



*Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church*  
*Faith Formation Office Seminole, FL*  
727-391-4661 [www.blessedsacramentonline.org](http://www.blessedsacramentonline.org)

Welcome Families!

Congratulations on your generous and loving decision to provide your children with Faith Formation in the Roman Catholic tradition at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church!

It is a great honor for our Faith Formation team to be entrusted with assisting in the Faith Formation of your child(ren). The primary goal of all our programs is to help children know and love Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist, the Sacraments, the Scriptures, the Church, and in all the people of the world.

It is not easy to raise children as true Catholic Christians. Our Catholic message of Christ is radical and counter-cultural in today's world.

Christ teaches true love and unselfishness, while the world teaches selfishness and self-centeredness. Christ teaches the immense value of all human life, while the culture teaches that some lives are expendable. Our Church finds Christ in Scripture, Sacrament and the Living Teaching Tradition of the Church, while the world has rejected all or some of these pathways to Christ. The freedom Christ gives is freedom from loneliness, lies, evil, and self-centeredness, while the world defines freedom in a very different way. Catholic children who truly receive Christ into their hearts will receive the grace they need to resist the temptations and erroneous messages of today's culture, and become truly joyful people. They will be strong, loving, and hopeful, regardless of their circumstances. They will have a sense of purpose in life and they will know their own great dignity in the royal priesthood of believers.

While parents are the most influential and important catechists for their children, most parents recognize that parents alone cannot overcome the messages of the culture. **Parish Faith Formation programs supplement the loving examples and lessons that parents provide**, with the testimony and resources of the Parish and the Church.

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church seeks to provide approaches that are effective and relevant to the needs of the children and the needs of their family through Liturgical Catechesis. What's more, it is our goal to develop programs that are constantly improving using several resources from RLI/Benziger as well as resources from [www.FORMED.ORG](http://www.FORMED.ORG) using code **X632Y2**. Please let us know if we can better assist you in any way on YOUR faith journey!

May God bless you and your family with many graces this year and always!

Faith Formation Office  
Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church  
Seminole, FL

## **Parish Responsibilities for Catechesis of Children**

Our Church has always taught that *“Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children.”* (*National Catechetical Directory.*)

Every member of the parish Children’s Faith Formation Team (DRE, catechists, aides) has the mission to respect and support families by providing faith formation assistance and direction.

Catechists recognize that they are dealing with families that provide varying levels of faith formation in the home and try to be respectful of these differences, adapting lessons as necessary to meet various needs.

As a support to families Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church is responsible to offer a well-balanced Faith Formation Program for children that features Diocesan-approved and developmentally appropriate curriculum regarding: creed, liturgy, prayer, sacred scripture, sacraments, morality, parish life, stewardship, social justice and charitable service to others in need.

Our Children’s Faith Formation Programs are adapted to the developmental needs of children at various ages and:

- Concentrate on Jesus Christ present in the Sacraments, in the Sacred Scriptures, in the living teaching tradition of the Church Magisterium, in the parish, in people who are in need, and in the hearts of all loving people.
- Offer a wide variety of prayer experiences.
- Provide loving, joyful experience of our Catholic parish community.
- Are rooted in Liturgical Worship/Mass and Sacraments, Sacred Scripture and the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church.
- Promote loving choices (Christian morality), stewardship/involvement in parish life, social justice and service to others as Disciples of Christ.
- Maintain compliance with the Diocesan Safe Environment policy which serves to protect children.
- Engage multiple learning styles with a balanced mixture of presentation, discussion, arts and crafts, role-playing, music, video, learning games, and hands-on experiences.
- Structure programming so that all students of all academic ability levels can experience success, come closer to Christ and learn the faith in accordance with their ability levels.
- Welcome non-Catholic students if parents give permission, and encourage students to bring friends.

