

St. Athanasius Catholic Church
Jesup, Iowa

Youth Faith Formation Handbook
2019-2020

St. Athanasius Mission Statement

We, the people of St. Athanasius, are a faith community called to pray and worship together, to witness and teach the Gospel, and to serve and minister to others.



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to another year of Youth Faith Formation (YFF) at St. Athanasius! We invite you to fully participate in your child's spiritual growth and development during this school year. This handbook is to help acquaint you with the St. Athanasius YFF Program structure. It details the program's operating procedures and expectations. Please keep this handbook available for reference throughout the year. The purpose of providing you with this handbook is so that you will be able to participate more fully in the faith formation of your child.

The beginning of the school year is also a good time to recall the promise that all parents/guardians make at their child's baptism. During the Rite, we accept "the responsibility of training our child in the practice of the faith" as well as the "duty to bring them up to keep God's commandment as Christ taught." By virtue of that promise, **parents/guardians become and truly are the primary teachers of their child in matters of faith and morals.** Rather than replace the parents/guardian's role, our parish provides Faith Formation programming in order to assist you in your duty and encourage you in your responsibility. Nothing can replace the attention, interest, love and dedication of a parent/guardian. No amount of programming will ever truly matter if the practice of the faith isn't also taught and supported at home. If you haven't already thought about volunteering some time as a catechist or as classroom aide in our program, please do so. And families should always be sure to make Weekend Masses a priority in their weekly schedule and busy lives.

A few items to note:

- YFF classes are held on Wednesday nights from 6:15 – 7:15 pm and runs from September through early May.
- Youth Group will now take place after regular YFF from 7:30 – 8:30pm and will be for 9th – 12th graders only. We hope it will provide an informal way for high school students to hang out, pray together, discuss their faith together and assist in various service projects.
- Sacramental preparation will change slightly. Our hope is to empower parents with more tools to walk through the preparation process with their child and thus have less meetings and events to attend.

Sincerely,

Lori Schutte, Director of Faith Formation (DFF)

Fr. Jeffrey Dole, Pastor

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

St. Athanasius' YFF Program is intended to supplement, encourage and support the faith formation efforts of parents/guardians. In order for children to truly embrace the Catholic faith – and to know the joy and strength of a loving relationship with God and the Church – all the parts of the faith formation process need to be active and engaged.

Parents/Guardians

Much of what your child will learn from YFF sessions will depend on your support and reinforcement at home. Please take time each week to discuss the lesson of that week. Learning prayers and church doctrine is time consuming and cannot be completed only within the short class time each week. Parents/guardians are expected to work with their children at home.

The church either requires and/or recommends:

- Attending Mass each Sunday and on Holy Days of obligation.
- Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.
- Praying at home daily with children (bedtime prayers, meal prayers, and bible reading are essential).
- Instilling Christian moral values through demonstrating, by word and example.
- Taking an interest in YFF, asking about classes/studies, volunteering, attending family events, and cooperating with policies.
- Placing a priority on regular attendance at all required classes and/or meetings.
- Reading and replying to mail or email from the DFF, Catechist and/or Pastor.
- Notifying the DFF or Pastor of any special needs that may affect the child's safety, well-being, health, success, or comfort level. The DFF and Pastor will work with parents/guardians to develop a learning plan to address special needs.
- Keeping children in YFF programs every year from Kindergarten through tenth grade. Consistent attendance at YFF is important for the regular and uniform formation of your child.
 - Moving forward students who "skip years" may be asked to make-up work prior to receiving Sacraments.
- Volunteering to help with YFF, VBS, Parish events, and/or service projects.

Students

A great deal of the program's success depends on the students. With mature behavior, students will be able to learn as much from each other as they will from the textbook about how to live as Jesus taught. For these reasons, and for the dignity of all, appropriate Christian behavior is expected from all students. They are expected to follow the guidelines for good classroom conduct.

