formation throughout the year, which will be offered & detailed in our parish bulletin.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

• **REGISTRATION**—Please register **when it is offered** (usually second to last class of the year). We need to know the number of students participating as soon as possible in order to be able to order books, place catechists, and get ready for fall.

There will be no registrations or changes accepted the first day of class. Any changes may only be made in emergency situations; extra-curricular activities are not considered emergencies.

• **SCHEDULE**—While we believe it is important for students to be involved in extra curricular activities (sports, scouts, lessons, etc.), we also believe it is important to be present at formation classes for the entire 1½ hour class time.

Our schedule is as follows:

Traditional & Good Shepherd Classes
Monday - 5:30-7:00 pm, weekly

Family Program—after the 9 am Mass
2nd Sunday of Month

Sacrament Program

Reconciliation* (2nd) & Eucharist* (3rd), and those in RCIA who need sacraments:
Tuesday, 5:30-7:00 pm, weekly—2nd semester, starting in January

Confirmation (7th/8th): Students will attend Monday classes & participate in service projects

* There are 8 classes each for Reconciliation & Eucharist.

***Faith Formation is in session from September through April/May.
Check email or texts for class closings due to severe weather.***

TUITION— **By 8/30/24:**
\$100.00 for 1 student
\$150.00 for 2 students
\$180.00 for 3 or more

As of 8/31/24:
\$110.00 for 1 student
\$170.00 for 2 students
\$210.00 for 3 or more

A payment plan is offered, if needed, and the first payment is due at registration. All other payments are due on the 15th of the month, September through March.

Non-parishioner tuition is twice the above rate, with half due at registration to reserve a spot. (Non-parishioners, see policy on pg. 9)

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

• **AIDES**—For the safety and well-being of adults and children, it is highly recommended and preferred that there be 2 “adults” in each classroom. The aides may be teens or adults; 1 person all year or signed up on a rotating basis.

• **ATTENDANCE**—It is extremely important that children attend each session. One lesson builds upon the next, thereby expanding knowledge and aiding faith development. Please follow the listed attendance procedures:

- (1) ABSENCE: **All absences should be reported to the Faith Formation Office ASAP, preferably no later than 2:00 pm,** and will require make-up (see **HOMEWORK policy on page 8**). IF AN ABSENCE IS NOT REPORTED, PARENTS WILL BE CONTACTED TO ENSURE THE CHILD IS SAFE.

FUTURE ABSENCES MAY BE REPORTED IN ADVANCE. IN FACT, THAT IS PREFERRED. If an appointment or vacation is scheduled, reporting it as soon as possible allows us to have everything documented & ready before class day.

- (2) ARRIVAL: All students are to enter the building through the main doors of the church no earlier than 10 minutes before class time for safety reasons. Students are to **check in with the adult/director in the vestibule** to make sure their catechist has arrived and to be made aware of any changes.
- (3) DISMISSAL: Parents of children preschool through 3rd grade are requested to come into the vestibule to pick them up. Fourth grade and older will be dismissed from their rooms and proceed to their rides. If you are carpooling, please make sure that all children know who is picking them up. **PLEASE BE PROMPT WHEN PICKING UP YOUR CHILD.** They become distressed being the last one picked up. If you won't make it in time, please call us so we can keep them in the office and assure them someone is on the way.
- (4) LATE ARRIVALS/EARLY DEPARTURES **ARE STRONGLY DISCOURAGED, UNLESS IT IS AN EMERGENCY.** They are very disruptive to the class, and the child misses out on the opening or closing parts of the lesson. It is for this reason we have set up the homework policy (page 8).

For those families who decide it is absolutely necessary for their child to arrive late or depart early, you must notify the Faith Formation office beforehand. For early departures, a parent/guardian must come in and sign them out. If the student will miss more than 15 minutes, homework will be given.

- (5) LATE PASS: **Any child who is tardy** (after 5:35 pm) **must stop in the office for a “Late Pass”** in order to be admitted to class. If they are late, they most likely have been marked absent. If they don't stop for a late pass, we don't know they are here.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES, con't.