**Faith Formation Office**

The Faith Formation Office administers all Faith Formation programs for children, from birth through Grade 8 and adults. (High School students are served through our Youth Ministry Program). Please call the Faith Formation office (727-391-4661) about any questions, concerns, or needs you may have regarding Children's Faith Formation.

**Parish School Building**

Faith Formation Classes are normally held in our Parish School Building and the Parish Center.

**Family Responsibilities**

Blessed Sacrament's Children's Faith Formation Programs are intended only as a supplement to the faith formation efforts of parents/guardians. If parents/ guardians want children to truly embrace the Catholic faith – and to know the joy and strength of a loving relationship with God and Church – they are encouraged to catechize children during family moments by:

- Attending Mass regularly and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year during Lent.
- Praying at home daily with children (bedtime prayers, meal prayers, and bible reading are essential).
- Instilling Christian moral values through teaching, demonstrating love and affection, providing a good example of Christian choices/virtues, making one-on-one time for each child and providing consistent, kind and loving discipline.
- Taking an interest in Faith Formation, asking about classes/studies, volunteering, attending family events, and cooperating with policies.
- Contributing to the parish through the weekly offertory collection or by volunteering to help with parish ministries and events.
- Placing a priority on regular attendance at all required classes.
- Eliminating negative influences by maintaining firm control of TV, music, videos, games, phones and other media to ensure wholesome content.
- Reading and replying to mail or email from the Faith Formation office.
- Ensuring child safety in the parking lot by picking up all children in grades K – 8 at the classroom door.
- Keeping children in Faith Formation programs every year from (at least) first grade through the senior year of high school. Attendance at Faith Formation classes every year from first through 8<sup>th</sup> grades is considered by our Diocese to part of Sacramental preparation.
- Attend Parent Meetings for First Eucharist, Confirmation, and the Parent Orientation/Child Safety Meeting – as notified by the Faith Formation Office.
- Volunteering to help in some way with Faith Formation, K4J VBS, Parish Events, and/or Service projects.

### **The Critical Importance of Regular Mass Attendance**

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. The intimacy with Christ that is available to us in the Eucharist is unsurpassable. Through loving celebration and reception of the Eucharist, we receive the graces we need for growing in love and truth. We cannot live up to Christian ideals and grow ever closer to God without this kind of help from God and our community.

Just as our relationships with family members suffer if we do not come together regularly, so will our relationship with Christ and our Parish Family suffer if we do not come together to receive Eucharist regularly.

In our Faith Formation Programs, much of the teaching centers on the Eucharist. Children who attend Mass regularly find our programs enjoyable, meaningful and inspirational. They are open to the lessons being taught and make good connections between our teaching and their own real lives.

But when children are not regularly taken to Mass, they often find themselves feeling uncomfortable in class. They may become confused, doubtful, and even cynical about God. Surely this is not the goal of families who routinely skip Mass, but this is almost always the result.

Our Catholic Church has only five man-made precepts or rules for its members. The first is that members are expected to attend Mass every Sunday (or Sunday vigil). The Church teaches that, for Catholics, willfully missing Mass on weekends is a serious matter that causes a very real rupture in our relationship with God.

Please make every effort to also attend Mass at Blessed Sacrament or any other parish regularly, so that your child will find their classes enjoyable and meaningful.

### **Weekly Class Times**

Our Weekly Program classes are taught by volunteer Catechists and Aides. Volunteer Hall Monitors and Office Helpers also help to make this program safe and effective.

The Weekly Program includes several Family Events each year that count as classes. These events are intended to increase the involvement of parents in the Faith Formation, of their children and parent participation is very important. We usually meet for regular Faith Formation Classes on Sundays from 10:00am to 11:00am which gives families the opportunity to attend Mass at our 8:30am Mass or our 11:30am Mass. Coffee & Donuts are usually served from 9:00am to 11:15am on campus.

