



“Parents are the primary educators in the faith. Indeed, in the same way as the Church, the family is a place in which the Gospel is transmitted and from which it extends. It is for this reason that the Christian community must give very special attention to parents. By means of personal contact, meetings, courses and also adult catechesis directed toward parents, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility – which is particularly delicate today – of educating their children in the faith.”

(GDC, Articles 255 and 227)

For more information or to register your child for any of the programs offered at St. Mary Immaculate Parish, please call **815-436-2651**.

**Pastor:**

Fr. David Medow x813

**Associates:**

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Fr. Stan Tabor x806

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**Parish Administrative Assistant:** Pat Widlowski x803

**RCIA Director:** Deacon Tom Sagenbrecht x476

**My Time with Jesus:** Bridget Melzacki x852

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**Confirmation Director:** Penny Giunta x878

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# Let the Journey Begin...

Your  
Child's  
Journey  
of Faith  
Begins  
with  
You...





# Your Child's Catholic Faith Journey

Scripture tells us that Mary was Jesus' first disciple as well as His mother. During the wedding feast at Cana, where Our Lord performed His first public miracle, Mary told the servants: "Do whatever He tells you." (John 2:5)

We, too, are disciples of Christ and are called to do what He tells us. Through His Church's leadership, we are called as parents to be the first teachers of our children, both in faith and in the world. We are also called as Catholics to share the Good News with all the people in our lives. We are called as a parish to provide for our members, young and old alike, a continual pathway of learning about Jesus and this wonderful gift of faith. This pathway includes Scripture, the Mass, the Sacraments, Prayer, the Church, Catholic beliefs and traditions, the Catholic community as the Body of Christ and many more important aspects of our faith.

## As parents, how do you begin to foster faith at home?

Well, we can't give what we don't possess, so first, it's important to develop your own relationship with Christ and an appreciation of the Catholic faith. Attending Mass and receiving the sacraments provide us with the grace to live life to the fullest. Reading Catholic literature, attending educational events offered by the Church, or reviewing Catholic audio and visual presentations that not only inform us but inspire us, is essential in forming a mindset for Christ.

Armed with a love for Christ and of the Catholic faith, you can begin to form your children to follow in your footsteps. At each step in their development, there are opportunities to meet their curiosity and desire for God.

During the earliest stage of their lives (birth to about age 2), when they are learning about their environment through their senses, you can bless them with holy water, teach them to kiss the crucifix and listen to Christian lullabies. Church can present a myriad of sights and sounds for your child to observe. Sit up close to the front so your toddler can see the priest, the candles, the incense smoke representing our prayers rising to God.



have the opportunity, through this program, to perform service projects and attend retreats.

## Guidelines for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

Second Graders in the RE program, who have attended RE classes the previous year, will receive the sacrament of First Reconciliation at the end of November and the sacrament of First Holy Communion in the spring. To better explain our approach to these sacraments and the necessary family involvement, all parents must attend one meeting in the fall.

Sacramental Make-up: Third through Sixth Grade Students who were enrolled in a Religious Education Program the previous year and are currently enrolled this year in our program register for a special class to prepare them to receive First Reconciliation and another class to prepare them to receive

First Holy Communion. Parents are required to attend a Parent Meeting in the fall.

Students in Seventh or Eighth grade who have not yet received First Reconciliation or First Communion also register for these Sacramental Make-up Classes.

The full day classes take place on two days when the public schools are not in session. The Reconciliation class takes place on Martin Luther King's Birthday. At the end of the day, students receive Reconciliation. The First Communion class takes place on Presidents' Day. All students in the Sacramental Makeup Class receive First Communion in March at a special Mass.

High School Students who have not received First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and/or Confirmation enroll in Fr. David's group that meets monthly on Sunday evenings from 4-6 p.m., and will receive their sacraments at the Easter Vigil. They also attend the monthly Parent/Teen sessions and complete a group service project.





introduced to their children in their weekly RE classes. Both parts of this equation are equally important; by working together, children will get the most out of their Religious Education experience.

## Religious Education - Grades 7-8

During these two years, adolescents prepare to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. The sacrament is administered in November of the following year. The goal of the Confirmation program is to prepare the students, with the help of their parents and sponsors, to receive this final sacrament of initiation. The sacrament of Confirmation completes their Baptism and is continually nourished through the sacrament of Holy Eucharist.

The program is three-fold to include the head, heart and hands. The students learn about the teachings of the Catholic Church and begin to apply them to a variety of life situations. If they attend St. Mary Immaculate School, this instruction is given

during the school day. If they attend public school, they are grouped with adult mentors to learn with their peers. All students also attend a monthly session with their parents so they have the opportunity to grow together in their understanding of the faith and can discuss the issues as a family.

