

St. Patrick Faith Formation

Confirmation Small Group Handbook



2009-2010

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***“Remember what Christ taught and let His words enrich your lives.”
(Colossians 3:16)***

Dear Confirmation Catechist,

Welcome to Formation Ministry at St. Patrick Parish!

Faith Formation Ministry at St. Patrick is about faith development and sharing that faith with the students and families of St. Patrick Parish. We look forward to the coming year as an experience of faith and relationship between the candidates, sponsors, parents, small group leaders, and Formation Ministry staff. Your commitment to formation ministry is a powerful witness of Catholic Christian faith in action.

The success of a Faith Formation process, as in any endeavor, depends on dedication and cooperation of all the people involved. The basic policies and procedures in this *Confirmation Small Group Handbook* were established to promote a welcoming, safe atmosphere for our young disciples and catechists. We encourage you to review the policies and procedures for leading a Confirmation Small Group in the home setting. We especially encourage you to review those policies that are to be set by you for your specific environment.

Please note that this manual uses the terms “Catechist” and “Facilitator” interchangeably to describe the role you perform in this process. As a Catechist you are an echo of God, a sounding board to help resonate the candidate’s experience with their faith. As a facilitator you are called on to help the candidates become sounding boards for each other’s experience and their faith.

As always, your questions and comments are very important and should be directed to the Faith Formation Office at (715) 386-9209. Faith formation is a partnership and we are here to assist you.

God Bless You on this faith journey with our candidates and may your commitment to Faith Formation Ministry at St. Patrick be a rewarding, faith-filled experience for all.

Sincerely,

Craig & Becky Swanson
Confirmation Coordinators

Larry Huiras
Faith Formation Director

FORMATION MINISTRY

Initial Faith Formation

On one level our mission in Faith Formation is simple, to lead people to Christ. In the initial faith formation of children, our mission is to lead young people to Christ and into full participation in the Christian life.

We accomplish this task by helping our young people to encounter Christ as they prepare for and complete their sacramental initiation into the Christian community. Our hope for our young people is that when they celebrate their First Communion and Confirmation these sacraments of initiation are truly outward signs of an inward reality of the grace of God already active in their lives.

The Catechist . . .

Facilitators in the Confirmation Preparation Program are called Catechists. In the words of one of the great religious educators of our time, Maria Harris, "A Catechist is one who echoes the Word of God. Catechists are gifts of the Church. They are seers, believers, co-creators, dancers, teachers, prophets... and their ministry is the work of the entire community."

Each Catechist contributes time and service toward achieving the primary goal and objective of the Faith Formation process, to "teach as Jesus taught." Catechists teach the curriculum while sharing their faith and love for the Lord. This contribution goes far beyond teaching the simple facts of our religion to being an authentic adult Christian role model from whom faith can be "caught."

There is, however, an organized structure for experiencing faith in this small group environment. We have structured the group to be facilitated by two adult catechists. We have broken down their role descriptions as follows:

Host Catechist

Host Catechist as the name implies is the residential host of the group. They are responsible, as the resident, for all of the physical considerations of the group. In essence, in addition to their catechetical role, they provide a safe and secure environment that is free of distractions in which the group can meet.

Host Catechists are ***full collaborators*** with their Co-Catechists. Both catechists are expected to work closely together to develop lesson plans and faith sharing experiences that might include welcoming activities, storytelling, prayer, games, etc. These activities must always be planned with age appropriateness and the theme of the lesson in mind.

Specifically it is envisioned that the Host Catechist will be responsible for:

- Participating in Catechist formation sessions before the year begins, as well as in-service sessions during the year.
- Collaborating with Co-Catechist in the preparation of weekly lessons in consideration of the yearly overview provided and session time allotted.
- Establishing with Co-Catechist written Arrival/Dismissal procedures for their group and distributing those policies to their parents (see Appendix A).
- Dismissing students on time following the written dismissal plan.
- Maintaining discipline during group sessions and gathered activities.
- Keeping track of each candidate's progress, noting absences and make-up lessons.
- Informing parents of group topics, special projects, and any instances of inappropriate behavior concerning their child.
- Set up appropriate furnishings, supplies, and A/V materials for the group sessions.
- Informing the Faith Formation Office, in advance, of any cancellation or unscheduled movement of a group to a different location if a substitute is required for a session.
- Providing the substitute with a lesson plan and all necessary materials to implement the plan.

Co-Catechist

Co-Catechists are ***full collaborators*** with the Host Catechists. Both catechists are expected to work closely together to develop lesson plans and faith sharing experiences that might include welcoming activities, storytelling, prayer, games, etc. These activities must always be planned with age appropriateness and the theme of the lesson in mind.

Responsibilities of the Co-Catechist include any and all of the responsibilities of the Host Catechist as mutually agreed and also include:

- Participating in Catechist formation sessions before the year begins, as well as in-service sessions during the year.
- Collaborating with Host Catechist in the preparation of weekly lessons in consideration of the yearly overview provided and session time allotted.
- Establishing with Host Catechist written Arrival/Dismissal procedures for their group and distributing those policies to their parents.
- Arriving at least 15 minutes before group session begins.
- Remaining with the Host Catechist at dismissal until all candidates are picked-up.
- Informing the Faith Formation Office, in advance, if a substitute is required so we may secure a substitute for that class.
- Providing the substitute with a lesson plan and all necessary materials to implement the plan.
- Assisting the Catechist at dismissal to be sure all students are picked-up.

In an emergency, the Co-Catechist may be called upon to take responsibility for teaching a class.

Catechist (Facilitator) Formation

The goal of catechist formation is integration. On the personal level, catechist formation should integrate theology and spirituality with life experience. Ministerially, it should integrate life and faith with pedagogy (i.e., methods and skills of the catechist).

While catechists are most often ordinary parishioners wishing to share a part of their time and faith life, a certain level of competence is necessary for those who serve and form others in catechetical ministry. In recognition of this, the Diocese of Superior has established 5 levels of Catechist Certification to insure that all catechists reach a Basic Level of competence within the first 3 years of entering into the catechetical ministry.

