Church of the Assumption

of the

 Blessed Virgin Mary

# Image result for faith formation

# PARENT HANDBOOK

*** School Year***

***2023-2024***

***Assumption Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary***

***302 High Street***

***Hackettstown, NJ 07840***

**Rose Strohmaier, Parish Catechetical Leader**

***faithformation@assumptionbvmnj.org***



**Dear Parents!**

Along with our staff and Catechists, I want to welcome you to a new year as we journey together on the path to Heaven. I am grateful for the opportunity to walk this walk with you as your Father in faith.

The schedule of classes, events, meetings, trips, and spiritual gatherings are created all with the desire to offer you and your children many opportunities to deepen your love for Jesus. Loving Jesus is central to our faith. Nothing we teach or say will make sense to anyone without the foundation of love for Christ to come first. It is our hope that your entire family will take full advantage of these opportunities.

You are a gift to me, and I pray you are as joyful and excited as I am, with the start of our new year of formation. My gift to you is my prayer that God may bless you and your children. May He lead you to grow and deepen your faith as your family participates in all we offer you in His glorious and holy name.

**Fr. Leo, Pastor**

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Church of the Assumption for the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish Faith Formation Program. It is our privilege to support you in your efforts to guide your child to a deeper and more meaningful Christian life following the doctrines and teachings of the Catholic Church. We are here to help all families of Assumption Parish with their faith formation needs and desire to engage the entire family on their spiritual journey.

Our goal in everything we do is to offer as many opportunities as we can for you and your family to more deeply love our Lord, Jesus Christ. Be it Adoration, Confession, Mass, Reflection Nights…so on and so one—we offers these for you for that one purpose—to deepen your personal relationship with God along with your children.

Please let us know what we can do to serve you as we journey this path together.

**Rose Strohmaier**

**Parish Catechetical Leader**

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## PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Catholic Community of The Church of the Assumption is to be led by the Word of God, to proclaim God in our words and actions, and to bring all people to God like Mary our Blessed Mother.

**VISION OF OUR FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM**

The mission of the Office of Faith Formation is to proclaim the message of Jesus, to teach His truth, and to extend His love to all people. We hope to enable our parish community, beginning at birth and continuing through life, to discover, grow and mature in their faith experience, to deepen their relationship with Christ and His church, and to realize an excitement about the wonderful gifts received by participating in our faith.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

***“Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”*** These words were spoken to you by the priest who baptized your child. As a brother or sister in the community of Catholic Christian believers, you are not alone in your sincere efforts to fulfill the promise you made to your child and to God.

We welcome this opportunity to assist you in fulfilling your primary obligation in teaching your children to walk in ways of faith. This can only be done when each family places Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of their lives through family prayer and daily living of the Christian message. ***Most importantly, your family’s participation at mass during Sunday Liturgy is an essential part of your family’s faith journey. Eucharist is food for our souls and the source and summit of our faith as well as a beautiful gift from Christ to us.*** We look forward to partnering with you, together, to communicate Catholic Christian values, morals and teachings to your children. We need to pray together, talk together, and plan together. In that way we can draw fully from sacred scripture and Church teachings to work and support one other to instill in our children, our families and ourselves Christ’s holy desire for us—that is, to live His word in the world.

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**PARISH MASS SCHEDULE**

An integral part of our Faith Formation is that we all attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and participating fully is an essential part of the sacramental life of the Church. Knowledge of Christ unfolds at the altar where we personally meet our Lord in His true presence-the Eucharist.

Our Mass Schedule: Saturday 5:30 PM (English), 7:00 PM (Spanish) and Sunday 8:00 AM, 10:00 AM & 12:00 Noon

Please note that each class will host the 10:00AM liturgy on Sundays as designated on the calendar. Children will participate as lectors, gift bearers, and greeters.

