

Saint Mary Magdalene Catholic Church



Parish Faith Formation Pre-K – 12th

*The Journey of Life Long Faith Formation
Parent Handbook 2019.2020*

**DEPARTMENT OF FAITH FORMATION
PHONE NUMBERS**

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STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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FAITH FORMATION/PREP OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday

Religious Education office is always open during all religious education class times. Individual staff hours do vary. You may always get the grade level coordinator on the days of classes, but we suggest you call to make an appointment if you wish to speak with any of the staff.

The main parish office is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This handbook is a guide for the policies of the programs offered by St. Mary Magdalene Faith Formation. We are here to serve and assist parents and children in any way necessary. The faith formation department does reserve the right to amend this handbook when necessary. If any changes do occur, parents will be notified in writing of such changes. Should you have any questions, comments or suggestions do not hesitate to share them with your child's catechist, or any member of the Faith Formation staff.

Welcome

Dear Families

Thank you for bringing your children to be part of a Spirit-filled lifelong faith formation process. We ask the Holy Spirit's guidance in providing age appropriate sessions focused on fidelity, faith, and fellowship.

We are blessed with gifted Catechists and Peer Leaders who have answered God's call and share their faith on their journey with Christ. St. Mary Magdalene is pleased to offer programs for children of all ages – as we are all children of God.

- **Pre-K through Fifth Grade** attend our peer level Elementary sessions.
- **Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grade** gather with the Middle School community; still gathering with their peers plus periodic large group sessions including Praise & Worship and social and community events.
- **Ninth through Twelfth Graders** gather as one large group for formation on Sunday afternoon in our High School/Youth Group. Additional sessions meet for Confirmation formation.
Our year is filled as well with retreats; lock-ins, and other social functions.
- **Home School** the home is the domestic church. We honor parents as the initial and primary catechist of their children. The home school option is available for all elementary age children.
- **Adult Sessions** meet throughout the year – small faith communities, bible studies, parent formation sessions, special speakers are all offered throughout our year.

Any Catechist will tell you that they learn from their students and receive more than they give. Thank you for blessing us with the gift of your children. We know that God will bless you abundantly for sharing and passing on the gift of faith to your children. We recognize your commitment to avail yourselves and your children to all the church offers. Together we grow, learning and nurturing our faith, leading to an authentic Gospel life. We appreciate this and we thank you for entrusting your family to our life-long faith formation sessions.

Peace,

Kathy Kelly Huey
Director, Faith Formation



VISION STATEMENT

We, the family of St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church, foster living conversion to Christ through life-long faith formation.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Mary Magdalene Religious Education strives to fulfill the greater mission of our parish through Spiritual Enrichment and Religious Education. Programs are for adults, teens and children. Our mission is to encompass all aspects of Faith Formation and to build up the Body of Christ by fulfilling their baptismal promise.

CURRICULUM

St. Mary Magdalene's Pre-K through grade 5^h grade faith formation uses Finding God from Loyola Press and 6th – 8th Formation uses Blest are We from RCL Benzinger. The doctrine taught is taken from Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The teachings are developmentally presented. This enables our young disciples to understand that, *what* we believe, *how* we worship, *how* we pray and *how* we serve our community, does make a difference in our relationship with ourselves, our community and our God.

Faith Formation Home School Option(s)

Traditional Home School

St. Mary Magdalene provides formation opportunities for those who desire to teach elementary children at home. Parents and students are required to attend four meetings a year in order to successfully complete the study for the year.

Home school families shall attend 4 Mandatory sessions and choose from four elective Parish Life events.

Mandatory sessions - elementary coordinator will provide dates. The four sessions include a parent information night in September, a mid-year review, and Year end family review.

Suggested elective Parish Life Events check parish bulletin for upcoming dates and events. You are not limited to these as each year /month new opportunities arise:

Parish picnic, Adoration, Blessing of Animals, Blessing of Throats, Saints Parade; All Saints Festival,

Feast Day of St. Mary Magdalene, Ash Wednesday, Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil); Teaching Mass; Parish Dinners, Knights of Columbus Breakfasts, Teen Carwashes, Live Stations of the Cross, Lenten Dinners – watch the bulletin and keep a list.

VIRTUS SAVE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOR CHILDREN and VOLUNTEERS

Under the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Article 12, parishes in our diocese must implement safe environment training for children. Effective fall of 2014 the Diocese of Atlanta chose the Virtus training for all children and teens. The program deals with the safety of young people and teens for the protection against child abuse. Each year parents are informed of this, through a letter from the DRE and must send us their signed forms giving approval or opting out of the training. This year we will offer the training for all K – 12th grade students. Dates and times to follow. Please visit <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/senvironment/safek12.html> for complete information on the VIRTUS training. Parents may opt out of training for the children. Alternate activities will be available on the day of training for those who opt out or who have forgotten to provide the permission forms. The primary focus of these days for K - 12 will be the safe environment training.

