

St. James the Less Faith Formation
2025-26



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

INDEX

Welcome.....	1
Parent Involvement.....	1
<u>Formation Programs:</u>	
Traditional.....	2
OCIA-Order of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for children.....	2
Sacramental Preparation.....	2
Reconciliation Requirements.....	2
Eucharist Requirements.....	3
Confirmation Requirements.....	3
Community Service	3
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.....	4
Adult Formation.....	4
<u>Program Information:</u>	
Registration.....	5
Schedule.....	5
Tuition.....	5
<u>Policies & Procedures:</u>	
Aides.....	6
Attendance.....	6
Celebrations.....	7
Class Cancellation.....	7
Communication.....	7
Custody Policy.....	7
Discipline.....	7
Discrimination Clause.....	7
Dress Code.....	8
Electronics.....	8
Email.....	8
Faculty.....	8
Health Problems/Medication.....	8
Homework.....	8
New Students.....	9
Non-Parishioners.....	9
Parking Lot Safety.....	9
Prayers.....	9
Text Messaging.....	9
<u>Volunteer Opportunities.....</u>	10
<u>Website Information.....</u>	11
<u>Office Hours & Staff Information.....</u>	12

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

Welcome to a new year of Faith Formation!
Whether your family is returning or joining us for the first time,
know that you are an important part of our church family.

Father Gregory, our Catechists, and I are excited to partner with you
in guiding your children to know Jesus more deeply!
We are here to support you on their journey to
help them grow in faith, love, and understanding of God.

May this journey be filled with His grace & blessings,

Lori Vetroczyk
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 Faith and Life by Ignatius Press. Each grade level presents the story of salvation history; through this love story students encounter Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. As children are introduced to and revisit concepts and vocabulary from one year to the next, their knowledge and experience both broaden and deepen. This program provides lessons in the faith and delivers those lessons through experiential activities that encourage lifelong practice. These classes meet once a week for 1½ hours on Mondays at 5:30.

• **OCIA**—Order 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 loriv@stjameshighland.org with any questions. These classes meet once a week for 1½ hours on Mondays at 5:30.

• **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 (Grades 7 & 8) will be incorporated into the Monday night sessions for the school year.**

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

- ▶ Have received the Sacrament of Baptism
- ▶ Regular attendance at weekend Mass
- ▶ Two parent sessions & completion of certification
- ▶ Attendance at regular Faith Formation classes
- ▶ Attendance at second semester Sacrament classes
- ▶ Completion of homework for any absence
- ▶ Reconciliation practice
- ▶ First Reconciliation

NOTE: If your child has not made their First Reconciliation and is past second grade, please call the director at 219-924-4220, #2.

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
- ▶ Two parent sessions & completion of certification
- ▶ Attendance at regular Faith Formation classes
- ▶ Attendance at second semester Sacrament classes
- ▶ Completion of homework for any absence
- ▶ 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 219-924-4220, #2.

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
- ▶ Attendance at regular Faith Formation classes, which includes lessons on the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- ▶ Completion of homework for any absence
- ▶ 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

In order to prepare yourself to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, it is important that you spend time going out into the world and being Christ to others. There are many ways you can do that, and to help you start, below are four categories that introduce you to new and to familiar ways to serve others, including your family.

Students need to complete one project for each category: Family, Parish, Community, and Spiritual. How to obtain the required service will be covered in the parent/student meeting.

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

• **CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS)** (Level 1-Pre-K & Kindergarten, 3-6 year olds) CGS is a Montessori-based approach to religious formation 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 relationship with God through nurturing personal prayer and learning about the life and teachings of Jesus, so as to strengthen an understanding of our Catholic identity and to participate more fully in the liturgy and sacramental life of the Church.

Note: Level II CGS (6-9 year olds) will be offered at St. Maria Goretti in Dyer, IN from 9:00-11:30 am every other Saturday. The Toddler Level (16-36 month olds) is offered from 9:45-11:45 am on Wednesdays at St. James. Please note that parents must attend with their toddler.

***Please contact Sue Jeff by phone at (843) 812-0318 or email: susanjettcgs@gmail.com for further information to register for the Toddler or Level II CGS program.**

• **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

Sacrament Program

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

** There are 8 classes each for Reconciliation & Eucharist.*

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

***Faith Formation is in session from September through April,
with sacraments occurring in May.***

Check email or texts for class closings due to severe weather.

TUITION— By 8/30/25:

**\$100.00 for 1 student
\$150.00 for 2 students
\$180.00 for 3 or more**

As of 8/31/25:

**\$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 students attend each session. One lesson builds upon the next, thereby expanding knowledge and aiding faith development. Please follow the listed attendance procedures:

- 1) **ABSENCE: There is a limit of four (4) absences per Faith Formation year. All absences require homework. If a student is absent more than 4 times, they will need to take an assessment at the end of the year. If they pass, they will advance; anyone who fails the assessment will repeat their grade.**

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.**

- 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. Those missing more than 15 minutes of class will be required to complete the homework for the day.**

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.

- 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**—If the Faith Formation program does not have a Christmas celebration as a group, the Catechist may decide whether or not they will have a Christmas celebration as a class. They may also decide whether or not they will have an end-of-the-year celebration. 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. That one is not checked on a daily basis. Please contact 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 absences require homework, and it will be emailed unless requested otherwise.** 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. Answers are to come from their textbook; answers from the internet will require the homework to be re-done. Failure to turn in homework will result in the student having to take an assessment at the end of the year (see attendance policy).** 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. **Students missing more than 15 minutes of class will be required to do the homework for the day.**

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, we may use text messaging in case of emergencies, class cancellations, or for other pertinent reminders.

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, our "Protecting God's Children" safe environment program. (Live or online training is available.)

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 (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

OCIA

Ongoing Donations

Prayers/Beliefs & Practices

Programs Offered

Registration Info

Sacraments —

Sacramental Preparation

Reconciliation Requirements

Eucharist Requirements

Confirmation Requirements

Teen Adoration Nights (T.A.N.)

Volunteers

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.

[illegible]