

Mission Statement

Saint Patrick's Church is committed to teach the Gospel Message and the true doctrine, practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church in a manner that reflects the teachings of Jesus. We will impart the Gospel Message in the format of Whole Parish Catechesis.

Whole Parish Catechesis

Whole Parish Catechesis is a vision of faith formation that is rooted in the documents of Vatican II, the *General Directory for Catechesis*, and other catechetical documents. It promotes faith formation as an ongoing and lifelong process that can be greatly supported by intergenerational learning and interaction.

Through developing opportunities for prayer, journaling, Faith Sharing, building Households of Faith, reflecting on why and how we Gather, and promoting active Service and Outreach, all members of the community of faith are supported in their own faith formation and are invited to reclaim their personal and collective role in the formation of all other members of the community.

The Whole Parish Catechesis vision recognizes and celebrates everyone at all ages as having an equal role and responsibility within the Christian community. Children are as important in the catechetical process as ever. At the same time, we will expand our efforts to support quality catechesis for all generations as well.

Suggestions to Parents/Guardians

A loving God-centered home is most essential for the development of faith and the living of faith. As primary and principle educators of your children be faithful to the Church. Worship with your children at home and in Church. Let them see old and young alike in a common spirit of prayer and celebration. Attendance at Mass, whether on Sunday or Saturday night Masses required by the Roman Catholic Church, the precept of the church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "*On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.*" Please keep in mind, the children cannot bring themselves to church. You, who are most dear to them, and who will forever be their greatest influence, must show them the way to God, by your good example. Actions speak louder than words.

Needless to say a major way parents participate in nurturing the faith of their children in the context of Whole Parish Catechesis is by demonstrating through their example and lifestyle that they both value and enjoy their own faith and relationship with Jesus and the Church. Parent and family participation in Whole Parish Catechesis is a major component in building a *Household of Faith*.

Studies verify that parents continue to exercise the single most important influence on the formation of their children's values from infancy through high school. Parents are the primary and principle educators. The first school is the family in which children learn to live in society and in the Church. Whole Parish Catechesis provides support for your endeavors.

On the practical level, the good example being asked of parents really does mean the *routine Christian behavior* of which you are capable. Whatever you routinely do *that flows from your Catholic faith life* is good example. One form this good example can take is attending catechetical assemblies together as a family. This says in no uncertain terms that adults value their own faith.

Regular attendance at the weekend Mass, to continue to study Catholic teaching, Breaking Open the Word at home on a weekly basis, efforts to grow in some virtue like patience or forgiveness of enemies, small acts of kindness, efforts at personal prayer, struggles to overcome personal weaknesses, concern for the less fortunate, involvement in some form of parish service – these all qualify as good example. None of them requires special skills, large expenditures of time, or extraordinary efforts.

Saint Patrick's Whole Parish Catechesis Website

Our Whole Parish Catechesis program is supported by a website. The URL address for the website is www.w-p-c.org. This website contains all information pertinent to the catechesis program. Copies of most documents are supplied on the website for easy access for any family. Information about special activities and programs will be announced on the website. Be sure to check out all of the additional services contained within the website.

Registration Fee

The registration fee, which helps to minimally cover our expenses, is \$55.00 for one child, \$70.00 for 2 children and \$85.00 for 3 or more children in the family. Those learners in grades 2 and 8 will be charged an additional \$25.00 to cover the extra costs of sacramental preparation. A timely payment of the required fees would be much appreciated. If due to extenuating circumstances you are unable to pay, please notify either the Parish Office or the Office of Whole Parish Catechesis. Your information will be kept strictly confidential.

Book Fee

Due to the high cost of textbooks and the fact that we consume them every year, Saint Patrick's Church will be charging book fees to each family. We will do all we can to keep the cost of books down, however, unfortunately, we can no longer absorb the majority of the book costs. These fees can be paid in full or in three installments due in September, November and January. If due to extenuating circumstances you are unable to pay, please notify either the Parish Office or the Office of Whole Parish Catechesis. Your information will be kept strictly confidential.

Attendance

During the Confirmation Ceremony the Pastor and PCL must verify to the Bishop that the candidates are properly prepared to receive the sacrament. In order to ensure that we can honestly do so we will track attendance at all assemblies. It is vital that learners be present for every session unless illness or other serious reasons prevent attendance. Should a young learner miss a class, the family is responsible for researching and completing the missed lesson and homework assignment. **SPORTS CANNOT BE AN**

ACCEPTABLE REASON FOR ABSENCE. It is stated in the Diocesan guidelines that sports is not acceptable as a reason for missing instruction. *Excessive absence in a sacramental year will result in a delay in receiving the sacrament.* Your efforts to affect regular attendance will greatly improve your family's catechetical experience.

Attendance Reports

Should any young learner have excessive absences, parents will be notified, in writing, that their child is in danger of being retained or removed from the sacramental program (grades 2 & 7/8). Excessive absence means any attendance pattern that falls outside of the Diocesan guidelines.