To engage the heart, families are given a monthly prayer journal that assists them in praying together with the daily Gospel readings.

And to develop the exercise of the faith – the hands – students are asked to perform 6 service projects, 2 for the church and 4 that accomplish the Works of Mercy taught in Sacred Scripture. Four of the projects are done with their mentor groups; two are done with their family.

## Religious Education – High School

High School Teens are encouraged to continue their faith journey at Life Teen Youth Ministry, Sundays 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.. They also



As your child grows into the next stage (about the time he starts to talk to about the age of 7), he will begin to use symbols to represent objects as he learns to read and write and draw. Offer your child lots of picture books that tell the stories of the Old Testament and of Jesus as a child. During Advent introduce your child to the Advent wreath that marks the four weeks leading up to Christmas. And, on Christmas day sing “Happy Birthday to Jesus” to teach the true meaning of Christmas in simple ways. During Lent, talk with your child about the great love of Jesus and begin to teach the importance of pleasing Jesus by good behavior and small acts of service.

Before you know it, your child will grow into early adolescence. You can help him begin to see that the world extends beyond his own existence. Encourage him to take responsibility for others and develop a sense of compassion not only for those he knows but for all people. You should continue to

make Mass attendance a regular weekly family experience that takes precedence over extra curricular activities. Discuss with your child the readings you hear at Mass and how they apply to his life.

As your child becomes a teenager, he is capable of hypothetical and deductive reasoning. He can consider many possibilities from several perspectives. Encourage your child to make the faith his own by asking questions. If you are unsure of the answers to his questions, seek the answers together in the Bible and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Or ask a priest, deacon or lay leader in the Church. Learning is part of our human existence and learning about the faith is no exception. If your child is comfortable about coming to you with questions of faith, you will have many opportunities to help form him into an adult who will embrace his faith. Do not be disappointed, however, if your child becomes disinterested in attending Mass during

this stage of development. Try attending a Sunday evening Mass where more contemporary music is played and many of the teens in the parish attend. Then, encourage your child to join the Life Teen group that meets afterwards. By helping your child see that the Church includes and values teens, he may feel more comfortable and enthusiastic about participating.

## The Church is here to help you.

At St. Mary Immaculate Parish, we have an educational pathway in place to help you raise your child in the faith, based on the structures and philosophies set forth by our Bishops. Our goal is to form the hearts and minds of children to become lifelong learners.

The following pages will explain these philosophies and the basic structure of the programs which are based on the guiding principles of the Church. You'll note that religious instruction continues year after year, just as your child's academic instruction does, helping to build on the concepts that were taught the previous year. Our religious education program is not merely about getting sacraments. Therefore, skipping any part of this formational process makes it more difficult for your child to get a full understanding and has the potential to stunt their growth in the faith. And what parents would want that for their children!

## St. Mary Immaculate Program and Policies

**Guidelines for Baptism:** For children under age 7, parents attend a class that explains the meaning and ritual of the sacrament, including the requirements of the



**Godparents.** By contacting the Parish Office, you can make arrangements to attend the class and have your child baptized.

For children between the ages of 7 and high school, parents should register their children for the Religious Education program that is age-appropriate. After the parents have secured a place for their children in the program, they should make an appointment to meet with a priest, who will arrange for a private Baptism.

High school age teens who have not been baptized or adults who have not received Baptism, Eucharist, or Confirmation enroll in the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA), which meets on Sunday mornings. During the process, the faith is explained and participants are led into a deeper relationship with Christ through prayer and discussion. They receive Baptism at the Easter Vigil.

They will also receive Eucharist and Confirmation at that time.

There is also one copy change under "Guidelines for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist" in the last paragraph:

High School Students who have not received First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and/or Confirmation enroll in Fr. David's group that meets monthly on Sunday evenings from 4-6 pm, and will receive their sacraments at the Easter Vigil. They also attend the monthly Parent/Teen sessions and complete a group service project.

## Opportunity for 3-5 year olds to learn about their faith

"My Time with Jesus" is an early childhood religious education program for 3, 4, and 5 year olds which meets during the 9:00

am and 10:45 am Masses. Children must be three years old by September 1st of the current school year to attend.

## Religious Education - Grades K-6

This ministry is designed to enhance the spiritual development and faith formation of our students, while at the same time opening their eyes to a church community. While each grade has a prominent theme covered throughout the year, all grades are presented with strands of the topics of Church, Prayer, Sacraments, and Morality woven throughout the curriculum.

An important part of our religious education is full and complete participation in the weekly celebration of the Mass. Parents bringing their children to Mass each Sunday, are reinforcing the lessons and ideas