

ST. ELIZABETH CHURCH
FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM



FAMILY HANDBOOK

2025 - 2026



A message from the Pastor

Dear Faith Formation Families of St. Elizabeth Parish,

As pastor of our parish community---and on behalf of all the parishioners of St. Elizabeth--- I welcome you with joy and gratitude. As St. Paul would say in the letter to the Philippians: "I thank my God each time I think of you and when I pray for you, I pray with joy."

I would like to express my happiness over your decision to become part of our parish and the Faith Formation program. I also would like to express my gratitude for enrolling your child(ren) because it is a sign of your earnestness and desire for faith in your families. It is also an affirmation of the trust and confidence your place in the parish's Faith Formation program. As you may recall from the Rite of the Baptism, when your children were baptized, you were reminded that you as parents are the first teachers of the faith.

Let's, therefore, collaborate wholeheartedly---your families and the faith family of St. Elizabeth---in providing the best of the faith-related formation to your children. As your children are engaged in this process, your entire families might also be touched by God's grace and renewed in faith.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church contains four parts: 1. The Profession of Faith (with a detailed interpretation of the Nicene Creed; God's Revelation, Trinity, Christ's life, death, and resurrection, Church being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic). 2. The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (about the liturgy and Seven Sacraments). 3. Life in Christ (Christian morality, Free Will, Sin and Grace, Virtues, and the Ten Commandments). 4. Christian Prayer (universal call to prayer, different types and ways to pray, and the Our Father).

It is our hope in the Faith Formation program to introduce the above four parts of the Church's catechism in some measure to your children, however rudimentary it may be, given the levels of their grasp and the limitedness of time. Through our classes and activities, through our liturgical celebrations, devotions, and the sacraments, we are hoping to lead your children and your families toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who is at the center of our Christian life. He leads us to the Father by constantly anointing us with his Spirit. He builds up the Body of Christ, the Community of believers, who will be a city on a hill, a beacon of hope, a light to all the nations, to make this world a better place, a suitable home for the Kingdom of God.

I wish your children and families all the joys and blessings through our Faith Formation program at St. Elizabeth parish.

Devotedly Yours in our Lord,

Father Charles Puthota, Ph.D.

Pastor

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FAITH FORMATION STAFF

Each class is staffed by a catechist. Our catechists are volunteers who give generously of themselves and their time. All have a willingness to share their faith to help our children grow in the love of Jesus. All our catechists, the assistant and the Faith Formation Coordinator are required to:

- Be in good standing with the Catholic Church
- Attend catechetical meetings
- Comply with the Archdiocese requirements
- Background check/fingerprinting with the FBI
- Sexual Abuse and Bullying Awareness Training
- Encouraged to seek certification through the San Francisco Archdiocese

STAFF

Fr. Charles Puthota, Ph.D.	Pastor
Laurrie Digneo	Faith Formation Coordinator
Patricia Spiteri	Pastoral Coordinator / Assistant
Maria Oropeza	Kindergarten, 1 st Grade & OFT
Francisca Oropeza	2nd Grade & OFC
Cipriano Peneyra	3 rd Grade
Cipriano Peneyra	4 th Grade
Richard John	5 th Grade
Richard John	6th Grade
Andrea Olson	7 th Grade
Mike Walsh	8th Grade
Sister Olga Cristobal	Songs of Faith

If you need to contact Faith Formation for any reason please call the numbers below.

Laurrie Digneo	415-672-4903 (cell)	sophielady7@aol.com
St. Elizabeth Church Office	415-468-0820	

OVERVIEW of PROGRAM

St. Elizabeth Faith Formation Program welcomes all children and youth (baptized or not) to participate in the catechetical program.

Classes are offered Sunday mornings from September 2025 to May 2026, in Cantwell Hall located below the Church on Goettingen Street.

Faith Formation School Year, class will begin with the 8:30 am Sunday Mass. Children must sit in the first three rows on the right hand side of the church. Parents are welcome to sit with their child(ren) so they can help them with the mass.

Faith Formation Schedule

TIME	EVENT
8:20 am	Drop-off at the front of the church for Mass. ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN
8:30 am	Mass
9:30 am	After Mass teachers will escort your child down to Cantwell Hall for the remainder of class time. Bathroom and water break
9:45 am	Class
11:15 am	Clean-up
11:30 am	Grades K-8 are dismissed at 11:30 am. Doors will open at 11:30 am and their teacher will escort them out.