Even though the requirements might seem overly rigid, the catechist should know that formation hours are counted for many parish events that they normally participate in and that many of the catechist's previous experience with retreats, bible studies, etc., will count toward their certification.

Because of the certification requirements, St. Patrick provides many formation opportunities each year designed to not only meet the faith formation needs of our catechists, but fit into their busy schedules. These formation opportunities occur on the diocesan, cluster, and parish level. St. Patrick provides its catechists with these formation opportunities without cost to the catechist. Formation opportunities generally fall into four categories – scripture, theology, methods, and spirituality.

Catechist Certification Levels

The 5 levels of Catechist Certification are continuous and build upon one another. While certain distribution of formation categories – scripture, theology, methods, and spirituality – are required for certain levels, any formation experience additional to the formation to that required for a particular level is never lost but simply applied to the requirements for the next level of certification, the goal being to provide a balanced formation background for the catechist.

Entry Level Certification: A level of certification to recognize catechists who are working toward Basic Certification. No particular distribution of categories – scripture, theology, methods, and spirituality – is required. Should be completed in the first year and a half of ministry.

Basic Level Certification: Basic Level Certification represents a balance of 10 hours (points) formation in each formation category. Must be completed within the first 3 years of ministry. *All catechists are expected to attain Basic Level Certification within 3 years of entry into the ministry.*

Intermediate Level Certification: Is awarded to catechists who have completed 20 hours (points) in scripture, theology, and spirituality plus 30 hours in methods.

Advanced Level Certification: Is awarded to catechists who have completed 30 hours (points) in theology and spirituality, 40 hours in scripture, and 50 in methods. This is the level required for all catechetical leaders (school or parish) and catechists in catholic schools.

Leadership Level Certification: Is awarded to catechists who have completed the requirements for advanced Level Certification and taken responsibility for a program or project that requires serious and demanding leadership skills. The evaluated project will require prior approval of the Director of Christian Formation for the Diocese of Superior.

Records of catechist formation hours are kept by the Diocese of Superior and St. Patrick Parish. It is **STRONGLY URGED** that the catechist keep a personal record of all formation opportunities attended.

Parish Formation Records are forwarded annually to the Diocese by March 31. The Diocese will review certification progress and apprise the catechist of their status in September of each year.

Safe and Sacred Places

Child sexual abuse is a worldwide public health issue. Child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, is reprehensible—especially when the wrongdoer is affiliated with the Church. The Safe and Sacred Places program has been developed by the Diocese of Superior to assist the Church in being a safe haven for children and a messenger for preventing child sexual abuse within the Church and society in general.

All parish volunteers who come in contact with the children of our parish are required to complete this training. This includes: teachers, catechists, all School, Youth Ministry, and Faith Formation volunteers, coaches, babysitters, field trip chaperones, etc.

Since it is our goal to make the entire parish a safe environment for children we wish to offer this training to all parishioners, parish board members, parish commission members, parish council members, lectors, choir members, eucharistic ministers, etc. All of us have a role to play in making St. Patrick a place where child sexual abuse not only can't happen but a place where children can find safety.

All volunteers in Faith Formation are required to have completed this training prior to beginning their service as a service minister in formation ministries. An online basic training program can be completed by going to www.stpatrickofhudson.org and clicking on the "Formation" tab and then on the "Ministry Opportunities" tab. You will be required to create a login for your basic training. For those parishioners without internet access a hardcopy of the training program is available from the Faith Formation Office. The completed hardcopy is to be returned to the Faith Formation Office.

Additionally, all volunteers are required to read the "Parish Personnel Policies for Volunteers" and return *Appendix C, Acknowledgement of Receipt* and complete and return the *Code of Conduct* form. These forms are available either online under "Ministry Opportunities" or in hardcopy from the Faith Formation Office.

Please note: The *Code of Conduct* form requires that the volunteer disclose their Social Security Number. This is required so that we can run a criminal background check on the volunteer. The individual's social security number will be retained in a secure offline file and only divulged to the security firm contracted by the diocese to perform the criminal background check. No credit or financial information is accessed or reported to the Diocese as a part of this process.

Faith Formation Procedures

Before You Begin Your Session

Lesson Planning

Plan your lesson, including discussion questions, audio or video resources, project or craft resources, and your opening and closing prayers.

- Review the weekend readings.
- Review the selected lesson from *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, the *Spirit* gospel weeklies, or other lesson plans provided.
- Review any additional Scripture readings associated with the lesson plan.
- Organize and obtain any additional resources you intend to use.
- Think about fitting prayers and about your prayer environment.
- Spend some time in prayer for your students and their families before you pull your resources together for your final lesson plan.

Discussion Environment

A comfortable, private, quiet space must be provided in the home for group discussions. A good space includes provisions for conducting group prayer and might allow for music or videos to be played.

- Other family members not enrolled in the group should not be present in the space during the small group session.
- Phone ringers should be switched off during the small group session and arrangements made for a person or answering machine to take messages as necessary.

Prayer Environment

Prayer is an integral part of the confirmation preparation experience and the candidate's faith development. You should have a space to gather and share prayer. We will provide you with the Lectionary readings for breaking open the word each week and suggest that it be a prominent part of your prayer space.

The prayer space should be reflective of, and reflect ownership by, the entire group. Prayer environment materials may be contributed by each member of your group or you might choose to provide the pieces on your own. The items chosen might be changed seasonally to reflect the liturgical season in the Church year, or be chosen specifically to highlight a particular theme or point in the evening's lesson.

Ordering Material/Resources From The Faith Formation Office

You may use any of the materials or resources available at the Faith Formation Office. You have been supplied with a couple of "Catechist Request Forms" for the purpose of requisitioning supplies. Additional forms are available in the Faith Formation Office.