### **Family Program Faith Formation – Kindergarten – Grade 8**

The Family Program option allows parents to teach Faith Formation at home using texts and materials provided by the Parish. To ensure that these children experience the community life of the parish, children are also required to attend two Community Builder Events during the year together with a parent.

This option is especially good for busy families, as it brings the family together, rather than keeping them apart and can be scheduled according to the family's needs. What's more, when it is done well, the Family Program provides a highly effective approach to Faith Formation. Kids love it!

### **Youth Ministry**

Our Youth Ministry Office serves Youth from grade 7 through 12 with social, athletic, educational, service and spiritual programming. At the middle school level, Youth Ministry provides events and retreats to supplement the Faith Formation program. At the high school level, Youth Ministry seeks to provide an exciting program that meets all the needs of High School youth. Parent involvement is needed. Call the Youth Minister for details (727-391-4661).

### **Non-Catholic Children and Children Who Have Missed Sacraments**

Our programs are open to non-Catholic children and children who have missed receiving Sacraments at the “normal” time.

In the case of non-Catholics, parents/guardians must grant permission for their children to participate, and should see to it that the children are taken to Mass on a regular basis. These parents are asked to contact the Faith Formation office, so that we can be sure that our programs are sensitive to the needs of the children.

In the event that a non-Catholic child wishes to explore the possibility of becoming Catholic, parents/guardians are asked to contact the Faith Formation Office to discuss the “RCIA for Children” process, which is designed to help them explore the faith, experience our parish community, and become Catholic if and when they are ready.

In the case of children who have missed receiving Sacraments at the usual times, such as First Communion in second grade or Confirmation in eighth grade, the Faith Formation Office will work with the family to design a Sacramental preparation program that meets the needs and preferences of the family. **Sacraments can be received by baptized children** at any time upon the Pastor’s approval provided they can demonstrate readiness and desire for the Sacraments. They may or may not participate in group ceremonies, depending on the family’s preference.

### **Catholic School and Homeschooling Families**

Catholic School and Homeschooling Families (those whose children do not attend Catholic or public schools) are also served by our Faith Formation program. They are encouraged to register with our office and participate in family events, Vacation Bible School and Sacramental Preparation programs for children.

### **Vacation Bible School**

Our Vacation Bible School Program is offered each year in June. VBS is highly recommended for helping children learn to love God and the Scriptures. This program provides a festive, fun approach to learning virtues of Saints and growing in love for Jesus and His Church. Children age 3 through grade 4 are invited to participate. Children grades 5-12 are invited to serve as Captains & Volunteers and have fun, too, as Youth Leadership. Many parent volunteers are also needed.

### **Sacramental Formation – Reconciliation**

The Diocese of St. Petersburg, children normally celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Penance or Confession) during their second grade year. Parents attend a First Reconciliation meeting at which they receive materials for completing formation at home and a group practice/mini-retreat is offered. First Reconciliation usually takes place on a Saturday during Catholic Schools Week.

*Older children, teens and adults* who have been Baptized and want to prepare to receive this Sacrament for the first time, may receive First Reconciliation at any time, provided their readiness has been established. The Faith Formation Office will custom design a preparation program based on the child's individual needs.

### **Sacramental Formation – Eucharist**

First Eucharist is celebrated during the second grade year. Parents attend a First Eucharist meeting at which they receive materials for completing Sacramental formation at home and our First Eucharist Retreat is offered after Easter. First Eucharist takes place the First Saturday in May.

*Older children and adults* who have been Baptized, and want to prepare to receive this Sacrament for the first time, may receive First Eucharist at any time, provided their readiness has been established. The Faith Formation Office will custom design a preparation program based on the child's individual needs.

### **Sacramental Formation - Confirmation**

Confirmation is celebrated during the month of October depending on the Bishop's schedule for students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Students attend 3 Sacramental Prep Classes during the month of September concluding with a retreat leading up to the Confirmation Mass. Parents attend an informational meeting as well as the rehearsal scheduled one week prior to the Confirmation.