PARENT'S ROLE

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Our staff is eager to work with parents to help them fulfill this responsibility. The staff asks that each parent cooperate in the following ways:

- Participate actively in the sacramental and community life of the parish, share your faith and what it means to you and your children.
- Pray with your children and help them memorize the traditional prayers of the church.
- Discuss with your children what they have learned in class.
- Be aware of what homework is to be done. Help younger children with their homework and discuss the lessons with them.
- Read religious books to your children or purchase religious books for your older children. Watch religious movies with your children.
- Discuss with your children moral issues and how they affect them and our society.
- Familiarize yourself with scheduled catechetical sessions and events for your children such as family masses, religious holidays, and Sunday 8:30 am mandatory Masses.
- Attend all parent meetings.
- Read and act promptly on all communications from Mrs. Digneo and teachers.
- Assure that your children are punctual and regular attendance at all classes.
- If your child is absent please call Mrs. Digneo to report the absence. All missed homework will be given to your child upon their return.
- Please be patient if your child's class ends later than usual.

Please provide your child with a snack and a water bottle.

COMMUNICATION

Parents/guardians and catechetical staff work in partnership in helping children grow in faith. Good communication is essential. If problems develop, the parent/guardian will meet with the Program Coordinator and child to resolve the issue.

If a parent/guardian wishes to speak with the catechist, they may do so after class or they can make an appointment by calling the Program Coordinator. Parents/guardians may also make an appointment to meet with the Program Coordinator at (415) 672-4903 / sophielady7@aol.com.

There will be periodic parent notices sent to you by the following methods:

- Email
- Phone call

When asked to contact the Program Coordinator, either by phone call or email, please do so as soon as possible. Some information is time sensitive especially when planning for events such as the Children's Christmas Mass, First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion or Confirmation.

All communication between parents/guardians, teachers and Program Coordinator must be conducted in a respectful manner.

STUDENT'S ROLE

Students also have a responsibility to cooperate in order to benefit from the catechetical sessions at St. Elizabeth's Faith Formation Program.

- Be respectful and cooperative with all catechists.
- Students are expected to be respectful of one another, other's belongings, and parish property.
- Listen carefully, follow directions and participate in the class activities.
- **COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS ON TIME.**
- Bring BOTH religious education book and communication binder (includes homework and announcements) to class every week. **Please check weekly.**
- Follow attendance, emergency/safety procedures and discipline policies.
- Share what they have learned and experienced in their classes with their parents and families.
- NO gum allowed.
- NO horse playing during class time.
- NO one is allowed on the STAGE.
- NO cell phones during class time. No earplugs, and electronics. All will be confiscated and returned to parents only.
- Dangerous materials shall not brought to class such as alcohol, drugs, weapons and other illegal materials.

The coordinator and teachers have the right and duty to protect the health and welfare of students in the catechetical program. This includes the right to inspect property of any individual suspected of possessing any of the above listed items. If any of these mentioned items are found, the parent/guardian and pastor will be notified.

Please Note: The Faith Formation program is a gang-free environment.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND FIRST RECONCILIATION

Preparation for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion is a two year program, beginning no earlier than first grade.

Classes are also available for older students. Reconciliation is usually held in February or March and First Holy Communion is held in May at St Elizabeth Church with the Pastor. One parent must attend the mandatory parent meeting for both First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

Practices for First Reconciliation and First Communion will be held during class time.

A copy of your child's Baptism Certificate is required with registration.

CONFIRMATION

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is a two year program beginning no earlier than 7th grade.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is held at Saint Mary's Cathedral. The date is set by the Archdiocese and is held either at the end of April or first of May.

There is only one sponsor. A parent **CANNOT** be the sponsor. Parents and students must attend the mandatory meetings. Families will be given a Confirmation Contract to complete with both parents and student signatures.

St. Elizabeth holds a one-day in-house Confirmation Retreat for the students, sponsor and parent - all must attend (usually in March or April.)

A copy of your child's Baptism and First Holy Communion certificates is required with registration.

NEW STUDENTS FROM ANOTHER PARISH

If your child is entering second (2nd) year Communion or Confirmation (if from another church), they must provide St. Elizabeth with a letter from their previous Faith Formation Coordinator/Director stating that they have completed their first (1st) year Communion or Confirmation year.

This letter must be on church letterhead with the pastor's signature and church seal.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINARY ACTION

We require that all students behave in an appropriate manner in order to create a productive learning environment. Disrespect towards teachers, fighting, foul language, defacement of church property, carrying harmful objects, and stealing are considered unacceptable behavior. We have a zero-tolerance policy on bullying.

In order to provide an environment that promotes maximum learning we require good discipline and respect in the classroom.