Please submit requests for supplies, videos, music cassettes, copying etc. at least 1 week prior to date needed. Requests may be dropped off at the Faith Formation Office or faxed to us at: (715) 386-0462.

Note: Because we do not have multiple copies of most video resources we will often require you to pick up and return videos immediately before and after your scheduled group meeting day.

About Using Audio and Video Resources

Media, audio or visual, used in short or segmented pieces can be extremely useful for starting a conversation within a group about a particular topic. We wish to encourage your intentional use of media to help reach your group of media savvy candidates.

We have provided you with a *Video Resource Guide* for St. Patrick Parish. There is also a *Diocesan Media Center Catalogue* in the Faith Formation Office from which you can obtain videos, CD's, and audio tapes.

Please plan ahead to use these resources. It can take several weeks to obtain a video from the diocesan center if someone else has it on loan. This is especially true for seasonal titles for Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.

Exercise extreme caution before using any secular material with your group. First, know that what might be acceptable for your teenager is NOT always acceptable for someone else's teen. Second, there is always the issue of secular material containing moral and theological positions that are not Catholic or Christian. Some general guidelines for using secular audio video material include:

- Never use any audio or video that you have not previewed in total before using even a short clip.
- Always pay close attention to the language used. As adults, we often become insensitive to vulgar language and fail to notice it in media.
- What is the message of the media you want to use? How does that relate to your group's topic?
- Does your chosen media portray Gospel values? What lifestyle choices are valued by the media? How are people portrayed in the media?

Finally, if you have any questions about using a particular media resource please contact the Faith Formation Office.

Beginning Your Session

Class Times / Student Arrival

Your sessions should begin promptly at 7:00pm as scheduled on your Group Information Sheet (Appendix B).

Your Co-catechist should routinely arrive 15 minutes prior to the class starting time so that parents can drop off their children. **AT NO TIME SHOULD AN ADULT BE LEFT ALONE WITH A MINOR.**

Parents must accompany their children to the door to verify that there are two adults present before they leave their children. An agreed signal such as having a yard or porch light turned on to let parents know that it is OK to drop off their children or to pick them up is also a workable solution.

The approaches to the residence should be unencumbered by snow, parked vehicles, landscaping and construction tools and materials in as much as is reasonably and prudently possible.

Attendance Policy

Please review the attendance policy with your students and their parents at your first meeting. Your policy should at minimum contain the following St. Patrick guidelines:

If your child cannot attend small group on a particular day because of illness or other emergency, you should notify the Host Catechist as early as possible before class begins. Follow the procedure as published for your group on the Group Information Sheet provided to you at the first session.

The number of absences during this sacramental preparation process can and will in part determine the readiness of the candidate to receive Confirmation.

Absences will be noted and kept on file at the Faith Formation Office.

Students who "miss" 4 or more classes will need to make arrangements with the Confirmation Coordinator or the Faith Formation Director to complete their requirements.

Tardiness

Out of respect for the Facilitator and other class members, students are asked to arrive on time.

Invariably, some individuals will begin the year by arriving late to your group meetings. Whether they continue to arrive late will largely be determined by your clearly stated expectations for their prompt arrival both to them and their parents.

It is suggested that you might explain to the whole group on the first night while the parents are still present that the starting and ending times for your sessions are fixed (Appendix A). If the session fails to start on time you will wind up short changing the discussion time later.

If the continued tardiness of an individual becomes a distraction or a concern, first, talk with individual's parents about the inappropriateness of their drop off times. If this continues to be a problem please feel free to contact the Faith Formation Office for assistance in mediating the situation.

Reporting Attendance

You have been given a "Class List" and a "Group Attendance Report" pad.

Please feel free to keep a record of attendance on the Class List for your own benefit.

Please fill out the "Group Attendance Report" for each group session regardless of whether all members of your group are present or not. These reports need to be turned in to the Faith Formation Office after each session. They may be returned either during regular office hours, during any Faith Formation event at the parish or faxed to us at 715-386-0462.

The Faith Formation Office will use the Group Attendance Reports to update the permanent attendance record of your candidate.

Dress Code

Catechists and their candidates are asked to dress appropriately. Comfort should be the norm in clothing. Since the small groups meet in homes the host catechist should stress the appropriate attire to be observed in their home.

For retreats or gathered meetings with other groups, or at the parish – NO hats, cutoffs, short shorts, torn jeans, obscene T-shirts, short/cropped tops, or gang paraphernalia are permitted. Roller shoes or other clothing that presents a potential safety hazard to the student are not allowed to be worn in any parish building.

Visitors

Because of the informal nature of the small group setting it might be necessary for you to control the comings, goings, and interruptions of a variety of people that would otherwise not be your concern in a school based setting.

Please keep in mind that while you want to be polite, you need to be in control of your environment and people's access to it, out of respect for your group members and in order to get anything accomplished.

Adolescent Visitors

Because of the basic need of early adolescents to form a strong and stable community bond before open sharing and discussion can occur it is highly recommended that there not be any adolescent visitors from outside the group.

- An unannounced friend tagging along is not acceptable. You should talk with the individual and the parent immediately if this occurs.
- Whenever someone wishes to bring someone along, it should be arranged in advance and be okayed by both catechists as well as be acceptable to the entire group.

Adult or Parent Visitors

While it is wonderful to have parents be interested in their child's faith development, this model of small group faith sharing allows for the disciple to hear their own voice among their peers and to address questions that they might not be able to address with their parents.

Unless the adult is an invited visitor of one of the Catechists or is filling the role of a non-related adult, it is highly recommended that there not be any outside adults present in the group space during group times.

Invited Visitors

There might arise an occasion when your group discussion has led you into an area where having parents, friends, a guest presenter, or an "expert" seems like an appropriate strategy.

Please follow a couple of simple guidelines regarding outside presenters or "experts":

- Be sure that your entire group is on board with the idea.
- Be sure that your calendar is flexible and that your group knows the day of your guest's appearance in advance.
- Parish ministry staff should be requested through the Faith Formation Office via your "Catechist Request Form." Remember, advance planning is required as ministry personnel have very active schedules.