• **CELEBRATIONS**—The Catechist has the right to decide whether or not they will have a Christmas celebration as a class and whether or not they will have an end-of-the-year party. If they decide to have one and ask you to send something, please be attentive to the items that are requested. He/she will make a list of items desired based on the allergies or health conditions of the youth in Faith Formation.

BIRTHDAYS—Optional—If your child would like to celebrate a birthday with his/her class by bringing in treats, please check with their Catechist so they can inform you of any allergies and so arrangements can be made to have the treats in a non-carpeted area.

• **CLASS CANCELLATION**—Cancellations due to weather or other circumstances will be sent by text (with your permission) or by email.

• **COMMUNICATION**—Communication between parents and the Faith Formation Office is very important in order for our program to run smoothly. We do our best to inform you of everything that is happening. **See EMAIL on page 8. We also ask that any problems or concerns be directed to our office. If we do not know the problem, we cannot provide a solution.**

• **CUSTODY POLICY**—In the event of a separation or divorce of parents, it will be assumed that both parents have access to the child. If this is not the case, a copy of a court order stating otherwise must be provided.

• **DISCIPLINE**—Your child is expected to conduct him or herself in a manner which shows respect for his/her trained catechist and staff, fellow students and the property he/she uses.

- a) If your child exhibits uncontrollable behavior, he/she will be removed from class to spend time in the Faith Formation office.
- b) If this situation occurs twice and it appears that we have an unchanging behavioral problem, the child will not be readmitted to class until a conference with the parent, child and Director takes place to determine what would be the best learning environment for the child.

Students are PROHIBITED from bringing in any item that does NOT pertain to Faith Formation class. This includes toys, phones, or any other electronics. See page 8.

• **DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE**—Saint James Faith Formation does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, sex, age, national origin, or physical/mental disabilities. We are willing to assist parents in any special needs situation. If we are not prepared to handle the need adequately, we will direct parents to programs within the Diocese of Gary addressing those needs.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES, con't.

- **DRESS CODE**—It is expected that children and adults will dress appropriately, reflecting good taste and proper modesty while attending sessions, prayer services in Church, and any other Church-related activities. **PLEASE FOLLOW THE DRESS CODE IMPLEMENTED BY YOUR SCHOOL.**

Students referred to the office for a dress code violation will be asked to fix the problem. They may be supplied with alternate, acceptable clothing to wear for class. If the problem cannot be resolved, parents will be contacted & asked to bring a change of clothing to the church.

- **ELECTRONICS**—Devices will be collected at the beginning of each class & returned at the end. The office phone is available if someone needs to call home.

- **EMAIL**—We use email for our main method of communication. **THEREFORE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE US WITH AN EMAIL ADDRESS if you have one. All emails are sent by “blind carbon copy” (no one will be able to see your email address). This information will not be shared with anyone.** To contact us by email, please do not use the church's general email (stjames4220@sbcglobal.net). That one is not checked on a daily basis. Please contact Emilija at ecalapas@stjameshighland.org or Lori at loriv@stjameshighland.org.

- **FACULTY**—All Catechists have completed a criminal background check and have completed or are in the process of completing the required Diocesan, “Protecting God’s Children” program. They are also working towards or have attained Basic Formation status under the Diocesan policy on religious education certification. Catechists are instructed in such areas as theology, the Bible, discipline and teaching techniques.

- **HEALTH PROBLEMS/MEDICATION**—It is the parents' responsibility to give notice of any health problem or special need that may exist. We will NOT dispense medication to any student. If a child requires medication during class time, the parents must come to the office and dispense the medication themselves. Do not send medication with the child instructing them to take it when needed. Any special situations will be addressed on an individual basis.