FOR VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers who work within our program are required to complete a volunteer packet on safe environment for children and youth protection. They must complete the online training outlining the importance of protecting our children against child abuse. They are required to fill out the necessary forms and have a background check. All the above is in compliance with the policies of our Archbishop.

OTHER SAFETY PROCEDURES

- We have hall monitors to insure safety such as:
 - Stopping visitors to ask if they can be of assistance, so they know why they are there.
 - Being sure that a student is never alone while in the hallway. We adhere to a “buddy system” while on the property.
 - They are aware that there are always two adults in a classroom and that the students are never alone with just one adult.
 - The coordinators office is open to receive any phones calls from parents or to call parents if they need to be reached.
 - We are committed to our families to insure that we adhere to a safe and friendly environment for all our children, teens and adults.
 - We need the cooperation of the parents in order to implement these policies.

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Arrivals and dismissals are a very important part of our safety policy. Supervision is vital for all minors from the time they arrive until they are safely in the care of their parent or guardian.

The following procedures are to be followed:

Elementary

- ★ All catechists are to be in their classroom 15 minutes before class begins.
- ★ Students may not be in the classroom more than 10 minutes before class begins.
- ★ If anyone other than the parent or guardian is picking up a student, we must have written permission with the name of the person picking the student up and they must have identification.

Sunday - Elementary

- ★ Sunday Parents are to bring their child to the classroom and pick them up at the classroom following classes. No child should be left without 2 catechists in the room. No child will be dismissed without a parent or guardian.

Elementary

All arrivals are through the side doors of the education wing.

- ★ All departures for all sessions are through the side doors by the education wing.
- ★ Parents are to drop their child/ren off at the car pool line. An adult will assist the children to the hall where they will be led to their classrooms.
- ★ No drop off or pick up is to be made at any other entrance to the building. We do not have any adults at these entrances or exits.
- ★ Parents must escort children to and from the classroom if the carpool is not utilized.

Middle School

- ★ Middle School students may be dropped off and picked up at the front of the building. They may be unescorted; however this is at the discretion of the parent.

High School

- ★ High School students who drive themselves should park in the front parking lot. They are not to sit or gather in cars. Upon arrival enter through the front church doors are greeted by members of the Core Team. All students must sign in.
- ★ If a parent or guardian is dropping off and picking up, they are to do so by pulling up to the front of the 'church area' having students enter by the front door to sign in and be greeted by a member of the core team.
- ★ No student is to wait outside for pick up or be by themselves without supervision of at least two adults.
- ★ Teens must remain in attendance for the duration of the program. Parent will be contacted if a student has left the property without parental consent.

If you are a volunteer, your child may come to meet you in your classroom, the office when the session is over. The child's catechist should be informed of this. If you are handling carpool your child is to remain with their catechist until car pool has been completed.

ATTENDANCE We ask that parents, youth and children make a commitment to regular attendance at all classes and activities. In order to grasp religious concept and to promote a sense of 'belonging' to a parish community, regular attendance is necessary. If a child is absent, we ask that the parent notify the Faith Formation Coordinator and contact the child's catechist for any missed assignments. Once the assignment is completed at home, and returned to the Coordinator, credit will be given for the assignment

Under the guidelines of the Atlanta Archdiocese, students must attend 80% of class (no more than 5 absences) in order to receive credit for satisfactorily completing the year. If your child completes work missed during an absence, and turns the work into the F.F. Coordinator, the absence will not be counted. For those in a sacramental year no more than three absences are permitted for First Eucharist/Penance and two absences for Confirmation.

Regular attendance at Mass is essential to the process of forming faith. As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is present in those gathered together in his name, in Word and Sacrament. Religious Education is not a substitute for Mass.

If a student becomes ill during a session, the child will be brought to the office and the parent will be notified.

If you are running late picking your child up, please call as soon as you can and we will allow the child to wait in the office until you arrive. A phone call can reduce the stress on your child during the delay.

DISCIPLINE It is our policy to discipline with love and understanding. If a child has discipline issues, he or she will be given "time out" in the coordinators office. If the problem persists, a parent will be called. If there is no improvement, we will discuss further options including home schooling. Catechists are not babysitters, nor are they professional educators. They are volunteers and are not expected to handle serious and on-going discipline problems.

Discipline Policy: At the first incident, the child will be reminded of the expected behavior and the consequences of misbehavior.

- ★ After the second incident, the child will be sent to the office for a discussion with the DRE or the R.E. Coordinator about appropriate behavior.
- ★ After returning to class, if inappropriate behavior continues, the child will be sent to the office to do his or her religious education assignment and the child's parent or guardian will be contacted.
- ★ If the child's behavior continues to be disruptive, the parent will be called to come and sit in class with the child.
- ★ If misbehavior continues the parent, coordinator and DRE will discuss other options.

CODE OF CONDUCT the Faith Formation wing is an extension of the church building. We ask that students treat it with the same respect.

- ★ There is no running in the building.
- ★ Please dress appropriately for learning situations.
- ★ Please do not chew gum during class time.
- ★ No cell phones or other electronic devices during faith formation sessions.