Church / Chapel Visits

Groups may wish to use the Church or Eucharistic Chapel space for tours, prayer time, or other activities. While the Eucharistic Chapel is available for devotional prayer it is also a shared prayer space and a prayerful atmosphere needs to be maintained. Catechists should be aware that the Church is shared space and that it can be booked out quite often during the evening hours. This is especially so during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

For this reason we need you to make arrangements for these times through the Faith Formation Office. Please use the "Catechist Request Form."

Accidents, Illnesses, Medications and Other Emergencies

St. Patrick Faith Formation program is forbidden to administer medication without prior authority to do so. Students who are under a doctor's care must have a medical permission form on file in the Faith Formation office. The form can be obtained in the Faith Formation office and must be filled in by the doctor. The Doctor and parent signature must be on the form before medication is administered. All medications are to be brought to the Faith Formation sessions in the prescription bottle with signed instructions for administration immediately upon the students arrival at the home. **NO STUDENT IS PERMITTED TO RETAIN MEDICATION OF ANY KIND ON HIS/HER PERSON.**

Should an emergency medical situation arise requiring one of the catechists to attend to the first aid of a group member, the remaining catechist should be designated to stay with the group and inform the parents/guardians of their young person's condition.

The group **MUST NOT BE LEFT UNATTENDED** by an adult facilitator for any reason.

In general:

- The affected young person should not be sent to lay down in a bedroom or other isolated area of the residence that might be in anyway misconstrued.
- All candidate illnesses or accidents should be kept confidential unless the parent gives permission via the Confirmation Coordinator or Faith Formation Director.
- If any accident occurs during the group session, it should be reported to the Faith Formation Office immediately so that the proper Diocesan forms are filled out.

Blood-Borne Pathogens

You and your family can be infected by serious, life threatening diseases, such as HIV/Aids, or Hepatitis-B, if you are not cautious when handling body fluid incidents (including, blood, vomit, and bodily wastes) that may occur during your small group sessions. Below are some suggested procedures for your safety. These are precautions to keep a barrier between you and the germs that can be carried in blood or other body fluids. The bottom line, of course, is that you should exercise common sense when handling such incidents.

General Recommendations

- These procedures should be used at all times for ALL people. Don't assume there is no danger of infectious disease because you know the person or their family. The infected person may not even know!
- ALWAYS wear disposable rubber gloves. If these are not supplied to you, you may obtain them at a medical supply or home-improvement store (in the painting section).
- You should wear gloves whenever you expect to come in contact with blood or body fluids: when administering first aid, such as cleaning cuts, scratches or bloody noses, or when assisting with toileting.
- For small, clean cuts or scratches, if the person is able to do so, have him or her apply their own bandage, so that you can refrain from coming into contact with their blood.

Procedures For Safe Disposal Of Body Fluids Or Blood (on campus)

- Always put on disposable rubber gloves. Minimally, you should have a set of gloves, paper towels, several adhesive bandages and some self-sealing plastic bags readily available. Do not allow other participants in your session who are not wearing gloves to be "helpful."
- Use paper towel to absorb spills, then place the towels in a leak-proof plastic bag (use red medical hazard bag if available). For spills that cannot be cleaned up with one paper towel, use *Sorb-all* or other provided absorbent following the directions printed on the can.
- If possible, flood the spill area with a freshly prepared bleach solution or with a hospital grade EPA approved tuberculocidal disinfectant. If not possible, spray with a germicidal spray.
- Clean the area with paper towels, broom or vacuum.
- Place additional used paper towels in the leak-proof plastic bag.
- Remove soiled disposable gloves by turning them inside out and placing one within the other, and place in the leak-proof plastic bag.
- Seal the bag and place in an appropriate infections waste container, if available. If not, take immediately to an out-of-doors trash disposal, rather than an indoor waste container.
- Immediately wash hands with soap and running water. Hand washing is necessary even when you wear gloves.

In The Event Of Exposure To An Infectious Agent

- Wash contaminated skin for at least 10 minutes, using antibacterial soap and copious amounts of water.
- If eyes are affected, flush the eyes for 15 minutes with water.
- Seek medical evaluation.
- Notify the Confirmation Coordinator and/or the Faith Formation Office.

Always proceed in a calm and unhurried manner, and for pastoral reasons, take care not to embarrass or imply blame to person(s) involved in any such incident.

Tornado / Fire

Tornado & Fire procedures should be reviewed with your group at their first session.

For Tornado emergencies:

A shelter space should be designated by the Host Catechist (unless one is already so posted for the building or complex) that takes into account the following guidelines from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Appendix E):

- A windowless, interior room; storm cellar; basement; or lowest level of the building.
- If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a smaller inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Get away from the windows.
- Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

For Fire emergencies:

The Host Catechist should develop an escape plan for the group meeting room.

- The best plans have two ways to get out of each room. If the primary way is blocked by fire or smoke, you will need a second way out.
- Designate a meeting location away from the home, but not necessarily across the street. For example, meet under a specific tree or at the end of the driveway or front sidewalk to make sure everyone has gotten out safely and no one will be hurt looking for someone who is already safe.
- Designate one person to go to a neighbor's home to phone the fire department.
- Group members should be informed of the escape plan and the escape plan should be practiced with the group at the first session.

Snow Days / Cancellation of Class

In case of hazardous road conditions in the winter or other conditions (i.e. power or water outages), group sessions should be cancelled.

- In general, if classes have been canceled for Hudson Public Schools or for St. Patrick School, then Faith Formation sessions are also cancelled.
- The Catechists **MUST** notify the Faith Formation Office **PRIOR** to canceling group sessions for any other reason.
- The Catechists are responsible for making calls to the parents of their group members to inform them of any cancellations.

While Conducting Your Session

Curriculum Materials

Curriculum materials for Confirmation Small Groups are the *Spirit* lectionary based series and either *Confirmed In a Faithful Community* or *Moving in the Spirit* confirmation preparation series. The *Spirit* magazine is meant to be read, written in, taken home, and shared with the family as part of the formation process.

