**Faith Formation Parent Handbook**

**2016-2017**

**St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish**

1230 Merle Hay Road, Des Moines, IA 50311-2098

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Parish Web Site: www.sainttheresaiowa.org

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**Parish Staff**

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Coordinator of Children’s Faith Formation

Children’s Faith Formation Website: <http://sainttheresafaithformation.weebly.com/>

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Director of Youth Ministry Mobile (515) 720-4060   
Youth Ministry Website: <http://sttheresayouthministry.weebly.com/index.html>  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/StTheresaYouthGroupDSM>

**Faith Formation Offices are located in the Parish Office Building.**

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**St. Theresa Lifelong Faith Formation**

**Vision Statement**

***Faith Formation at St. Theresa Parish is an ongoing collaborative ministry. It encompasses all aspects of parish life so that each baptized person will more fully understand his or her faith and live it out at all times and in all places. Faith Formation will be nurtured in our parish by providing a variety of opportunities through prayer, liturgy, service, and catechetical processes*.**

**The Foundations of Faith Formation**

Faith Formation applies the Six Essential Tasks of Catechesis:



* Knowledge of the Faith
* Liturgical Life
* Moral Formation
* Prayer
* Community
* Missionary Spirit

We also incorporate the four pillars of stewardship, which richly complement the tasks of catechesis:

* Formation
* Prayer
* Hospitality
* Service

**Faith Formation is a lifelong process** that promotes an environment of Christian values and spiritual growth needed for establishing and maintaining a strong relationship with Jesus.

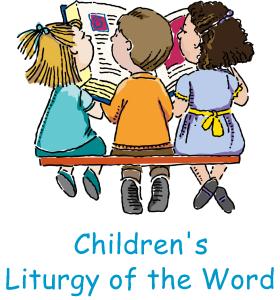


**Family Involvement**

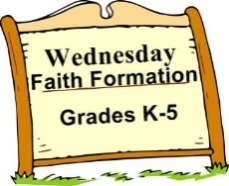
At the time of each child’s Baptism, parents accept the responsibility and duty of training their child in the knowledge and practice of the faith. At St. Theresa we recognize parents are the primary educators of their children, sharing their experiences, values, stories, customs and faith. We believe that the holiness a child is exposed to and experiences begins in the home long before the child comes to the parish for faith formation. Faith Formation processes assist and support parents and families in this remarkable task. As partners, we assist in promoting a durable and solid relationship with God, living life as God calls each one to live.

**Catechetical programs for Pre-K – high school**

 **Sunday School** for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten (ages 4-6). Sunday School meets most Sundays from September through April, during 8:30 am Mass. Children must be four years old by September of the current school year to be registered for this program.



**Children’s Liturgy of the Word** meets during 10:30 am Sunday Mass. Children in grades Pre-K through 3rd (ages 4-9) grade are dismissed from the assembly during Liturgy of the Word to participate in the Liturgy at their level. No registration required.

 **Wednesday Faith Formation (WFF)** for Kindergarten through 5th Grade. Meets Wednesday evenings from September to May 6:30-7:30pm at St. Theresa’s Parish School.

 **First Reconciliation & First Holy Communion** sacramental preparation is offered to children entering 2nd Grade or older. For schedule see page 7.

**Confirmation Preparation** begins in 9th grade. On-going faith formation is expected during elementary and middle school years. Contact the youth minister if catch up is needed.

**Edge for 6th-8th grade usually** meets 1st, 2nd and 3rd Wednesday evenings, September to May, 6:30-7:30 pm, in the parish school.  **Edge** is offered to all parish middle schoolers. Edge includes catechetical sessions, service, and social events.  It provides parish-based, age appropriate activities and events that reinforce Catholic identity fostered in the home, at St. Theresa School or in the home-school setting. This is led by a team of core team members. An alternating schedule of large group one week and small group the next is used. All middle school students study the same topic. The typical format consists of opening prayer, icebreaker or game, scripture, activity, discussion and closing prayer..

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**Life Teen** for high school meets on the 1st/2nd/3rd Wednesday evenings in the parish hall, September to May, 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Life Teen uses three avenues for learning and faith-sharing: teaching, social and topic/issue sessions.  The typical format consists of opening prayer, icebreaker or game, scripture, activity, discussion, and closing prayer. For more information, visit the Youth Ministry Website <http://sttheresayouthministry.weebly.com/index.html> .

**Vacation Bible School**

A summer program for students entering grades K-5th.

Further information available in the spring.

**Catechetical Registration and Tuition**

Faith Formation Registration forms must be completed for each child before they may participate in Faith Formation sessions. Please contact our office for more information.

Tuition Rates:

Registration Fee $15.00 per family Wednesday Faith Formation Tuition Grades K-5

Sunday School $20.00 per child One child $ 60.00

Edge & Life Teen $30.00 per participant Two children $100.00

Three or more children $130.00

No family is charged more than $145 ($130 tuition + $15 registration fee). No family or child will be turned away for financial reasons. There is no charge for Children’s Liturgy of the Word. Families of catechists are charged only the registration fee of $15.00 (tuition fees are waived).

**Wednesday Evening Attendance Policy**

Consistent attendance is essential for children to gain the maximum benefit from participation in faith formation sessions. We ask that parents notify the Faith Formation office if their child(ren) will be absent from class before 5:00 pm on Wednesdays using e-mail or phone. Do NOT leave a message on the school phone.

