

St. Agnes  
Children's Faith Formation  
Program  
Family Handbook

St Agnes Catholic Community  
1025 Masonic Ave. San Francisco, CA 94117  
[www.saintagnessf.com](http://www.saintagnessf.com) (415)487-8560, Fax (415)487-8575



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# WELCOME

Dear Parents and Children,

The catechetical staff and I hope this handbook will provide you with valuable information about St. Agnes' Children's Faith Formation (CFF) Program. It is important that you read it and discuss it with your family. After you have done so, please sign and return the insert to Natalie at the Parish Office.

We ask you to keep this handbook in a convenient place and to refer to it as needed. We welcome any questions you have and look forward to serving you and your family.

Sincerely,

Natalie Terry  
Coordinator of Children's Faith Formation

## Office Information

Coordinator:	Natalie Terry
Call:	(415) 487-8560 ext. 225
Text:	(510) 838-1027
E-mail:	natalie@saintagnessf.com

# PHILOSOPHY

St. Agnes believes that catechetical ministry is a share in Jesus' own mission of proclaiming the Reign of God. Catechesis is that activity which enables faith to become living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction—especially sharing God's Word in Scripture and sharing the tradition of the Catholic Church. Catechesis is a life-long process for each individual as well as the work of the entire Catholic Christian community.

The Church teaches that the primary responsibility for the spiritual growth and development of the children rest first and foremost with the parents. Parents may share this responsibility with others, but they do not relinquish it.

The Church assists the parents in passing on their faith through the ministry of catechesis. Catechists echo the Catholic faith in a way that those catechized (children, youth, adults) can understand. Catechists must do more than merely teach about the faith. They help children/youth build and strengthen their relationship with Jesus and the Church. Catechists do this by proclaiming the Word, building a sense of community, leading to prayer and worship, encouraging loving service to others and through the example of their own lives.

Our catechists are all volunteers, from many walks of life. They are people who have answered a call to minister to our children/youth and who have prepared themselves in a variety of ways to serve as catechists. Above all, they are people for whom faith is important enough to share.

In conclusion, the catechetical process seeks to open children/youth to the discovery of the goodness and beauty of God as reflected in themselves and their world, and help them to experience this world within the Catholic Christian community. It seeks to help them grow further in their faith, hope and love; the understanding of and commitment to our catholic tradition, our personal relationship with Christ nurtured by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## GOALS

The goals of the Children's Faith Formation Program at St. Agnes are:

- To cultivate a personal relationship with God and an ongoing conversion to Jesus Christ, the Center of our Christian life
- Full participation in the life and mission of the Catholic Community

## PARENT'S ROLE

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Our staff is eager to work with parents/guardians to help them fulfill this responsibility and asks each parent's cooperation in the following ways:

- Celebrate Sunday Mass regularly with your children/youth. The schedule is as follows:
  - Saturday – 4:00pm
  - Sunday – 8:30am, 10:30am with Children's Liturgy of the Word, and 6:00pm
- Participate actively in the sacramental and community life of the parish.
- Share your faith and what it means to you with your children.
- Pray with your children and help them learn and memorize the traditional prayers of the Church such as, the Our Father and Hail Mary.
- Attend all parent meetings.
- Familiarize yourself with the scheduled catechetical sessions and events for your children/youth.
- Read and act promptly on all communication from the Children's Faith Formation Program.
- Assure your children's punctual and regular attendance at all sessions.
- Become a CFF teacher/volunteer!

## CHILD'S ROLE

Children also have a responsibility to cooperate in order to benefit from the catechetical sessions at St. Agnes. They are expected to:

- Be respectful of the catechist and other children.
- Listen carefully, follow directions, and participate in the session activities.
- Complete homework assigned, and share what they have learned and experienced with their families.
- Follow attendance, emergency and safety procedures.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

St. Agnes welcomes all children and youth, baptized or not, to participate in the Children's Faith Formation (CFF) Program.

GRADES 1-8: CFF sessions are held from mid-September through early May on Sunday mornings from 9:15 – 10:15am.

CFF for Children/Youth with Disabilities is provided in regular or specialized religious instruction, particularly with regard to preparation for the sacraments. Please contact the Coordinator regarding the specific needs of your child/youth.

## GRADE LEVEL THEMES

In order to provide a complete catechesis appropriate to children, St. Agnes uses the following Lectionary based catechetical series:

Grades 1-6: [Pflaum Gospel Weeklies](#)

Grade 1 – *Good News*

Grade 2 – *Good News*

Grade 3 – *Good News*

Grade 4 – *Venture*

Grade 5 – *Venture*

Grade 6 – *Venture*

Grades 7-8: [Called to be Catholic](#) and [Confirmed in the Spirit](#) - Loyola Press; *Have Faith* – 23<sup>rd</sup> Publications; [Sunday Prayer for Teens](#) – Liturgy Training Publications

A calendar of all program dates is given to parents at the Orientation Session at the beginning of the new Program.