You might wish to encourage your candidates to bring their Journals or other notebooks to your meetings each week. It is not unreasonable to require them to bring these items along with pens/pencils.

Candidates are required to bring a Catholic Bible to class each week. A couple of guidelines for using Bibles as part of your curriculum:

- Because of the number of translations and editions available you should specify the Bible you will be using (we recommend the *Catholic Youth Bible* or New American Bible).
- You should make sure that copies of the chosen edition are available for purchase.
- Your candidates are old enough to purchase a Bible that they can write in and make their own study Bible. Giving them a Bible doesn't foster ownership.
- The Faith Formation Office has copies of the Catholic Youth Bible available to your candidates for purchase at \$10.00 a copy.

Please do not require your students to purchase any curriculum supplies that you do not plan to use as a regular part of your sessions together.

Leaving the Premises with your Group

On occasion, you may wish to leave the premises with your candidates to walk outside, visit a backyard garden, etc. So long as no mode of vehicular transportation is involved no “authorization” is necessary.

Field Trips or Events

You may decide that taking your small group to a particular site, such as to perform a service project or see a justice issue up close, is a good idea. Whether you “take” the candidates to the site or they agree to meet at the site, you will need to obtain a permission slip (Appendix C) in advance of the field trip or event.

Tests

Small group faith formation is about building relationships with the group and with Jesus Christ. While we might have curriculum materials to aid in exploring our faith and develop the relationships inherent in our faith, this is not a classroom or school environment. Tests about religious knowledge are not appropriate.

Regarding Your Attendance / Substitute Catechists

Your commitment to Formation Ministry is greatly appreciated. We are aware that illnesses and emergencies arise which may prevent you from being with your group. In the event of an absence, please notify the Faith Formation Office A.S.A.P.

It is your responsibility to notify the Faith Formation Office if you will need a Substitute Catechist. In the event that you simply need a non-related adult please attempt to have one of the parents from your group fill that role. In that event, simply notify the Faith Formation Office as to who will take that role and on which day.

Please be sure your substitute and your Co or Host Catechist is aware of the substitution and that the substitute is aware of the planned group activities.

If you are unable to secure a Substitute Catechist for your class, notify the Faith Formation Office so we may assist you in making other arrangements.

Ending Your Session

Early Dismissal

Parents need to be informed at the first group meeting that early dismissals are not acceptable (Appendix A). They distract from everyone’s participation and can destroy the entire work of a session. That said, on those very rare occasions, when a candidate must leave early, parents need to come into the residence, or at least to the door to pick up their candidate.

Regular Dismissal Procedure

Parent's arrival 5 or 10 minutes prior to the end of your session to pick up their candidate will become a huge distraction if you do not control their actions at dismissal. For that reason we strongly suggest that you have parents remain in their cars prior to the end of your group's session – an agreed signal such as having a yard or porch light turned on to let parents know that it is OK to pick up their children is a workable solution.

Parents should come into the residence, to the door or to some place where you can recognize them prior to allowing their children to leave. Horn honking will not win you any friends in your neighborhood.

The Co-catechist must remain until all of the non-resident minor children have been picked up or departed the residence.

Discipline Policy / Parent Contact

Group Ground Rules

Polite social decorum is expected of each candidate. The Catechists should be clear beginning with the first session as to what is acceptable behavior for the candidate's interaction with the group and within the particular home setting (Appendix A & B).

Typical rules for interaction might include items similar to the following:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- You can say anything you want as long as you say it respectfully.
- No put downs of anyone are allowed.
- Anything that is shared in the group stays within the group and is not shared with anyone outside the group.

Typical "House Rules" might include:

- Cell phones and pagers off at the door.
- No feet on the furniture.
- Everyone busses their own dishes and picks up the space before they leave.
- Food is OK, - or - Food is NOT OK.
- No shoes in the house... etc.

Behavior requiring disciplinary action due to lack of respect for others may include:

- Speaking out of turn in a way not respectful to the catechist or a group member.
- Verbally or non-verbally harassing or putting down a group member by any action or inaction.
- Student behavior that is disrespectful of the catechist's environment or property.
- Any other behavior inappropriate for the environment or that goes against "House Rules."

Catechist Responses

You should never tolerate inappropriate behavior by guests in your house. Most inappropriate behaviors are the result of boundary testing by adolescents or the different levels of socialization skills taught in families. Most of the time a simple comment will solve the situation.

For those other or recurring situations the following discipline "steps" should be followed regarding inappropriate behavior:

First Step:

The individual is issued a final verbal warning by both catechists. It should be clear that failure to modify the behavior at this point will result in a conference with the individual, parents, and catechist.

Second Step:

The individual, parent, and catechists conference after the group session to resolve the situation. A written covenant should be agreed to and signed by all prior to the student continuing with the group (Appendix D). A signed copy of the covenant needs to be given to the Confirmation Coordinator or the Faith Formation Director.

Third Step:

Student is removed from the group and Confirmation Coordinator or Faith Formation Director is notified. The individual, parents, Confirmation Coordinator, and Faith Formation Director will determine appropriate further action. The catechist is removed from the process at this point.

Zero Tolerance for Violence

Any violent threat whether to a catechist or group member, whether made with harmful intent or “just kidding,” will result in the immediate removal of that individual from the program and notification to the police department. Notification needs to be given to the Confirmation Coordinator and/or Faith Formation Director immediately after the police have been notified.