**For the safety of the children, students are not to be on the parish grounds before 6:20 pm on Wednesdays, unless they are under the supervision of a parent. All students must be picked up immediately upon dismissal at 7:30**. The doors on the lower south side of the school are opened at 6:20-6:40 and again from 7:20-7:40 pm. \*Note: Children are to remain with the hall monitor until their catechist arrives.

**Cancellations & Emergency Closings**

**We will follow the St. Theresa school calendar for academic breaks and school closures due to weather.** Parents will be notified of cancellation by e-mail or text. The closings will be announced on WHO Channel 13 and KCCI Channel 8. The Parish Website and/or Family Faith Formation/Youth Ministry website will also be used to make cancellation announcements when possible.

**Catechists**

Catechists from the parish community are encouraged and trained to offer some of the richness of our Catholic Tradition in the faith formation setting.

Confirmed high school students may serve as catechists at the discretion of the director

Catechists have the right to expect adequate training and support for the ministry to which they are called. Catechists are required to complete on-line Virtus training, with a focus on providing a safe environment for children. Catechists are also encouraged to participate in faith formation opportunities, in-service meetings, and other offerings that enhance their own spiritual lives and catechetical skills.

St. Theresa Parish recognizes the family as the domestic church. **Parents/guardians are the principle educators of their children.**  Catechists assist families in reinforcing the teachings of the Church and help the family to grow in spirituality.

**Discipline**

In order to foster a Christian atmosphere of hospitality, caring and courtesy and to promote maximum learning in the classrooms, the following guidelines are in force.

* It shall be the policy that students attending Faith Formation Programs are expected to treat themselves, others and all property with respect and to demonstrate Christian-like conduct at all times.
* Catechists are trained and encouraged to deal with discipline problems in the classroom. When discipline problems arise it is the practice of the program to approach the situation with an attitude of Christian reconciliation.
* Should a discipline problem persist, the catechist has the right to request that a student be excluded from the classroom. In this instance, parents will be contacted.

**Dress Code**

Modest dress should be the guide for all attire.

** Cell Phones, iPods, MP-3 players, etc.**

All personal electronic devices must be out of sight and not in use once students enter the building for catechesis. Devices that are out will be safely held by the catechist, hall monitor or director until the session is over.

**Curriculum**

Faith Formation is built around the vision and philosophy described on page 3

Sunday School uses *the Allelu! Program.*

Children’s Liturgy of the Word uses “*Children Celebrate*” from Pflaum

WFF uses *“Call to Faith”* from Harcourt Religious Publishers

Edge and Life Teen use curricula provided by Life Teen

**Sacramental Preparation**

Sacraments provide times of joy and celebration for individual families and the entire parish community.

  Normative ages for reception of the sacraments are seven (second grade) for both First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. The normative grade for Confirmation is 10th grade.

  Consistent attendance in a faith formation programs or Catholic School for the years prior to and the year of a sacrament is a prerequisite for celebrating First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. Students not participating in a faith formation program after celebrating First Eucharist will need supplementary formation sessions prior to beginning Confirmation preparation.

  NOTE: Parents of children preparing to receive sacraments are to attend sacramental preparation meetings to learn what their children will be studying and to receive support in their roles as parents in the process. **Please contact the Coordinator of Children’s Faith Formation (Reconciliation and Eucharist) or Youth Minister (Confirmation) if you are unable to attend the scheduled meetings.**

**\*\*Students who were not baptized at St. Theresa Parish, need to provide a copy of their baptismal certificate prior to the reception of other sacraments.**

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**First Reconciliation**

**Parent Meeting**: Wed., Sept. 21, 2016, East Meeting Room, 6:45-7:30 pm

**Child/Parent Learning Centers**: Wed., Nov. 2nd, Parish Hall 3:30-7:30pm

**Celebrations of First Reconciliation**: Tues., Nov. 15th or Wed., Nov. 16, 2016, @ 6:30pm, reception in parish hall to follow.



**First Communion**

**Parent Meeting**: Wed. Feb. 22ndh, 2017, East Meeting Room, 6:45-7:30 pm

**Child/Parent Learning Centers**: Wed. April 19th, 2017, Parish Hall 3:30-7:30 pm

**Celebration of First Communion** 5/6: 4:30pm Mass; 5/7: 8:30am & 10:30am Mass

**Confirmation:**

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| **C1 Candidate & Parent Meeting**  Sun. Aug.21  12:00pm-1:30pm  Parish Hall | **C1 Candidate & Parent Meeting**  Sun. Aug.28  12:00pm-1:30pm  Parish Hall | **C1 Interviews**  Sat. Sept. 10  9:00am-12:00pm  Parish Office | **C1 Interviews**  Sun. Sept 11  12:00pm-2:00pm  Parish Office | **Rite of Enrollment**  Sat-Sun November 12-13. During all weekend Masses |
| **C1 Candidate & Sponsor Meeting**  Sun. Nov. 13  1:00pm-2:30pm  Parish Hall | **C1/C2 Confirmation Retreat**  Sat. Feb. 4  10:00am-5:30pm  Meet in Parish Hall | **C2 Interviews**  Sat. Feb. 11  9:00am-12:00pm  Parish Office | **C2 Interviews**  Sun. Feb 12  11:300 am-2:00pm  Parish Office | **Sacrament of Confirmation**  TBA –Mid April 2017 |