**MASS ATTENDANCE**

You, as a spiritually committed parent, are sending your children to Faith Formation to grow deeper in knowledge of faith and relationship with God. Children learn most from the modeling of those most influential in their lives—YOU. They are watching more than listening, so to attend Mass on Saturday evenings/Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation as a family is most powerful for their formation and the positive effects on the family as a whole ought not be minimized. You, too, will be ever amazed as to the spiritual growth you yourself will make when actively participating in the formation of your child. We can never learn all there is to know about Christ who is fully present in the Eucharist; so, it stands to reason, that we can never learn all there is to know about the Eucharist. Jesus said “Let the children come to me.” We are ALL His children, so let us ALL come and it is strongly encouraged that families attend mass together.

***Since Sunday liturgy is of upmost importance and to prepare for initiation of the sacraments of Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation, families of the children in the second and eighth grade are to regularly attend Mass. Each child is to have a bulletin from their church signed by a priest/deacon each time they attend Mass and bring it to faith formation every Wednesday in order to record their attendance at Mass.***

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

Participating as a family in aspects of a child’s life forms their thinking and pursuits of what is important. This is true for academics, social engagements, sports and--of course--faith. The more God is the center of your life, the more influence you have on guiding your child to do likewise. As parents, our intention is to have the souls of our children obtain the eternal gift of Heaven, so it makes sense to fully participate in what your child is being exposed to during their experience in Faith Formation. Again—as parents, we, too, can learn from the exercises and practices offered to our children. Ask. Review. Inquire. Participate. Your children are with us for a little over an hour a week. We are supporting you and our efforts will prove fruitless without your help. Please—assist your child in all that is asked of them during their formation here at Assumption Parish.

**THE CATECHIST**

A Catechist is a person of faith who has the task of creating the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit to bring about growth among believers. They foster “mature faith” through a regular systematic presentation. The primary mission of catechists is to communicate God’s love to those entrusted to their care, by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished through the fourfold activities of message, community, worship and service.

**VOLUNTEERS**

Faith Formation is served by volunteer Catechists, Aides, and Hall Monitors. All employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Metuchen, 18 yrs. of age or older, who have more than a onetime contact with a minor as defined under New Jersey State Law, MUST, undergo a criminal history background check and fingerprinting in accordance with the policy set forth in the Policy on Criminal History Background Checks. All volunteers in our parish program have completed this program. In addition to our volunteers, our Pastor and Director of Religious Education also have completed this program.

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**CURRICULUM**

Curriculum guidelines are attached to this handbook. It is advised that the entire family read and discuss the various topics as outlined on the guidelines. Naturally, it is encouraged that all the prayers and means of the faithful be prayed and shared as a family at home so everyone is able to reap the spiritual benefits of praying and living out our faith together. The prayers and means of the faithful for each grade are outlined below and written in full attached to this handbook.

**GRADE PRAYER FORMATION**

Kindergarten Sign of the Cross

 Glory Be to the Father

 Grace before/after meals

Grade 1 Lord’s Prayer

 Hail Mary

 Guardian Prayer

Grade 2 Act of Contrition

 Confiteor

 Morning Offering

Grade 3 Apostles Creed

 Hail Holy Queen

Grade 4 Mysteries of the Rosary

 Rosary

 Come, Holy Spirit

Grade 5 Prayer to the Holy Spirit

 Acts of Faith, Hope and Love

Grade 6 Memorare

 Magnificat

Grade 7 Prayer to Saint Michael

 Angelus

 Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

Grade 8 Prayer to St. Francis

 The Eight Beatitudes

**FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM**

The Diocese along with Virtus has developed a video series titled “Empowering God’s Children” which, with parent permission, will be taught to all grade levels. This series will replace the Family Life series which was used in the past years.

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**MATERIALS FOR OUR CHILDREN**

The Faith Formation Program provides materials for all registered children. The Catechists will give instruction as to what materials will be used and when. Be sure your child is prepared every Wednesday for we have them but once a week and time is at a premium.

**SACRAMENT POLICIES**

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation entails two years of formal faith formation. Permission for home study may only be granted after a discernment process by the Pastor, the Parish Faith Formation Office, and the Diocesan Faith Formation Office. Homeschooling is offered to families whose children are not in school and are schooled full-time at home. Sacrament programs require both formal religious formation as well as attendance at practices, activities and special liturgies held on days other than regular class days. You will be reminded of these special dates through letters and monthly notices.