A Prayer for Catechists

Dear God,

There are so many signs of your presence in our lives,
not just sacramental signs, like bread and wine, and
oil for anointing,
But signs that point to and flow from the same reality.
You are present. You are among us. Your signs say so.
You are present in sunrises and sunsets,
in the roar of great oceans, and in the trickle of small streams.
Your presence is announced as much by towering trees
as by the tiniest blossoms.
All of nature proclaims your presence.
Everything created announces you.
Above all, your presence is proclaimed by people,
people of every description.
You dwell in us.
We are miracles of the life you have created.
We are complex and mysterious.
We are signs of all that you can do.
But signs mean nothing to those who don't see them,
or fail to read them, or who ignore them.
Help us not to be among those.
Dear God, you have called us, your Catechists,
To proclaim all the signs of your presence,
including your sacramental ones.
Help us to see them clearly, To read them carefully,
and to speak them with Love.

Amen.

~ Gwen Costello

Appendices

Conducting Your First Session

- ❖ **Purpose:** To take care of housekeeping details and set group policies for your location, your candidates, and their parents.
 - Welcome everyone and let them know where or which bathroom facility they might use if they need to and any other movement or comfort items that they might need to be made aware of immediately.
 - Invite the parents to remain for the first part of the meeting so that they can be informed of the basic details that will impact them.
 - Explain that after you let the parents leave. You will go through the details that the teens need to be aware of and have a part in forming such as emergency procedures and a discussion of ground rules.
 - Tell them that you will close the session tonight by putting together a prayer space, reading this coming weekend's Gospel, and spending a little time in reflection and prayer.

- ❖ **Part One:** With Parents Present (have Information Sheet completed and copies for everyone)
 - Class times and arrival/departure procedures
 - Stress timeliness to parents (we realize that the candidates do not normally drive themselves).
 - Importance of prompt arrival for the group.
 - Importance of prompt pick up for the catechists.
 - Importance of parents not interrupting the session before it is over (no early pick ups).
 - Stress the importance of parents coming to the door to pick up or drop off their teen (AT NO TIME SHOULD AN ADULT BE LEFT ALONE WITH A MINOR).
 - Explain any pick up or drop off signals if appropriate for you. Yard lights are great signals to let parents know whether it is OK to pick up their kids.
 - Explain the procedure for snow days and cancellation of sessions (be sure you have parent contact numbers to call).

- Service Hours
 - Explain that service is the action of Christian life. That may seem obvious when you read the gospels but there is a difference between reading about a soup kitchen and working on a serving line at a soup kitchen. Doing service has become a part of many high schools' requirements for graduation. They understand that service is a component of being a good citizen – something that is a goal of many school systems. In the Christian community service to others is not an option, it is a responsibility.
 - Service Opportunities may be found and service hours recorded on line at the parish web site: www.stpatrickofhudson.org click on formation on the top menu then “Service Opportunities” on the left menu.

- Attendance policy and visitors
 - Review St. Patrick’s attendance policy and explain that you will be reporting attendance to the Faith Formation Office.
 - Explain that even though this is a less formal environment visitors uninvited by the catechists and the teens collectively, including parents, are not acceptable.

- House rules
 - Review any “House Rules” that you wish to enforce. Explain that these are non-negotiable items.
 - Set any dress code you wish your teens to adhere to in clear and concise terms.

- Parents as the “Unrelated Adult”
 - In the event that you will use parents to be the unrelated adult for your small group sessions you will need to have a schedule of meeting dates on a sign up sheet.
 - Explain that sessions can not be held without an unrelated adult present. If all the parents pitch in no one will have to be present more than a couple of times throughout the year.
 - Be creative and have a defined task for the parents to do such as snacks, story teller, or other activity you define for them (clear instructions on a handout sheet works best).

❖ **Part Two:** Dismiss the Parents and tell them when to return

- Review Emergency Procedures (have these set in advance)
 - Explain Fire Evacuation Procedure.
 - Perform a practice Fire Drill.
 - Explain Tornado Shelter Procedure.
 - Perform a practice Tornado Drill.

- Discuss sessions and set group ground rules
 - Explain the flow of a normal group meeting:
 - Listening to the Gospel.
 - Reflecting on the Gospel message and its meaning in our lives.
 - *Spirit or Confirmed in Faithful Community* session as outlined.
 - Closing Prayer or meditation (discuss having group members take over responsibility for leading and preparing this eventually).

 - Explain that this model means that each group member needs to participate and that in order to participate freely certain ground rules will have to be agreed to by everyone.
 - Establish ground rules with teen input.
 - Explain what sorts of activities would not be tolerated.
 - Explain the 3 step disciplinary procedure.
 - Explain *Zero Tolerance for Violence*.

 - Ask if anyone has any questions about any of the housekeeping items or rules covered so far.
 - Ask for and receive a verbal agreement from each member of your group to these items.

- Establish a prayer space (prelude to your opening prayer service).
 - Show a space you have selected to be your prayer space.
 - Minimally dress the space with a table covering, a candle, and a Bible while you explain the importance of having a space where all of you as a group can come together and pray.

- Invite your candidates to bring in a special item (size appropriate) that says something about them to keep with the prayer space throughout the year.
- Opening Prayer Service
 - Light the candle in your prayer space and remind your candidates that Jesus promised us that wherever two or more are gathered in his name that he is there with us. This candle symbolizes that presence of Jesus, who is certainly here with our group today.
 - Proclaim the Gospel for the coming weekend (other readings optional depending on time).
 - Give a brief reflection (or ask for any thoughts from your candidates time permitting).
 - Conduct your opening prayer ceremony as you have planned.
- Dismiss according to your established procedures.

Group Information Sheet

Catechist: _____

Phone: _____

Catechist: _____

Phone: _____

Meeting Location(s): (1) _____

(2) _____

Meeting Day: WEDNESDAY Start Time: 7:00PM End Time: 8:30PM

Pick up / Drop off Signal: _____

Cancellation Procedure: _____

Attendance Contact: _____

Phone: _____

House Rules: _____

Additional Contact: St. Patrick Faith Formation Office

Phone: 715-386-9209

Diocese of Superior
Parent or Legal Guardian Permission Slip and Indemnity Agreement

Please return this form to the appropriate parish/school/diocesan personnel by the date indicated below.

