

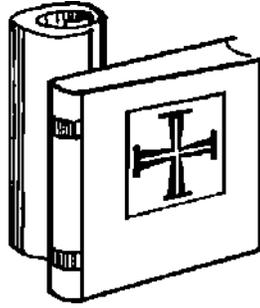
St. Elizabeth of Hungary



FAITH FORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome! Registration in our program confirms your commitment, as a family, to your child's religious education. God gives parents the responsibility of forming their children in faith at Baptism and you have taken an important step in acknowledging that responsibility. Faith formation is a process - one that neither starts nor ends in the classroom, but depends on the strength of YOUR faith and example at home. As a program, we are privileged to aid this process and our families in any way we can while recognizing parents as the first and most important teachers of their children. Your children can be raised in faith without the classroom experience, but the classroom cannot nurture a faith that does not exist at home. It is, indeed, an awesome responsibility, but God will provide the strength and guidance we need to succeed. Please let us know how we may assist you at any stage of your faith journey as a family.

This handbook has been designed to provide your family with important and vital information regarding policies and procedures. Please read it carefully and keep it available for reference. You will be given replacement pages if/when any changes are made in addition to a yearly program calendar.

PHILOSOPHY & MISSION

As all programs at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, our Religious Education program is intended to be Christ-centered, first and foremost, helping to bring each child to a better understanding of their relationship with God and His mission for all of us. We encourage each family to foster an understanding and appreciation of the rich sacramental life of the Church by participating fully in liturgical services. We believe that children learn about God's love through the example of family and by attending mass regularly to hear the Gospel proclaimed and to receive Jesus into their hearts.

Recognizing the family as the first and most important faith example and teacher of their children, we are committed to providing real and consistent support for all families in the faith formation of their children. The classroom experience is meant to enhance, not to replace the practice of our faith; therefore our classrooms will seek to instill an, age appropriate, understanding of liturgy and traditional prayer experiences. Through the study of Church teachings and history, we aim to help each child not only to grow in faith, but to recognize the Body of Christ in their everyday world.

WEEKLY MASS

All students in the Religious Education Program at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish are expected to participate in the Sunday Mass. Religious Education Classes cannot and do not substitute for the Sunday Liturgy. The commitment to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation is especially important in the years in which a child is preparing to receive a sacrament.

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REGISTRATION

It is expected that all students who are presented for on-going catechesis or sacramental preparation (Reconciliation, Eucharist and/or Confirmation) have been continuously enrolled in a recognized, formal program of catechesis. That program may be a parish, private or regional Catholic school, a religious education program or combination of both. Any student presented for registration without sufficient documented catechetical history, shall be evaluated and placed accordingly.

No registrations will be taken during scheduled class time. Only a parent or legal guardian may register their child. A registration form is required for each family as well as a valid baptismal certificate. If transferring from another program, please ask that records be forwarded. Unregistered students are not permitted in class.

Students previously registered and in attendance last year, need to re-register every year. Re-registration forms are mailed to each family during the summer months. Emergency contacts should always be aware that they have been so-designated and be available during class time. Parents of students previously registered, but not in attendance last year are asked to register as a new student.

Full disclosure of all medical and special education needs is encouraged to help us serve your child to the best of our ability. Some medical conditions or educational needs may necessitate arrangements for religious education outside of the classroom. Please make the program director aware of any custodial situations that may negatively impact your child/children while arriving at or departing from class.

Confidentiality: All information is kept in strictest confidence and not disseminated without parental permission. No information on any child will be released to anyone except the person who signed the registration form.

Student Records: If it becomes necessary to withdraw your child/children from the program, please notify the program administrator in writing, stating the reason for withdrawal. Only the registering parent/legal guardian may request transfer/transcript information. When transferring to another church program, student records will be sent directly to the new parish, if requested.

Faith practice: It is expected that each family that registers their child/children in our religious education program will be practicing members of the Catholic Church who faithfully attend Mass and recognize the need to contribute to the support of their parish community through regular use of their envelopes.

Out-of-parish registration will be accepted as space and resources permit. We recognize that there are many reasons why a family might choose another parish community for the religious education of their child/children without changing parish registration. While we respect their right to choose in the best interest of their family, we do not negate the duty of the parish pastor to oversee and assure sacramental preparation. Before acceptance into this program we will require a letter from your Pastor. If accepted your Pastor will be notified of their enrollment.

Orientation shall be provided for all newly registered families in the form of a group meeting. You will be notified of the meeting specifics time by bulletin/mail.

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CURRICULUM

All curriculum and textbooks are in compliance with Diocesan approved guides. No catechetical material without an imprimatur will be used as instructional material within the class. Qualified and faith-filled catechists who are certified or are working on certification according to diocesan guidelines will teach all students, in a parish religious education program.