- **HOMEWORK—GIVEN BY THE FAITH FORMATION OFFICE (not the Catechist) FOR ABSENCES. All homework will be emailed unless requested otherwise; (exception: Sacrament class homework).** This means you will need to print it out for the student to complete and return to us. When the homework is completed (preferably by the time they return), we are asking that the child return it to the Faith Formation Office. **Homework will be checked and returned to students as excused. If a child reaches 3 absences without homework turned in, parents will be contacted. Failure to turn in homework may require a meeting with the director for an evaluation to ensure knowledge of subject matter missed.** We will be keeping a record of homework turned in. By having this plan in effect, we will be helping your child stay current with the others in class and not be confused when they return. Many times previous lessons are reviewed in order to set the theme for the new lesson.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES, con't.

- **NEW STUDENTS**—Those students who are new or transferring from another program must provide records of any sacraments they have received (Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation) **unless** received at St. James. A transfer form is needed from any program previously attended. This will keep our records up-to-date and accurate.

NO SACRAMENT MAY BE RECEIVED WITHOUT A BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE ON FILE AT ST. JAMES. If you have the original at home, we can make a copy for our files. If you do not have a copy at home, this can be obtained by calling the parish of Baptism. They can mail or fax it to us. Mailing is preferred, however, if faxed, we must be able to see the parish seal.

- **NON-PARISHIONERS**—We need a letter from your parish pastor giving you permission to attend our program. If it is a sacrament year (generally 2nd, 3rd or 8th grade), we also need permission for your child to receive sacraments here. This may mean that you will be getting a second letter from your pastor. **The child cannot begin classes until we receive the pastor's letter.** The tuition is twice the parishioner rate.

If you decide after placing your family in St. James the Less Faith Formation Program that you want to become a member of the parish, the expectation is that you will be an active participating parishioner, using your time, talent & gift in order to support St. James Parish.

- **PARKING LOT SAFETY**—**For the safety of everyone, please drive slowly, be careful, and use extra caution when driving or walking in the church parking lot. It is expected you will obey the stop sign, 15 mph speed limit, and any directions given by our on duty parking lot personnel.**

- **PRAYERS**—In the child's folder, there will be a list of Prayers and Beliefs & Practices that are important for them to know. The “Our Catholic Faith” page outlines the grades that the children will be introduced to the prayers and when each prayer is to be learned about/memorized (those with an asterisk*). In the classrooms, the Catechists will be asking the children to say the required prayers. **At home, we are asking parents to reinforce what Catechists have done by saying the prayers often with their children.**

- **TEXT MESSAGING**—Providing we have your permission (signed & dated form), we will be using text messaging in case of emergencies, class cancellations, and for other pertinent reminders. At registration, we ask for the Text Message Permission Form to be signed and dated as to whether or not you would like to use this form of communication for the above mentioned reasons. **REMEMBER:** Please inform us if you switch cell phone companies. Our text messaging system requires the correct company in order for it to work.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are the heart and soul of the Faith Formation program. Their service is essential to passing on the Catholic Faith to the youth of our parish. In addition to adult volunteers, we welcome high school students needing community service.

We have a number of volunteer opportunities available, including the following:

Catechists
Substitute Catechists
Classroom Aides
Hall Monitors
Parking Lot Monitors

All volunteers (18 years & older) are required by the Diocese to complete VIRTUS TRAINING, beginning with a 3-hour workshop on "Protecting God's Children."

PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING—IT CAN'T HAPPEN WITHOUT YOU!



WEBSITE INFORMATION

Church website: www.stjameshighland.org

Touch Faith Formation to show drop down menu & then click on link.

Faith Formation **Office Hours, Class Times, & Staff Email** on Faith Formation home page.

Current available links:

Contact Faith Formation (Staff Email, Office Hours, Class Times)

Formation Calendar

Confirmation —

Confirmation Requirements

Choosing Your Sponsor

Saint Report

Sponsor Eligibility Certificate

Patron Saint Option by Month

Patron Saint Listing by Topic

Handbook

Ongoing Donations

Prayers/Beliefs & Practices

Programs Offered

RCIA

Registration

Sacraments —

Sacramental Preparation

Reconciliation Requirements

Eucharist Requirements

Confirmation Requirements

Volunteers

Teen Adoration Nights (T.A.N.)

Feel free to explore the rest of the church website. If you don't find what you are looking for on the web, give us a call.