**HOMEWORK**

Homework reinforces classroom learning and can provide opportunities for independent study and creative thinking. Parents can help their children by arranging a quiet, comfortable place for their children to complete their assignments and checking to see if assignments are done. Homework is assigned at Catechist’s discretion.

###### ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES:

**Formation Sessions are held Wednesdays:**

Grades K—4 4:15-5:30—1st & 3rd Wednesdays in School/2nd and 4th On-line

Grades 5—8 6:30-8:00—1st & 3rd Wednesdays On-Line/2nd & 4th in School

**ARRIVAL:** PARK YOUR CAR. Parking is allowed in the Columbus Club parking lot. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES are you allowed to block any entrance or driveway; parking on the school lot is not permissible. When entering the school, children will be met at the door by a volunteer and be sent directly to the classroom.. Catechists will be present in the room upon student arrival.

**DISMISSAL:** PARK YOUR CAR IN THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS LOT. Children will be with their Catechists in the parking lot at the session end time. Parents are to wait by the first row of cones until the children are in the parking lot. ONCE THE CONES ARE REMOVED, YOU MAY MEET YOUR CHILKD IN THEIR DESIGNATED DROP OFF LOCATION. DO NOT WAVE TO OR ENCOURGE YOUR CHILD TO RUN THROUGH THE LOT TO MEET YOU.

**NO CHILD-NO MATTER THE AGE-WILL BE PERMITTED TO GO TO THE PARKING LOT UNATTENDED WITHOUT THE PROPER WAIVER COMPLETED AND RETURNED TO THE DRE.**

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**ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES** (continued)

If your child is in a car pool, or usually has someone other than you pick them up, please make sure that they know who will be taking them home. If these children are to go to the lot unattended, proper waiver forms must be submitted to the DRE prior to the day of pick-up. Remind them that they should wait and not accept a ride from another person.

Please be on time to pick up your child/children. Children become very upset and worried when they are not picked up on time. Also, this is not fair to our staff. Catechists *are not* permitted to take on the responsibility of transporting children home. If you cannot pick up your child on time, *IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY* to make other arrangements and to make sure that your child is aware of these arrangements before they are dropped off and picked up from class.

Walking Home - for the safety of your child/children **it is not** advisable for you to allow your child/children to walk home. Again, if this is by parent request the proper waiver must be submitted to the DRE.

WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN RIDING THEIR BIKES TO AND FROM CLASS.

**PUNCTUALITY**

This is vital to all levels. Habitual tardiness creates a distraction in the classroom and is a loss of precious time. *Please bring your children to class and pick them up to go home on time. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.*

**ABSENCES (Diocese Policy)**

If your child will be absent, please call the Faith Formation Office or send an email to the Director before class on the day of the absence. Excessive absences will hinder good learning. **DIOSCEAN POLICY STATES NO MORE THAN THREE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL BE ALLOWED IN ONE SCHOOL YEAR.** Sickness, death in the family or serious family emergencies are the only valid excuses. If your child has more than 3 unexcused absences a meeting will be set up with the DRE, the Catechist and the family to discuss what will be needed for the student to successfully complete the program. *Sports or other extra-curricular activities are not acceptable excuses for absence from religion class. State law mandates that children cannot be disciplined in any way for missing or tardiness to school functions for religious reasons of which faith formation is included.* Please make sure that missed assignments are made up.

**LEAVING EARLY**

On the very rare occasion that your child must be dismissed early, *due to an emergency or sickness*, please be advised that a parent/guardian must pick up their child in the Director’s Office. For security reasons, no parent/guardian is allowed to go unsupervised to the classroom for a child*. You must call the Director and write a note to the Catechist to request an early dismissal.*

**CANCELLATIONS**

Cancellations will be sent to you via Flocknotes. If your child’s public school is closed due to a weather emergency, then Faith Formation classes are also cancelled.