INCLEMENT WEATHER When schools are closed there are no Faith Formation sessions.

If weather becomes severe once classes have started we ask that parents come to the church and pick their child up from classes. **There will be NO carpool under these circumstances parents must come inside to pick up their children.**

Emergency info will be posted on the St. Mary Magdalene website and Facebook pages. In addition it will be given to WSB-TV local channel – do not use this as your primary source of information, as we have no control over the timeframe of posting.

Tornado Warnings:

In the event of a tornado warning, students will be moved to a safe location within the building away from exterior doors and windows.

HEALTH CONCERNS AND MEDICATIONS

It is standard policy that catechists and other staff members of the faith formation department cannot dispense any medications to students during classes. A confidential appointment can be made with the DRE to discuss special medical needs. Arrangements can be made if there is a specific need to make a policy exception. Only prescription medication in the original container can be accepted or administered under any circumstances.

CHILD ABUSE

Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse, and we will follow diocesan policy on such matters. All catechists and volunteers have been background screened according to Archdiocesan guidelines and are Mandatory reporters. These guidelines may be found by visiting <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/senvironment>.

RETREATS AND OTHER OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

A student permission form must be signed for any activity that takes place off the St. Mary Magdalene property. All middle and high school students are required to fill out an annual medical release form, including a copy of your insurance card. This form is to be returned with the registration for classes. No student can attend any off-site function unless this form is on file in the FF office. Many insurance companies renew policies in January. If yours changes or updates, please provide us with that new information as well.

*******SPECIAL NOTES*******

SESSION TIMES FOR THE 2018.2019 FORMATION YEAR

Sunday:

10:15a.m.- 11:30 a.m. Grades 1 through 5
4:00p.m. - 6:00p.m. Confirmation (see calendar for specific dates)
4:00p.m.- 6:00p.m. High School

Monday:

4:15 to 5:30 p.m. Pre-K through Grade 5

Tuesday

1st and 2nd grade only (This session is dependent upon demand levels this year)

Wednesday:

6:45 to 8:00 p.m. Middle School

Registration and Sacramental Year Fees must be paid when form is turned in.

Even with recent increased costs no child will be denied faith formation due to financial difficulties. Scholarships are available, please see the Pastor or the DRE.

After May 1 st Regular	1 Child - \$125	2 Children - \$195	3 or More Children - \$235
Early Bird before May 1st	1 Child - \$100	2 Children - \$160	3 or More Children - \$190

Sacramental fees reflect the cost of additional books and supplies for the year of immediate preparation.

2 nd grade First Penance/Eucharist	\$55.00
Confirmation fee	\$40.00

Sacramental Preparation Years

This promises to be an exciting year in the life of your child. The Sacraments of Christian Initiation; Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are celebrated with great joy by your parish family. Our hope along with yours is that this will be the beginning of a long and faith-filled relationship with Jesus Christ.

First Eucharist Children must have at least one year of faith formation prior to the year beginning formation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. This does not include the year of immediate preparation. (e.g. a second grade child seeking the sacrament must have instruction in first grade). No more than 5 absences are permitted the year prior and 3 during the immediate preparation year

Confirmation Youth must have two years of faith formation prior to the year beginning formation for Confirmation.

The sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated in Archdiocese of Atlanta during the tenth grade year. With care and concern for your child, our Bishop Wilton Gregory, has established several guidelines for this process. One such guideline states that a student must have regular attendance in religious education class for *two years prior* to the year of Confirmation preparation *as well as* the year of preparation. Just as you would have your child complete high school before attending college or begin a career (they need to know what they are studying), attendance in faith formation sessions is necessary to ensure you child knows to whom they are saying, Amen, which means, "I Believe".

One of these prior years can be from the candidate's 6th, 7th, or 8th grade year. Regular attendance means that a student must be coming to Faith Formation sessions on a regular basis.

- All middle school students are permitted 5 absences throughout the year.
- Ninth graders, the year prior to Confirmation preparation may only miss 5 classes.
- During the Confirmation prep year, candidates may only miss 2 Confirmation sessions.

RCIA – the process for reception of the Sacraments of Initiation for un-baptized adults and youth or baptized persons from another Christian faith tradition seeking full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Formation lasts as long as it needs to last with no fixed duration however persons shall be in formation for a least one liturgical year.

ADULT CONFIRMATION – Sessions for adults 19 years of age and older seeking to complete the sacraments of initiation also participate in formation sessions during the fall or winter of each year. The sacrament is celebrated with the Archbishop during the parish celebration. Formation sessions will be announced in the parish bulletin.

OUR FAITH... OUR FUTURE...

Almighty God, we thank you for the many blessings you have bestowed upon our growing parish. We look to you for guidance through your Holy Spirit, that, we may do your will in all our efforts to build your kingdom in this place.

Bless us with a sense of unity as we journey in faith.

We call on the intercession of our patron saint Mary Magdalene, that we may follow her apostolic mission in strength, courage, and untiring faith in your Son.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