Director of Faith Formation (DFF)

The DFF is responsible for assisting the students, parents/guardians, catechists and all volunteers in performing their roles. The DFF is responsible for providing programs, content, and materials which will promote the spiritual growth of the students enrolled in the program.

Catechists

The role of your child's catechist is to extend the presence of Jesus, the teacher of the Good News. They will be responsible for planning on average 3 lessons per month. An easy to use Teacher's Guide will be provided. Catechists will be required to complete a State of Iowa background check and safe environment training.

Classroom Aides

The role of the aide is to assist the lead catechist as needed. They will be responsible to provide an extra set of eyes and ears in the classroom. Classroom aides will be required to complete a State of Iowa background check and safe environment training.

Floating Volunteer

A variety of roles will be filled by floating volunteers. Some of those roles will include parking lot safety, hall monitor, activity helper, guest speaker/testimony for older classes, classroom aide.

The Critical Importance of Regular Mass Attendance

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. The intimacy with Christ that is available to us in the Eucharist is unsurpassable. Through loving celebration and reception of the Eucharist, we receive the graces we need for growing in love and truth. We cannot live up to Christian ideals and grow ever closer to God without this kind of help from God and our community.

Just as our relationships with family members suffer if we do not come together regularly, so will our relationship with Christ and our Parish Family suffer if we do not come together to receive Eucharist regularly.

In our Faith Formation Program, much of the teaching centers on the Eucharist. Children who attend Mass regularly find our programs enjoyable, meaningful and inspirational. They are open to the lessons being taught and make good connections between our teaching and their own real lives.

But when children are not regularly taken to Mass, they often find themselves feeling uncomfortable in class. They may become confused, doubtful, and even cynical about God. Surely this is not the goal of families who routinely skip Mass, but this is almost always the result.

The Church teaches that, for Catholics, willfully missing Mass on weekends is a serious matter that causes a very real rupture in our relationship with God. Please make every effort to also attend Mass at St. Athanasius (or other parish) regularly, so that your child will find our classes enjoyable and meaningful.

Mass Times: Saturday 5:00 pm

+ Confessions at 4:00 pm

Sunday 8:30 am

10:30 am (at St. Francis, Barclay)

Tuesday 5:30 pm

+ Confessions at 4:30 pm

Wednesday 8:00 am (at St. Francis, Barclay)

Thursday 8:30 am (8:00 am during the summer)

Friday 8:00 am

Confessions can also be made by appointment, 319-827-6682, ask to speak with the priest.

YOUTH FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

YFF classes are held on Wednesday nights from 6:15 – 7:15 pm and run from September – early May. Attached is a detailed calendar.

All students can begin meeting in the lunchroom between 6–6:10 pm. Students will remain in assigned seating area and can talk quietly with their peers until they are dismissed by the DFF or Catechist. Class will start promptly at 6:15pm. Please make every effort to arrive on time for student drop-off and pick-up.

DROP OFF:

- When dropping your child off without parking, enter from Main St. and exit towards 6th St. so that your child does not cross traffic when exiting the vehicle.
- When parking to walk inside, please use the No Parking/Bus Stop signs as a guide and do not park in between these signs so that parents/guardians dropping off on the street have a safe place to stop.
- All students can begin meeting in the lunchroom between 6–6:10 pm. Class will start promptly at 6:15 pm.

PICK UP:

- Students will be ready for pick up at 7:15 pm in the gym.
- Students in K – 3 grades will remain with the Catechist until a parent/guardian, sibling or another trusted adult comes to the lunchroom to get them.

ATTENDANCE

If your child must miss class or needs to leave early, please let the DFF and Catechist know indicating the reason and date of the absence.

If your child has an extended illness, contact the DFF to make arrangements for learning at home. If a child has three consecutive absences, the DFF may contact you to see if the parish can help, if possible, with any special circumstances. Excessive unexcused absences may result in retention of grade level or delay of receiving Sacraments.