Sacraments

Because of the seriousness of the sacramental preparation, minimal absences are allowed in grades 2 and 8. There can be **NO ABSENCES FOR REASONS OF SPORTS.** Children preparing for the sacraments are required to attend 2 consecutive years in grades 1&2 and 7&8. For those learners that are transferring in, we will require documentation that the student has been attending a catechesis program regularly in their previous parish.

Behavior / Discipline

Jesus has asked us to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. As we all strive to follow Jesus, we will be aware of showing respect and courtesy to each other. Your encouragement and cooperation in helping your children to live God's law of love is essential.

In concert with good discipline, no child should bring to an assembly any sharp or dangerous objects. A good rule of thumb is to follow the airline guidelines. If you can't take it on a plane then a learner cannot bring it to an assembly. Should any unsafe object be found in a child's possession and the parent is not present, it will be confiscated by the catechist. The object will be sent to the office where a parent will have to retrieve it. On a first offense there will be a warning. On a repeated offense the learner runs the risk of being removed from assemblies.

This same policy will also apply to cell phones and/or electronic media. They will be confiscated not because they are dangerous but because they are a large disruption in a gathering.

FaithWork Assignments

*FaithWork is the assignments that are given at all assemblies for the interim week when we do not gather for a WPC session. These assignments are a meaningful and necessary activity that supplements and reinforces work done in the group. FaithWork is given as a means of extending catechesis over the period of time when we do not meet. This simple task has dramatic impact on learning.

1. FaithWork doubles the amount of learning time.
2. FaithWork increases the amount of learning by 50%
3. FaithWork significantly improves learner involvement.

4. FaithWork gives learners a sense of responsibility and ownership for their faith formation.

FaithWork is not the same as homework and should not be treated as such. To help families understand the difference between FaithWork and homework, a WPC FaithWork Manual will be provided. Please refer to the *FaithWork Manual* for guidelines to completing interim course work.

Memorization

Knowledge of certain elements of Catholic belief is best acquired by memorization. Pope John Paul II pointed out that *“the blossoms... of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memoryless catechesis. What is essential is that the texts that are memorized must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life on the personal level and the community level.”* Those prayers that are essential to Mass participation and receiving the sacraments will be tested for mastery.

Special Needs / Learning Disabilities

Parents/Guardians should alert the PCL and catechists if your child has learning disabilities. It is vital that we are aware of the specific disability so that we can tailor your child’s instruction to suit their learning styles. Consideration will be given on how to instruct and evaluate any pupil with special needs.

Health Issues

It is common for children to have serious and even life threatening allergies or other health conditions. It is imperative that the office and catechist be advised of any such conditions and/or needs your child may have. We will do everything in our power to keep your child healthy and safe. Allergy, medical and emergency forms are kept on file with the catechist and in the office for every child. This is to maximize our ability to protect your child’s health and safety. When you receive these forms to be completed please do so and return them to the parish catechesis office as soon as possible.

Dismissal

Parents/Guardians of primary children are required to drop off and pick up their children at the classroom door. If the teacher is not present in the classroom **do not** leave your child unattended. No young child will be released at the end of class without an adult present, who must sign the child out of class. If another parent/adult is picking up your child the teacher should have your permission, in writing, to release the student to the alternate adult.

Emergency Closing

Emergency closings, due to inclement weather or emergency will be announced on the answering machine in the Catechetical Office at the following number: 475-4919. We will attempt to inform families by email of unscheduled closings. You can also check the WPC website for announced closings (www.w-p-c.org).

Change of Address, Email or Phone

Please notify the catechetical office immediately if you should have a change of address, email address or phone number, so that we may have accurate records should we need to contact you for any reason. If you are moving out of the parish then we would appreciate notification that you are withdrawing your family from the parish program.

The Calendar

Please note the changes in the calendar each year. The year extends from September to May. Sunday and weekday assemblies do not always coincide. Our Classes **DO NOT** follow the public school calendar. Secular holidays **DO NOT** always affect our calendar. When in doubt be sure to check our calendar of events, attached to the end of this handbook and on the WPC website at www.w-p-c.org .

Confessions

It is our goal to provide Confession for assembly members. Confessions will occur a minimum of twice a year, once during Advent and once during Lent. Parents should, however, take their children to confession at other times during the year. Young learners who do not go to confession on a regular basis are often embarrassed and insecure when asked to receive the sacrament only twice a year. This is due to the fact that when the sacrament is rarely received the children forget the format and the prayers involved.

The Curriculum

A copy of our Whole Parish Catechesis Curriculum will be available for every participating family. Our curriculum is a living document in that it is ever evolving and changing. The curriculum for Whole Parish Catechesis is a spiral scope and sequence that approaches every topic at every age group. This is done in an age appropriate manner. We have expanded our curriculum to include all age groups from 5 to 95. The subject matter being offered goes beyond our assembly walls and into your homes. You will find that on every age level we include the following: home assignments, Family Night participation and required community service. The vision of Whole Parish Catechesis is based on the belief that catechesis does not occur in only one format or that age-level catechesis ends. It recognizes, rather, that catechesis is a lifelong process that occurs in many different ways at different times and in different places.