**CLASS SCHEDULES /CALENDAR**

A calendar for Faith Formation is included at the end of this handbook and on the Parish Website. Please keep it in a convenient spot so that you and your child can check schedules. Please note the days when there are no classes scheduled. We cannot be responsible for children being dropped off on a day when there are no classes. Parent meetings, retreats and all extra sacramental program sessions are published on the calendar. Dates for Confirmation and related rehearsals will be published and distributed to students as soon as the dates are finalized.

**TELEPHONE NUMBERS, ADDRESSES, E-MAIL**

If your address or telephone number is changed during the school year, please notify the office. The office has a difficult time getting important messages to you if we do not have accurate information. Also, if you have an e-mail address, please provide it to us.

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**COMMUNICATION**

Our main source of ongoing communication to parents is via notices sent home from class with your child(ren) and the parish website. Reminder e-mails to parents are sent and/or information is published in the parish bulletin. Please be sure to look for notices after Faith Formation Classes each week and consult the parish bulletin for relevant information.

You may contact the Director of Religious Education via e-mail at **faithformation@assumptionbvmnj.org**, by cell phone **(908) 303-9692** or send a written letter into class with your child. All calendar updates can be found on the parish website**: olofa.org/faith-formation**

**STUDENT CODE OF BEHAVIOR**

1. Students are expected to show respect for all persons in words and actions.

2. Students must conform to the attendance policy stated in this handbook.

3. Students will comply with the classroom rules set by their Catechist to provide a good learning environment.

4. Students must do nothing that could cause physical harm to themselves or to others.

1. Students must not destroy, deface, or remove property from the building. Vandal damage must be paid for by the parent of the student.
2. Students are responsible for completing all class work and homework.
3. Drugs, alcohol, and weapons, of any sort, are not allowed on the premises. If a student is found to be in
possession of any of these, the student will be detained, and the police will be notified. The student will
immediately be dismissed from the program.

8. In addition, we maintain a firm **Zero Tolerance Policy** for any and all verbal or non-verbal threats. If such an incident is reported to our office, the student will be detained, and the authorities will be notified. The child will immediately be dismissed from the program.

**STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Rules are necessary for the orderly operation of our Parish Faith Formation. We expect our children to contribute to an atmosphere of Christian concern for others. We also expect them to act in a courteous, respectful manner. Willfully damaging or destroying property will not be tolerated. Vandal damage must be paid for by parent of student. Accidental damage is to be reported to Director immediately. Cooperation of parents is vital in helping our children develop good character traits. To this end, children are expected to comply with the rules and regulations of the Assumption Parish Faith Formation Program. Deliberate disregard for the policies stated in our Student Code of Behavior will lead to:

 1. Catechist reprimand and call to parent

 2. Reprimand by Office of Religious Ed. and call to parent

 3. Parent Conference

 4. Discharge from program with home study option

ELECTRONICS & CELL PHONE POLICY

We prefer that cell phones not be brought to class at all. If you feel strongly that it is important for your child to have a cell phone in order to communicate with you, the phone must be kept turned off and put away during class time. Catechists will keep any cell phones being used during class and only return it to the parent. No electronic devices will be permitted in class. If a student comes with an electronic device of any sort it will be kept in the office until class is concluded.

**SAFETY PROCEDURES**

For the safety of your children, fire/evacuation drills will be conducted during the year. A lock down drill will also be conducted during the year. The doors from the outside of the building will be locked at 15 minutes after class starts and will be reopened 15 minutes before the end of class.

###### MEDICAL CONDITIONS

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform the Director about their child who has a special medical condition that could flare up in a session or which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. allergies, asthma, auditory or visual impairment, possibility of seizures, learning disability, hyperactivity, Attention Deficit Disorder etc.) This information is kept confidential and is communicated only to the Catechist and Administrative Assistant. In the event medication needs to be administered to a child, a Diocese of Metuchen Release from Physician and Parent for Staff administer Medication to

Student form must be completed and returned to the office. (Call our office if you need one of these forms).