The following are minimal behavior expectations in the classrooms:

1. Pay attention
2. Listen to who is speaking
3. Speak when it is your turn
4. Keep hands to yourself
5. Show your love for God and others
6. Do your best
7. Respect each other and all adults

MEDICATION

We do **NOT** administer prescription or non-prescription medication to any child. If your child uses an asthmatic inhaler we need a note from the doctor stating your child can self-administer the medication. Inhalers **CANNOT** be shared with others.

ALLERGIES

Please indicate all allergies and/or medical conditions your child may have on the registration form. Please update all medical information as needed.

PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES (CELL PHONE FREE ZONE)

If parents/guardians need to be contacted, someone on the staff will call you. All cellphones are turned into their teacher at the beginning of class and returned at end of class.

CLASS ATTENDANCE/ABSENCE

If your child is going to be absent, please call the Coordinator prior to class time.

Faith Formation Education should be a priority. Given the amount of time we have in the classroom, attendance at all classes is mandatory for all students, unless they are ill.

Students are responsible for making up all work missed. Please contact the Coordinator with any questions.

TEXTBOOKS

Our textbook series for grades K through 8 is entitled, "Christ Our Life".
Grades 7 & 8 monthly journals are required. Journal assignments will be given monthly.

MASS ATTENDANCE

Our faith teaches that it is our obligation to worship God and participate in the Eucharistic Celebration every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation. It is expected that every child enrolled in the Faith Formation Program attend masse every week and on Holy Days of Obligation.

REGISTRATION

Registration begins in June of each year.

Registration Forms are required every year for new and returning students. Families should also be registered at St. Elizabeth Church.

When returning the Registration Form:

1. Must be completed and signed
2. Registration fee attached
3. If new is student, a baptism certificate is required
4. If new student has made their First Holy Communion, this form is also required.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS/PHONE NUMBERS

Please notify the Faith Formation Coordinator with any changes in writing.

CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

The primary parent responsible for seeing that custody arrangements are carried out rests with the parents. The Faith Formation staff wishes to cooperate with special custody arrangements of the family.

CHILD ABUSE – SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Our Faith Formation staff, as well as our children, are required by the San Francisco Archdiocese to complete the Protecting God's Children –Teaching, Touching, and Bullying Safety Program (VIRTUS). This program is powerful in content. The goal is to educate all those who work with children to recognize abuse/abusers and address the protection of children by following established guidelines as noted below:

- Step 1 – Know the Warning Signs
- Step 2 - Control Access
- Step 3 – Monitor All Programs
- Step 4 – Be Aware
- Step 5 – Communicate Your Concerns

Catechists who observe actual or suspected child abuse are required by law to report the matter in confidence to the proper authorities. If you would like support in reporting abuse you may contact any of the numbers below.

Faith Formation Coordinator:	Laurrie Digneo 415-672-4903
St. Elizabeth Church Office:	415-468-0820
The Child Abuse Hotline:	1-800 -856-5553
The Local Police:	415-553-0123

EMERGENCY/SAFETY PROCEDURES

The safety of the students and catechetical staff is of paramount importance. All actions taken shall bear in mind the safety and well-being of both students and staff members.

In case of an emergency/natural disaster, the Emergency Procedure Plan will be followed:

Fire and earthquake drills are conducted during class time. In the case of an emergency, the Coordinator and catechists will remain with the children until either a custodial parent/guardian or designated person picks up the child.

Only a person who is listed on the emergency/earthquake release form will be allowed to pick-up a child.

It is VERY IMPORTANT that you list anyone who you think may take your child home in case of an emergency, i.e.: relative, friend, and neighbor. If a name is NOT on the list, we will NOT allow the child to go home with that person. If you need to add or change your emergency contact/release information please contact the Program Coordinator in writing.

Please note: VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

If you need someone to pick up your child DURING the class hours, you MUST call the Faith Formation Coordinator, Laurie Digneo, 415-672-4903, and inform her who on your emergency form is picking up your child(ren). Cell phone will be on at all times. MUST SHOW A VALID IDENTIFICATION (DRIVER'S LICENSE)

If someone on your emergency form RANDOMLY comes to pick up with your child(ren) without your prior notification to us, we will NOT release them to this individual. YOU MUST CALL US.

If someone comes to pick up your child(ren) and they are NOT on the emergency form without your prior notification to us, we will NOT release them to this individual. YOU MUST CALL US.

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A VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL EMERGENCY PICK-UP.

2025 – 2026

PARENT/GUARDIAN AND STUDENT

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND SIGNATURE

I have received the Faith Formation 2025 – 2026 Handbook. I have read and understand the St. Elizabeth Faith Formation Handbook. I will *abide* with all that is listed in this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Signature

Student Signature

Date _____