Child's Full Legal Name: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

Child's Address: _____

Your child (named above) is eligible to participate in a school/parish-sponsored activity that requires your permission. This activity will take place under the guidance and supervision of employees and/or volunteers from St. Patrick Parish, Hudson, WI.

To participate in this activity, this completed and signed permission form must be returned to:
no later than

A brief description of the activity is as follows:

Type of activity:

Description of activity:

Date and time of activity:

Method of transportation:

Student cost:

I consent to the participation of my child/ward in the above named activity. In consideration for my child/ward's participation, I agree to reimburse and indemnify the above named parish/school/Diocese of Superior (DOS) for all reasonable legal and court fees incurred by parish/school/DOS in defending a lawsuit that I or my child/ward may bring against the parish/school/DOS which relates to the above named activity if the parish/school/DOS is found not legally liable by the courts and prevails in the lawsuit. If the parish/school/DOS is found legally liable for the injuries sustained by my child/ward, this paragraph will not apply. I further agree to reimburse the diocese or any other agency for property damage or any bodily harm to other participants caused by my child/ward.

I certify that I have an understanding of this agreement, as well as the risks and hazards associated with the activity (including illness, injury and the rare possibility of death) described above that my child/ward will be participating in. I further understand that I had the opportunity to fully discuss this agreement with a representative of the parish/school/DOS to clarify any concerns or questions about the activity or this agreement that I may have had.

Parent or guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Address of parent or legal guardian: _____

Phone numbers - Home: _____ Work: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Emergency and Incidental Medical Treatment

In the event of an emergency, I give permission to transport my child to a hospital for emergency medical treatment. I wish to be advised prior to any further treatment by the hospital or doctor. In the event of an emergency, if you are unable to reach me at the above numbers, please contact:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone numbers - Home: _____ Work: _____ Cell: _____

I further understand that if I cannot be reached, or if the emergency contact that I have listed above cannot be reached, and my child/ward is in need of immediate medical care, the parish/school/DOS reserves the right to make a temporary decision that is in the best interest of my child/ward until such a time when I can be reached.

Please check the appropriate preference below.

I give permission to chaperones of this event from the parish/school/DOS to distribute non-prescription/ over-the-counter medications and treatments to my child/ward such as, but not limited to: applying minor bandages and first-aid ointments or sprays, ice or heat compresses, dispensing of non-aspirin pain relievers, cough drops or syrups, and antacids and the like. Yes No

Please supply all of the information requested below:

Family Health Insurance Company: _____

Policy # : _____

Family physician or clinic: _____

Current medications: _____

Address: _____

Date of most recent tetanus immunization: _____

Phone: _____

Family dentist: _____

Known allergies: _____

Address: _____

Treatment for allergies: _____

Phone: _____

Date of most recent physical examination: _____

Recent surgeries or serious illness: _____

Any other special needs to be noted: _____

I verify that all of the medical information for my child/ward listed above is correct and current to the best of my knowledge at the time of the event described above. I have indicated all potential health issues for my child/ward (including medications and any special dietary needs), as well as indicated my preference to the distribution of non-prescription/over-the-counter medications and treatments such as: applying minor bandages and first-aid ointments or sprays, ice/ heat compresses, dispensing of non-aspirin pain relievers, cough drops or syrups, and antacids and the like.

Parent or guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

This is a two-sided form. Please complete both sides.

Behavior Covenant

Date: _____

Student Name: _____

Catechist Name: _____

Behavior: _____

Solution: _____

Next Step: _____

Note: This covenant represents a second attempt to correct continuing inappropriate behavior. Failure to live up to this covenant will result in the student's removal from the group and a further discussion with the Faith Formation Director.

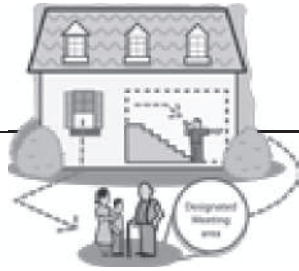
The above is acknowledged and agreed to by:

Student: _____ Date: _____

Catechist: _____ Date: _____

Parent: _____ Date: _____

A copy of this agreed covenant will be filed with the Faith Formation Office



Get Out Safely!

A Factsheet on Fire Escape Planning

More than 4,000 Americans die each year in fires, and 20,000 are injured. Deaths resulting from failed emergency escapes are particularly avoidable. The U. S. Fire Administration (USFA), a part of the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, believes that having a sound escape plan will greatly reduce fire deaths and protect you and your family's safety if a fire occurs.

HAVE A SOUND FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

In the event of a fire, remember - time is the biggest enemy and every second counts! Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly. In less than 30 seconds a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for a house to fill with thick black smoke and become engulfed in flames.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRACTICE ESCAPING FROM EVERY ROOM IN THE HOME

Practice escape plans every month. The best plans have two ways to get out of each room. If the primary way is blocked by fire or smoke, you will need a second way out. A secondary route might be a window onto an adjacent roof or a collapsible ladder - evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) - for escape from upper story windows. Make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly and that security bars can be properly opened. Also, practice feeling your way out of the house in the dark or with your eyes closed.

SECURITY BARS REQUIRE SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

Security bars may help to keep your family safe from intruders, but they can also trap you in a deadly fire! Windows and doors with security

bars must have quick release devices to allow them to be opened immediately in an emergency. Make sure everyone in the family understands and practices how to properly operate and open locked or barred doors and windows.

IMMEDIATELY LEAVE THE HOME

When a fire occurs, do not waste any time saving property. Take the safest exit route, but if you must escape through smoke, remember to crawl low, under the smoke and keep your mouth covered. The smoke contains toxic gases which can disorient you or, at worst, overcome you.

NEVER OPEN DOORS THAT ARE HOT TO THE TOUCH

When you come to a closed door, use the back of your hand to feel the top of the door, the doorknob, and the crack between the door and door frame to make sure that fire is not on the other side. If it feels hot, use your secondary escape route. Even if the door feels cool, open it carefully. Brace your shoulder against the door and open it slowly. If heat and smoke come in, slam the door and make sure it is securely closed, then use your alternate escape route.