Instructional Materials

Textbooks are often a major source for instructional material. In Whole Parish Catechesis, textbooks and Bibles will provide only a portion of the material used for instruction. The catechists will employ many means to impart information and foster faith growth. In addition to texts for young learners, at times, there will be instructional materials and/or booklets for adult learners. Both the booklets and texts are aligned by topics and in keeping with the *Catechism of the Catholic Faith*. Aside from printed material, mixed media will be incorporated into the catechists plan for instruction. The assembly will also contain the use of Bibles, Hymnals, trade books, prayer books and journals.

Learner Safety Protocol

In accordance with Diocesan mandates, we are adhering to a new Learner Safety Protocol. As an institution of catechesis, we have an ethical and legal responsibility to provide a safe atmosphere for learners of all ages, instructors, aides and support staff alike.

Crisis Management Plan:

In light of the nation's heightened state of alert, we have put into place a Crisis Management Plan. This plan will work in concert with local law enforcement, fire and public safety agencies. In the event of a local emergency we will be notified by the authorities. Immediately thereafter, we will go into "Lock-Down" mode. In Lock-Down all learners will be secured either in the church basement or in the Parish Center. We are prepared to keep them there safely until we receive and all-clear form the authorities.

In case of an evacuation, the authorities are aware of our assembly schedules and will contact and relocate us. We will assume Lock-Down mode until we are removed and relocated to a safer environment. When we have safely arrived we will then attempt to notify families of our location. We are unable to contact you before then because we will not be apprised of our new location until we are there. It is our intent to keep all members safe and secure at all times.

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment is any activity of a sexual nature that is unwanted or unwelcome, including but not limited to: unwanted touching, pinching, patting, verbal comments, of a sexual nature, sexual name – calling, pressure to engage in sexual activity, repeated propositions, and unwanted body contact. Learners, who engage in sexual harassment, while engaged in catechetical activities or on parish property, will be subject to appropriate discipline which may include removal from the program and/or legal action. In the event of an incident, the occurrence will be documented; adults will meet with the pastor and PCL to pursue an investigation to determine if sexual harassment occurred and the appropriate response.

Evidence of Threats:

Evidence of a threat is when a learner either in writing or verbally expresses a desire to cause harm to himself or others. Learners who present a threat either to themselves or others while engaged in catechetical activities or on parish property will be subject to an immediate and strict response to the threat. The learner will be removed from the program and not allowed to return unless a written statement from a doctor that the person is no danger to himself or others has been submitted to the Parish Catechetical Leader. This written recommendation should be the result of a full psychological evaluation. *All threats, no matter how trivial they seem, must be taken seriously and dealt with immediately. NO EXCEPTIONS!*

Staff Abuse:

Staff abuse is any activity of a threatening nature including verbal and/or physical abuse. Most cases of staff abuse occur when a learner engages in verbal attacks against a

catechist. It is considered abuse whether or not they engage in foul language. It may be statements of disrespect or actual threats of future physical harm. On rare occasions an angry or out of control learner may strike someone in authority, shove another person or they may hurl books, chairs, objects, etc. Learners who engage in staff abuse while participating in catechetical activities or on parish property will be subject to appropriate discipline which may include removal from the program and/or legal action. When an incident occurs it will be documented. Adults will meet with the pastor and PCL to determine what happened and the appropriate course of action. Those actions may involve reprimand, removal from the program and/or a legal complaint.

Technology Communication Policy:

Saint Patrick's has adopted the Diocesan Technology Communication Policy. All Technology Communication will be used solely for relaying information related to WPC activities, class topics, clarification of assignments and church sponsored events.

- All communication regarding students, or related to the classroom, will be directed to the parents/guardians of the students, and not to the respective student themselves. As such, parish staff, catechists and other volunteers will not phone, text message, e-mail or correspond via social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Myspace, etc.) *directly with current students, or former students under the age of 18*. Likewise, parish staff, catechists and other volunteers will not provide their personal email address or telephone/cell number to current students, or former students under the age of 18. Catechists may however, provide their personal contact information to parents/guardians.

Fingerprinting:

All catechists, aides and support staff are fingerprinted as a matter of course and precaution. This is to verify that there is no criminal record in any one's background. This will further ensure that all learners are in a safe environment when in attendance.

Supervision:

Due to the fact that our catechetical campus involves more than one building and that we meet in the evening, in addition to Sunday mornings, we will be heightening supervision of young learners. **No** young learner will be allowed to travel outdoors from one location to another unsupervised. They will be accompanied by an adult each time they are outdoors.

Handbook Protocol

After reading this publication it is essential that you review all of the pertinent material with all members of your household. All policies and protocols will be most effective if you discuss them as a family and ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them. Your continued support is always valued and appreciated.