



# **ST. AMBROSE PARISH**

## **Faith Formation**

### **Programs, Policies & Procedures**

**2022-2023**

# Introduction Letter from Father Robert Turner

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Beginning as we are another school year this autumn, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect with you on the irreplaceable role you have in the life of your child. The parent/guardian is responsible to God for the whole child—body and soul. We spare no effort preparing and forming our children for bodily health and world success; yet, we know that this is not enough for we have been charged with helping these children to know their Creator and Father, who desires to spend eternity with them.


The parish is pleased to offer a variety of programs to assist you in learning the faith as well as handing it on to your children. Enclosed in this packet is a program for everyone, adult and child. Adult faith formation helps parents grow closer to God and teach their children at home while our catechetical programs for children and young adults assist the parents/guardians in their role of forming disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Importantly, we know that a relationship is more than just knowledge but also love. Following Jesus means more than knowing about him; it means loving him and listening to his voice in all we do. In addition to participating in faith formation programs, it's essential to spend time in prayer every day, to attend Sunday Mass (and other days of obligation) and to live a life of virtue.

"We cannot love what we do not know" (St. Catherine of Siena); and, I dare say, we cannot say we love without the desire to know more deeply.

Please be sure of my prayers for you and your families as we seek to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ, who, as the way, the truth, and the life provides peace the world cannot give.

In the Lord,



Fr. Turner

# OFFERED PROGRAMS

## Adult Faith Formation

Open to registered parishioners who would like to learn more about their faith. Classes meet weekly via Zoom. Join Father Turner as he helps you diver deeper and grow in your understanding of the Catholic Faith. St. Ambrose Parish is committed to carry on the catechetical mission of the Church by effectively supporting and educating parents encouraging a lifelong deepening of their faith and offering support in their role as primary educators of the faith.

## Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

**Level I: Ages 3-6**

**Level II: Ages 6-9**

**Level III: 9-12**

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a Montessori-based faith formation program based on the educational principles of Maria Montessori. It offers a pathway for even the youngest child to experience the joy of entering into the mystery of God. At St. Ambrose Parish, we have Level 1, 2 and 3 atria for children ages 3-12. This atrium is a sacred space dedicated to CGS where children retreat from the noisiness of the modern world and enter a place of prayer. Child sized furnishings, manipulatives, and objects based on Scripture and Liturgy placed in the atrium encourage joyful self-discovery, foster community, and accommodate all learning styles. This approach, like all Montessori methods, respects children's individualism by allowing each child to grow and explore at their own pace. By allowing the child this natural path to unfold, they encounter Jesus and their faith in a deeply personal way. Volunteer Catechists of this program undergo 100 hours of training, per level, to receive their certification for instruction.

## Junior High School Program

**Grades 7 & 8**

Our grade 7 and 8 students meet every other week for instruction and discussion using YOUCAT. YOUCAT is the Catechism of the Catholic Church for adolescents and young people. The most important elements of the faith are summarized briefly and comprehensibly. The YOUCAT was approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome. The program is broken down into four parts that are covered in a two-year program. One year covers *What We Believe* and *How We Celebrate the Christian Mysteries* and the other year covers *How We Are to Have Life in Christ* and *How We Should Pray*.

# **Pre-Confirmation Small Group**

**Grades 9-12**

When teens reach High School, they will be invited to continue to grow in their faith through a Discipleship module as opposed to instructional classes. Discipleship isn't about passing a test or learning facts over a set number of years; it's a life-long journey where someone continues to deepen their relationship with Christ and commits to living their life like His. It reminds us that our Catholic Faith is something to be lived rather than just learned! Small Groups meet every other week with an adult Small Group Leader and spend time discussing questions they may have about God, faith, relationships, religion, life, their future and anything else they may want to discuss. Small Group Leaders facilitate discussion and share about what it means to be a practicing Catholic in today's world. The goal is for the teens to grow in relationship with others in their parish community and receive guidance and support from their leader and dive into a deeper understanding of the faith and into a deeper relationship with our Lord. Teens that have spent at least one year during high school attending small group and begin to take ownership of their faith life are invited to begin the Confirmation Preparation program when they desire to.

# **Post-Confirmation Small Group**

After a teen is Confirmed, teens are invited to continue to grow in their faith and continue to grow in relationship with other teens in their parish community. They meet once a month and will be provided with continued opportunities to encounter Christ and grow in an authentic relationship with Him. There will be discussion evenings on a variety of topics both with Small Group Leaders and visiting speakers and they will enjoy events, gatherings and service and prayer opportunities. The Post-Confirmation Small Group provides those on the road to becoming a young adult the opportunity for continued support and encouragement in taking ownership of their faith life, deepening their faith and becoming a disciple of Christ.