Regular class attendance at least one year prior to preparing to receive a sacrament, as well as the year of receiving the sacrament is important in ensuring uniform and consistent preparation prior to reception of the desired sacrament. If a child enters into the program the year of preparation for a sacrament and doesn't demonstrate an understanding at that level, additional preparation may be required.

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

If school is canceled, YFF and youth group are canceled. If severe weather develops in the early evening, an email will be sent to all parents/guardians and our Facebook page will be updated. Find us on Facebook at **St. A's YFF & Youth Group - Jesup, Iowa** and **St. Athanasius Parish**. Please let the DFF know if you need to be notified via phone.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

A safe and conducive atmosphere to learning is essential to our program. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a Christian manner while attending class. The following guidelines are expectations of all students:

- 1) **NO ELECTRONICS**; no phones or other personal electronic devices, toys, weapons, inappropriate reading material will be brought to class. Catechist will collect such items at the beginning of class. These items will be returned to the student at the end of the session. **Please help us by reminding your child not to bring any of the prohibited items to class.**
- 2) No gum, food, or beverages in class without the permission of the catechist.
- 3) Christian respect will be shown to everyone in the building.
- 4) Students are expected to arrive on time.
- 5) Students will follow the classroom expectations of their catechist

DISCIPLINE POLICY

YFF should make all children feel welcome, loved and respected. No student or adult should inhibit another from learning by disrespectful actions. Students are expected to follow normal classroom rules - being quiet, attentive and following instructions from catechist and classroom aides.

Discipline policy for addressing student misbehavior:

- 1) The catechist will first speak with the student, and a parent/guardian may be notified.
- 2) The student will meet one-on-one with the DFF and parent/guardian will be notified.
- 3) Consequences for continuing misbehavior will be at the discretion of the Catechist and DFF. Possible consequences may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Temporary removal from the classroom.
 - b. Parent/Guardian required to sit with their child in the classroom.
 - c. Student, Parent/Guardian, DFF and Pastor meeting.
 - d. Permanent removal from the classroom.

PARTICIPANTS

Our programs are open to all children in our parish community, grades K – 12, even those who may not be Catholic.

In the case of non-Catholics, parents/guardians must grant permission for their children to participate and should see to it that the children are taken to Mass on a regular basis. These parents/guardians are asked to contact the DFF, so that we can be sure that our programs are sensitive to the needs of the child.

If a non-Catholic child wishes to explore the possibility of becoming Catholic, parents/guardians are asked to contact the DFF or Pastor to discuss the process of initiation for children, which is designed to help them explore the faith, experience our parish community, and become Catholic if and when they are ready.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

St. Athanasius YFF Program will be using a variety of programs to meet the needs of our students.

Kindergarten will use *Allelu!* published by Our Sunday Visitor. This includes interactive activity sheets that are designed to be a learning tool for the classroom and then sent home to share with the family. They provide both structure and support for important family rituals such as eating meals together, praying together, reading Scripture, and talking about their faith.

1st – 8th grade will use the *Alive in Christ* textbook series published by Our Sunday Visitor. These textbooks feature a unique spiral scope and sequence based on seven essential doctrinal themes. Teaches children to know, love, and live their Catholic faith through Scripture, doctrine, and prayer. Developmentally appropriate text, images, exercises, and activities.

Both of these curriculums provide parent materials that catechists will occasionally send home with students. In addition to materials that may be sent home, parents and students are encouraged to visit the Our Sunday Visitor website for materials and activities that supplement our curriculum at <http://aliveinchrist.osv.com>. The website includes materials/activities for parents, students, and catechists.

9th and 10th grade will be using the *YDisciple* series from the Augustine Institute (also see www.formed.org). This series is an online platform using short videos and discussion questions. It is designed to help reach teens more effectively with the Gospel.