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The first step in the sacramental preparation process for new families is a meeting with the Coordinator of the program. All parents are expected to assist in the sacramental participation of their children and to attend the parent meetings for this purpose.

**FIRST EUCHARIST (FIRST COMMUNION):** Preparation is a one-year process beginning in the second grade. *\*\* Parents of children preparing for the sacraments of First Eucharist and First Reconciliation join their children in the sessions beginning in January.\*\**

Sessions are also available for older children who would like to prepare for First Eucharist and First Reconciliation.

**FIRST RECONCILIATION:** Children are prepared to celebrate this sacrament before they receive their First Eucharist; Text used: ***Growing Up Catholic – Reconciliation & Eucharist***, © PastoralPlanning.com 2008. All rights reserved. Visit [www.GrowingUpCatholic.com](http://www.GrowingUpCatholic.com)

**CONFIRMATION:** Preparation is a two-year program for young teens. Text used: *Loyola Press – Called to be Catholic* and *Confirmed in the Spirit*.

**CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN** is a process for children above the age of 8 (for St. Agnes) who are not yet baptized in another Christian tradition. It requires full participation of the parents. Children who complete this process will receive the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

**INFANT/YOUNG CHILDREN'S BAPTISM:** Baptism upon completion of the Parent Baptism Preparation Program. Contact the Parish Office at 487-8560 for more information.

**CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORLD:** Is celebrated year-round during the 10:30am Mass for children already in school - Grades K-6. After the Opening Prayer children who are attending Mass are invited to come forward and join a catechist to read the scriptures of the day and talk about the readings in the Chapel of St. Agnes Church. The children will rejoin the community during the offertory collection, in time for the Eucharistic prayer and communion.

# REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

## A. REGISTRATION

All families currently registered are invited to register online and newcomers to the parish are asked to call the Rectory so that we can properly welcome your family into the community!

## B. FEES

These fees help us cover the expenses of books, materials, and refreshments for the year. Scholarships are available and financial need should not stop anyone from participating. Everyone is entitled to catechesis regardless of their ability to pay registration fees.

### Children's Faith Formation Classes

One Child	\$100.00
Two Children	\$150.00
Three Children	\$175.00
Four Children	\$200.00

## C. BAPTISMAL INFORMATION

A baptismal certificate is required for all children who are preparing to celebrate First Reconciliation / Eucharist and Confirmation or who are being registered for the first time.

## D. CHANGE OF ADDRESS/PHONE

Please notify the catechetical office of any change of address or telephone number (work or Home) immediately so that the catechetical staff will be able to contact you in the event of an emergency involving your child/youth.

## E. EMERGENCY CARDS

Each child/youth must have an emergency card on file in the office. Please see that the information listed on the card is kept accurate at all times.

## F. CONFIDENTIALITY

When you register in our Children's Faith Formation program, your family will be added to the catechetical database. The CFF Office will not release any information about you or your family to any individual or special interest group without your permission.

## F. ALLERGIES AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

Please notify your child's teacher in writing of any medical condition/allergies, or special learning needs that we should be aware of. If your child has special learning needs, please share with your child's teacher how your child best learns and how those needs can be met.

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Supervision is provided up to 10 minutes before and after the catechetical session. Children/youth should not arrive earlier than 10 minutes before their session.

At the end of the session, children should wait in their classrooms for their parents to pick them up. All children/youth should be picked up no later than 10 minutes after being dismissed.

### A. BY CAR

Children/youth should be accompanied to their classroom on the 3rd floor of the Mark Salkind Athletic & Academic Center at 1639 Oak Street. Parents must sign children in and out of CFF sessions.

### B. BY FOOT

Parents/guardians should establish a safe route to and from the parish with their children/youth. When children enter or leave parish grounds on foot, they must use the marked crosswalks.

Roller blades or skateboards are not permitted on parish grounds.

## **ATTENDANCE**

### **A. ABSENCES**

Promptness and attendance at every class is important for the sake of continued understanding and for the development of faith in our children. If it is necessary that your child/youth miss a session, please alert the CFF coordinator or catechist in advance. If your child cannot attend on a regular basis, please call and discuss the situation with the Coordinator.

### **B. VISITORS**

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit their child's catechetical session.

## **OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES**

Off-site activities such as service projects and retreats may occasionally be scheduled by the Coordinator. No child/youth may go on an off-site activity unless a completed permission form signed by a parent or guardian has been submitted to the Coordinator's office. Separate permission forms are required for each off-site activity unless it is a progressive learning session held at the same site.