# **Sacramental Preparation Programs**

**First Penance and First Holy Communion (pg. 7)**

**Confirmation (pg. 8)**

# CHILD SAFETY

## Drop Off

Classes begin promptly – there is much material to cover in the time. Please make arrangements to be here on time.

## Pick Up

### Pre-School through Grades 6

Parents will need to sign their children in and out of the parish center. Children will be dismissed to parents listed on the registration form, if you would like someone other than yourself authorized to pick up your child please provide us with that information on your registration form. Children will only be dismissed to those listed. If you would like to give permission for another adult to pick up your child at a future date, please provide a written note to us.

**Grades 7 and up** will be released without parental sign-out and can proceed directly to your cars. If you would like your grade 7<sup>th</sup> and up student to be signed out, please notify us on the registration form.

## Safe Environments Program (VIRTUS)

All staff, small group leaders and catechists continually work to be in full compliance with all elements of the Archdiocese of Hartford's Safe Environment program and guidelines (VIRTUS). VIRTUS is a very informative program and is required of all volunteers that will be working with children, you are invited to take part for your own information or if you are anticipating volunteering. If you would like to participate, please call the office. There will be no cost to you.

## Child Lures Prevention

St. Ambrose Parish presents a program that can help protect the safety and wellbeing of your children called Child Lures Prevention, *Think First and Stay Safe*. This is an in-depth safety program which is required as part of the curriculum of parish religious education programs by the Archdiocese of Hartford and is offered to all students each year in person. Materials can be made available for parents to provide their children with this program at home, if you choose not to present or have this program presented to your children a signed opt out form is required.

# **Classroom, Atrium and Small Group Policies**

## **Electronic Devices**

Children should not bring iPads, cell phones or other electronic devices into the classroom or atrium.

## **Attendance**

Adults and children are asked to plan to attend all regularly scheduled classes and meeting times. Attendance is important for formation and lessons and classroom instruction mostly builds upon the previous class. For children, regular attendance is important for class instruction and atrium lessons to be considered complete when evaluating progression to the next program, grade or atrium level. (Please see Sacramental Program Guidelines for sacramental preparation attendance requirements.)

## **Discipline**

Respect for oneself, clergy, staff, catechists, fellow students and parish property is expected at all times. Parents of any child disrupting class or atrium time will be contacted and will be asked to leave until a resolution is met.

## **Sacraments**

At St. Ambrose, sacraments are based on readiness upon completion of a sacramental preparation program (see following guidelines).

## **Service**

St. Ambrose's Faith Formation Program strives to promote an active parish community where we live and learn our faith not only in faith formation but also as active members of the Church and parish community. There are many opportunities for adults to serve the parish. Children are encouraged to join the choir or become an Altar Server.

## **Mass Attendance**

Regular attendance at Mass is an important part of your child's understanding and growth in their faith. The Catholic Church has always required a practicing Catholic to attend Mass on Sundays (or Saturday Vigil) and other holy days of obligation.



## **Sacramental Guidelines**

### **FIRST PENANCE/FIRST EUCHARIST**

Administration of the sacrament of First Holy Communion will be based on a child's readiness and using the following guidelines.

1. Baptized children who have reached the age of reason (at least 7 years old) and are showing signs of readiness may choose to begin the preparation program for receiving the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist for the first time.
2. This preparation program is available to children who have completed at least one full school year in Level 2 *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*.
3. It is expected that families whose children are preparing for these sacraments are active members of the St. Ambrose Parish community participating at Mass with us each week.
4. The child and at least one parent must commit to participation in five scheduled meditations, normal atrium time and a full day retreat.

Your role in this process is crucial. How you model your faith at home in your daily life greatly influences your child. You are their primary and most effective teacher of the Catholic Faith!



## **Sacramental Guidelines CONFIRMATION**

Administration of the sacrament of Confirmation will be based on readiness.

1. Candidates for Confirmation must complete the Confirmation Preparation program.
2. The Confirmation Preparation program is available to teens who:
  - a. Are in grade 10, 11 or 12 (those out of high school should contact the Archdiocese of Hartford for adult classes.)
  - b. Have been active in a faith formation program and have completed at least one full year of small group and are currently enrolled in at least their second year of Small Group.
  - c. Is an active member of the St. Ambrose Parish community participating at Mass with us each week.
3. Candidates must have the personal intention and desire of receiving this sacrament.
4. Candidates must commit to participation in the 12 preparation classes, apart from normal small group time, and attend a Confirmation retreat.
5. Candidates must commit to take the time to research and choose a saint who's name they will take at Confirmation and write a reflection paper on the saint chosen.

*If a candidate cannot commit to the Confirmation Prep. gatherings, is not active in the parish and prioritizing their Faith or behaves in such a way that shows he/she is not ready or willing to prepare for the Sacrament, he/she may need to postpone the reception of the Sacrament to allow time for continued preparation.*