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**CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

If a catechist or director suspects a child has been abused, NJ State statutes require that the Division of Youth and Family Services be notified immediately. At the discretion of the director or catechist a student will not be sent home with a driver who is visibly impaired. In this instance the program director reserves the right to call an emergency number to arrange an alternate means of transportation.

**MOVING**

If you are moving away from Assumption Parish, we would appreciate a call from you. We like to keep our files accurate and we would be glad to give you a transfer letter to bring to your new parish.

###### VISITORS

Visitors are not permitted in the classrooms or building during class time. In case of necessity, a visitor should report to the Faith Formation Office in the school.

**VALUABLES AND LOST AND FOUND**

The Catechetical staff cannot be responsible for valuables which students bring to class. It is recommended that all valuables be left at home. All lost clothing, money, jewelry, or any other articles of value that are turned in may be claimed at the Director’s office.

**CLASS PLACEMENT**

The following fulfill the directives of the Diocese of Metuchen: Faith Formation is a preparation for life. The students are expected to attend Faith Formation continuously from Level 1 to 8. Sacramental preparation is a two-year program (Eucharist, Confirmation). Older children, without previous formal Faith Formation are enrolled in the RCIA for children program. Any child who leaves the Faith Formation Program after receiving First Eucharist will (upon re-entering the program) be required to complete the level curriculum missed. The placement of the student is determined by the Director after consultation with the parent.

**PRE-REGISTRATION PROCEDURE**

In Spring of every year registration forms for the following year are handed out in class for each family. Please fill out one form per family. You may mail back the forms along with the required fee or drop them off at the Faith Formation Office, located in the Parish Center. We ask that you return your forms by the cutoff date.

**FEES**

No child will be refused Faith Formation due to finances; therefore, if there is a financial problem, please call the Faith Formation Office.

* **Early-bird discount: March 25 to May 10, 2024:**

$100 for one child, $150 for two, $200 for three or more children.

* **Registration Fee: May 13 to June 28**

$150 for one child; $205 for two, $245 for three or more children.

* **Late Registration:**

$175 for one child; $230 for two; $270 for three or more

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* **Preparation Fee** (cost of gowns, banners, prayer book, retreats, Mass, etc**.)**

 **$25 First Communion $20 Confirmation I $50 Confirmation II**

* **Faith Formation Catechist Discount:**
	+ Cost per child if Mother or Father is Catechist- $75 for one child, $100 for two, $175 three or mor

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**SPECIAL NEEDS**

Our ministry responds to the religious and spiritual needs of persons with a physical, mental or emotional disability which impairs their functioning in a regular classroom. Because of that disability the student may require individualized instruction in a small group or in a one-on-one setting or may be mainstreamed into the regular catechetical program if assistance is provided. In consultation with the parent, the Director will appropriately place each child in a program that will service his/her special needs and encourage further spiritual growth.

**Homeschool is permitted ONLY if the children are homeschooled for all subject areas.**

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###### ALTAR SERVERS

All children will be trained to altar serve so they may do so for when the class hosts Mass. All Confirmandi in both years are to altar serve as a part of their sacramental requirements.

###### CHILDREN’S CHOIR – As soon as a children’s choir is assembled, faith formation children will be encouraged to participate.

**Food Allergies**

Food allergies are a growing health concern for children across the county. Even a miniscule amount of the allergenic food is sufficient to cause a life-threatening reaction and inadvertent contact (via nose, eyes, mouth) can be sufficient to put a child in danger. It is the goal of Assumption Parish to provide an allergen free environment for children with food allergies, so that they may enjoy a safe and respectful place to grow in their faith.

Recognizing that strict avoidance of the allergen is the only way to prevent a potentially life-threatening reaction, we ask your cooperation with the following directive: No food and drink of any kind are permitted during parish faith formation programs. This includes foods that are considered to be "safe".

Parents and guardians of highly allergic children MUST make known the special needs of their child to the parish catechetical leader and catechist, so that all precautions will be taken.

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