## **COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES**

Parents/guardians and CFF staff work in partnership in helping children/youth grow in faith, therefore good communication is essential. If a parent/guardian wishes to talk to a catechist they may do so after the session or they may make an appointment with the catechist by calling the Coordinator's office. Parents/guardians may also email, call the Coordinator at (415) 487-8560 x 228, text at (510) 838-1027 or make an appointment to visit.

Catechists and/or the Coordinator will communicate with parents/guardians by email, phone, mail, or by sending notes home with the children/youth.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICIES**

One of the catechist's first concerns is to maintain an atmosphere in which the children/youth can form a community, share faith, and enjoy an optimum-learning environment.

As part of a Catholic Christian learning environment children and youth are expected to:

1. Behave respectfully and courteously toward all catechists, adults, and other children/youth. Inappropriate behavior includes disrespectful verbal and body language.
2. Participate positively and be attentive in the catechetical session.
3. Respect parish property and the property of others.
4. Follow the rules of the program and the class.

Parents/guardians will be called if their child/youth repeatedly disrupts the class session. The Coordinator of Children's Faith Formation, in consultation with the pastor, is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations.

## HARASSMENT/PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

St. Agnes Parish believes in the sanctity and integrity of all persons: that we are all created in God's image and are of inestimable value. Any form of harassment is completely contrary to this belief and St. Agnes is committed to providing an environment free of harassment. As mandated by the Archdiocese of San Francisco, teachers and any adults who work with children, volunteer or paid follow by the *Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures Regarding Child Abuse and Harassment, Guidelines with regards to Ministry with Minors*.

The following is a letter to the Parents and Educators, written by Most Rev. George Niederauer, former Archbishop of San Francisco:

*My Dear People,*

*In June of 2002, I joined with my brother bishops throughout the United States in signing the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. We reaffirmed our commitment in June of 2005. In this charter, we pledged to do everything possible to ensure that the children and youth in our parish and school communities will be safe from sexual predators. I again reaffirm my personal commitment to that pledge.*

*Beginning in the school year 2008/2009, I promulgated new programs for children and teens in our Catholic Schools and in our parish Religious Education programs:*

- *Talking About Touching K - 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade*
- *Shield the Vulnerable(online training)4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grades*
- *Shield the Vulnerable(online training)6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades*
- *Shield the Vulnerable(online training)9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades*

*We affirm parents as the first educators of their children. All of the above programs have opportunities for parent involvement. So, we encourage parents to take the online KID SAFETY training course with their children or at a separate time.*

*May God bless all of your role as parents, educators, and concerned adults of our children.*

*George Niederauer  
Archbishop of San Francisco*

## **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 emergency/natural disaster the Emergency Procedure Plan will be followed.

In the case of an emergency/natural disaster, catechists will remain with the children until either a parent or designated person picks the children up. A checkout system will be provided for parents/guardians to sign out their child.

### **A. MEDICAL EMERGENCY/ACCIDENT/SUDDEN SICKNESS**

In the case of accident or sudden sickness, the Coordinator or catechist will give appropriate care and notify the parents/guardians. No medication may be given by the Director of Children's Faith Formation or teachers without written parental consent.

### **B. CHILD ABUSE**

As required by state law, evidence of apparent non-accidental injury, suspected neglect, or child abuse will be reported to the proper authorities.

### **C. CHILD PROTECTION**

St. Agnes Parish is committed to the protection and safety of all children entrusted to its care. During all scheduled parish activities/programs, at least two adults are required to be present. As mandated by the Archdiocese of San Francisco, teachers and any adults who work with children, volunteer or paid, are required to be background checked and follow the Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures Regarding Child Abuse and Harassment and participate in a the Child Protection Workshop, Shield the Vulnerable.

### **D. DANGEROUS MATERIALS**

The Coordinator or designated persons have the right and duty to protect the health and welfare of the participants of the catechetical program. This includes the right to inspect property of any individual suspected of possessing alcohol, drugs, weapons or other illegal materials. If alcohol, illegal drugs, weapons or other dangerous materials are found, parents/guardians, the pastor and public safety officials will be notified as appropriate.

### **E. GANGS**

The parish catechetical program is a gang-free environment. No evidence of gangs or gang-related activities will be tolerated. Persons participating in any gang or gang-related activities while on parish property or in conjunction with program-related activities will be subject in immediate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

## **RIGHT TO AMEND**

The Coordinator of Children's Faith Formation and the Pastor of St. Agnes have the right to amend this handbook for just cause. Parents will be given prompt notification if changes are made.

This family handbook has been approved by

Rev. Raymond Allender, S.J.  
Pastor of St. Agnes Church

Natalie Terry  
Children's Faith Formation Coordinator

Date : September 15, 2017