Prayers, Beliefs and Practices will be a regular part of our curriculum for all grades. These will be taught in the classroom and should be reinforced and taught at home as well. A list of suggested/recommended prayers, beliefs and practices by grade level is at the end of this handbook and a complete list is also available on our website, <http://www.saintaparish.com/>.

Safe Environment Curriculum is also taught at each grade level. Prior to each grade level session, a parent letter and permission slip will be sent home. Key training components are to include information about quality relationships, proper forms of touch, actions to take in uncomfortable situations, and reporting possible abuse. This program is not sex education.

SACRAMENTAL PREPERATION

In addition to regular YFF participation, children preparing for the reception of a sacrament will have a special period of preparation with their parents/guardians as well as their peers. This preparation needs to accompany regular faith formation, as it is important for children to be able to fully participate in the reception of the sacrament. These preparations are done along with students/parents in the Catholic school. Parents/Guardians are especially asked to take the lead role of assisting, instructing and witnessing to their children on the importance of receiving the sacrament.

Preparation for First Reconciliation & First Communion normally takes place in second grade.

- **First Reconciliation** preparation will be from September – December. This will consist of 1 parent/child meeting to kick off the preparation process and 1 parent/child retreat at the conclusion of the preparation.
- **First Communion** preparation will be from January – May. This will consist of 2 parent/child meetings and 1 parent/child retreat at the conclusion of the preparation.

Preparation for Confirmation normally begins in tenth grade.

- **Confirmation** preparation begins in October and runs throughout the year. Reception of the sacrament typically takes place in the Fall of the following year (11th grade). This will consist of 1 student retreat and 12 meetings, some of which will include participation by the students sponsor or parent/guardian.

In the case that a child did not receive Baptism as an infant or First Reconciliation/Communion in second grade, St. Athanasius will assist families in preparing that child to receive the sacrament(s). Please contact the DFF or the Pastor.

YOUTH GROUP

Youth Group (YG) is open to 9th – 12th grade and will take place after YFF classes (about 7:30 – 8:30pm) in the Parish Center. There is no fee to be part of the Youth Group. YG participates in different service projects and community building events throughout the year.

TUITION

The cost of YFF is \$100 per student. This fee covers Catechist payroll, textbooks and other instructional materials, supplies needed for classes (paper, scissors, markers, etc.), food and drink for special events and much more.

The current year's Catechist will be eligible to receive free tuition for each of their children.

The current year's Classroom Aides will be eligible to receive a 50% discount for each of their children.

Tuition Assistance - It is important that every child be offered the opportunity to grow in their faith and learn the Catholic teachings. In the case you need help paying the tuition for YFF classes, please contact the DFF or the Pastor.

SCRIP – This is great way to save money on tuition cost and help support St. Athanasius at the same time.

What is it? Essentially you are buying a prepaid gift card. There are gift cards to grocery stores, gas stations and restaurants. A complete list will be included in the appendix of this handbook. You can also stop at Farmer's State Bank (Jesup location only) or St. Athanasius School office (Parish Center office during summer break) to see a complete list and purchase the gift cards of your choosing.

How does it work? As soon as your purchase the SCRIP (gift card) a percentage automatically comes back to St. A's. Those percentage vary depending on what is set up with the vendor, it ranges from 3% return to as high as 13% return. Then from that return 50% goes to St. A's and 50% goes towards the student or church organization of your choosing (ex. YFF Tuition).

For Example, if you purchase \$100 of Kwik Star SCRIP (Kwik Star gives back 5%) \$2.50 goes to St. A's and \$2.50 goes towards your student's tuition. This may not seem like a lot, but this adds up throughout the year.

SCRIP purchased this year will be applied to next year's tuition.

SPECIAL NOTE

Every situation that might arise during the year cannot be covered in this handbook. Just because it is not mentioned does not mean it does not apply. In order to provide respect for one another and a Christian learning environment in which all can grow we all need to understand and be familiar with these guidelines.

CONTACT US

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