DESIGNATE A MEETING PLACE OUTSIDE AND TAKE ATTENDANCE

Designate a meeting location away from the home, but not necessarily across the street. For example, meet

under a specific tree or at the end of the driveway or front sidewalk to make sure everyone has gotten out safely and no one will be hurt looking for someone who is already safe. Designate one person to go to a neighbor's home to phone the fire department.

ONCE OUT, STAY OUT

Remember to escape first, then notify the fire department using the 911 system or proper local emergency number in your area. Never go back into a burning building for any reason. Teach children not to hide from firefighters. If someone is missing, tell the firefighters. They are equipped to perform rescues safely.

Finally, having working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home dramatically increases your chances of survival. Smoke alarm batteries need to be tested every month and changed with new ones at least once a year. Also, consider replacing the entire smoke alarm every ten years, or as the manufacturer guidelines recommend.

For more information contact:

The U. S. Fire Administration
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727
or
Visit the USFA Web site:
www.usfa.fema.gov



Homeland Security



Federal Emergency Management Agency

TORNADOES

When a tornado is coming, you have very little time to make life-or-death decisions. Advance planning and quick response are the keys to surviving a tornado.

TORNADO FACTS

- A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground.
- Tornadoes are capable of destroying homes and vehicles and can cause fatalities.
- Tornadoes may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel. The average tornado moves SW to NE but have been known to move in any direction.
- The average forward speed is 30 mph but may vary from stationary to 70 mph and have rotating winds in excess of 250 mph.
- Tornadoes can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move onto land.
- Waterspouts are tornadoes that form over water.

WHERE and WHEN

- Tornadoes can occur at any time of the year.
- Tornadoes have occurred in every state, but they are most frequent east of the Rocky Mountains during spring and summer months.
- In the southern states, peak tornado occurrence is March through May, while peak months in the northern states are during the late spring and early summer.

- Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 and 9 p.m. but can happen at any time.

HOW TO PREPARE

- Develop a plan for you and your family at home, work, school and when outdoors. The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers planning tips on its Internet site: www.fema.gov/pte/displan.htm
- Identify a safe place to take shelter. Information on how to build a "Safe Room" in your home or school is available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.fema.gov/mit/saferoom.
- Conduct frequent tornado drills each tornado season.
- Keep a highway map nearby to follow storm movement from weather bulletins.
- Have a NOAA Weather Radio with a warning alarm tone and battery backup to receive watches and warnings.
- NWS watches and warnings are also available on the Internet. Go to the NWS Home Page at www.nws.noaa.gov for services or weather.gov for weather and forecasts.
- Listen to radio and television for weather information.
- Check the weather forecast before leaving for extended periods outdoors. Watch for signs of approaching storms.

- If severe weather threatens, check on people who are elderly, very young, or physically or mentally disabled.
- Practice having everyone in your family go to your designated safe place in response to a tornado threat.
- Contact your local emergency management office and NOAA for more information on tornadoes.

Develop a communications plan

Pick two places to meet: a spot outside your home for an emergency and a place away from your neighborhood in case you can't return home.

Choose an out-of-state friend as your "family check-in contact" for everyone to call if the family gets separated. Discuss what you would do if advised to evacuate.

Prepare a Disaster Supply Kit

- A 3-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person.
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit including prescription medicines.
- Emergency tools, including a battery powered NOAA Weather Radio and portable radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card or cash.
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members.
- Copies of ID cards or driver's licenses for all family members.

Tornado Watches and Warnings

The National Weather Service issues a tornado watch when tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms. This is the time to remind family members where the safest places within your home are located, and listen to the radio or television for further developments.

A tornado warning is issued, by NWS, when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If a tornado warning is issued for your area and the sky becomes threatening, move to your pre-designated place of safety. Turn on a battery-operated radio and wait for further instructions.

TORNADO DANGER SIGNS

Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that advance warning is not possible.

Look out for:

- Dark, often greenish sky
- Large hail
- Wall cloud
- Loud roar, similar to a freight train

Caution:

- Some tornadoes are clearly visible, while rain or nearby low-hanging clouds obscure others.
- Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still.
- A cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible.
- Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

SAFETY RULES DURING

- Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement (under a sturdy piece of furniture) or a Safe Room.

- If an underground shelter is not available, move to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside.
- Stay away from windows. Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they attract debris.
- Get out of automobiles immediately and seek shelter in a nearby building. If a building is unavailable or there is no time, get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the car. Be aware of potential for flooding. In urban or congested areas, never try to outrun a tornado in a car or truck; instead, leave it immediately for safe shelter. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a car or truck and toss it in the air.
- If caught outside, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of potential for flooding.
- Be aware of flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes causes most fatalities and injuries.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes. You should leave a mobile home and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building or a storm shelter.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways, or shopping malls.
- Do not open windows, use time to seek shelter.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

AFTER THE TORNADO

- Help injured or trapped persons. Give first aid when appropriate. Don't try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help.
- Stay out of damaged buildings. Return home when authorities say it is safe.

- Turn on radio or television to get the latest emergency information. Use the phone only for emergency calls.
- Clean up spilled flammable liquids immediately. Leave the building if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Take pictures of the damage – both the house and contents – for insurance purposes.

Inspect Utilities in a Damaged Home

Check for gas leaks – If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas, a professional must turn it back on.

Look for electrical damage – If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician for advice.

Check for sewage and water line damage – If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap. Melt ice cubes for safe water.

Mitigation

Mitigation includes any activities that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or lessen the effects of unavoidable emergencies. Investing in preventative mitigation steps now, such as building a Safe Room, checking local building codes and ordinances about wind resistant designs and strengthening unreinforced masonry, will help reduce the impact of tornadoes in the future.

You can print or download copies of FEMA publications from www.fema.gov/library. Order printed copies from FEMA's Distribution Center (800-480-2520). For *Taking Shelter Before the Storm*, call 888-565-3896