The Family Life Program

In addition to the basic course of study each year the Family Life Program is presented throughout grades one through eight. This program is a requirement and recommended by the Diocese of Trenton. This series presents skills and virtues for Catholic family living. Each grade has five themes that include family, self, life, love and community.

Textbooks are meant to be resources for our families as well as tools for the classroom. Please encourage your child/children to discuss their classroom experience with you. Use the opportunity as a tool to help shape the faith of your child/children. They will value that which you show them, by your example, has value.

All books are expected to be usable throughout the entire year. Please provide your child/children with a plastic (or other) folder for book storage and transport. Please check this folder weekly for any program communications. Try to find a regular “home” for your child/children’s folder so that they always know where to look for it. (If that regular home is in your car trunk - or the like, there is little chance that the book will be used as intended.) Attendance at class without the proper materials leaves a student at a disadvantage.

Book replacements will be made only after a replacement fee of \$20.00 has been paid.

Prayer is a regular feature within the classroom experience and must be practiced within the family also. Recognizing parents as the primary teachers of their child/children, we feel that the responsibility for prayer memorization lies with the family. All levels will be evaluated yearly for prayer knowledge. Any student who has not mastered their prayers* at the end of the year, will be placed “conditionally” in the next level until re-evaluated in the fall. Please use the following guide to evaluate your child’s progress:

The Sign of the Cross is our most basic prayer. As such, all children entering the program should already know how to pray it reverently.

First Grade will be responsible for: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be to the Father, Grace before and after meals and Morning and Evening prayer.

Grades 2 – 6 will be responsible for: Act of Contrition, Form for Confession, Rosary, Stations of the Cross and all the above.

Grades 7 & 8 will be responsible for: Apostle’s Creed and all the above.

* May not apply in some special needs cases.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated within the program (3rd – 8th grades) during Advent and Lent. All participants are expected to be prepared. First Reconciliation (2nd grade) will be celebrated separately.

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PROGRESSION IN PROGRAM

Progression in the program is not automatic and is dependent upon both regular attendance and participation. Neither is it based on corresponding school grade levels. Program grade level placement is determined by the family's own journey of faith to date. We assume religious education to be continuous. We strive to work with families to achieve the most valuable classroom experience for all involved.

Attendance is extremely important in this program. We have only 27 classes with your child/children to cover a great deal of material. We do not want your child/children to fall behind due to absences. For that reason, we will accept up to **5 absences** for the school year. Once a student reaches 5 absences, a notice will go home to parents to inform them of their child's excessive absenteeism and instructions on how to avoid an incomplete status for the year. When your child/children reaches the 6th absence you will have the option to go on **Home Study** (see Home Study for info.).

Evaluation Criteria. A multi-measures approach will be used to assess any student whose catechetical background is in question. This may include, but not be limited to any combination of the following:

- A review of class attendance, assignments/workbooks and/or projects
- Consultation with class catechist
- Interview with student
- Consultation with parents
- Consultation with Religious Education Director
- Consultation with Pastor

In all cases of dispute, the Pastor's decision shall be final.

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TUITION AND PROGRAM FEES

While each parish community supports all programs to some extent, it is necessary for the families immediately affected to assume the majority of the financial support of the program. Our teachers volunteer their time to share their faith with our children, but the program does incur other expenses: rental of the Avon Public School, text books, supplemental materials and supplies for classes and liturgies, catechist training and support, etc. We will work with our families as needed to determine how best to meet this goal, however, inability to pay, alone, will not exclude any family from the program. Please let us know how we may be of service to your family.

Registration/re-registration forms along with your payment (made payable to: St. Elizabeth of Hungary) can be dropped in the Sunday collection basket and/or rectory. Please mark your envelope Faith Formation (CCD).

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Reconciliation and **First Communion** are generally celebrated in second grade. Candidates must have had one year's prior formal preparation.

Sacrament Preparation Programs does incur additional support fees. If your child is eligible, you will receive information specific to the sacrament being sought.

Confirmation is celebrated in the eighth grade, with a minimum of one year prior formal preparation (not including Confirmation year).

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DISCIPLINE

All students are expected to behave and respond according to basic Christian values, recognizing the face of God in all present. The program does not exist as a disciplinarian. Any and all discipline problems will be referred to the family as soon as they manifest and will be expected to be resolved within the family.

If a child's behavior infringes on the rights and safety of other, the director will determine whether or not that child may remain in the program.

Family covenants are requested of all families registered in the program as a sign of their commitment to the philosophy and mission of the program. Please take time to read it and explain it in age appropriate language to your child/children. Please sign and return the pledge sheet as instructed.

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DRESS CODE

Classes – All students are expected to adhere to standards of good grooming, neat and conservative clothing styles while in attendance at class and all program functions.

Absolutely no cell phones, sunglasses, hats or bandanas are to be worn in class at any time.

Any student inappropriately dressed for class may be sent home and counted as absent for the session.

If your child is in a **sport program** and will be attending the program after Faith Formation (CCD) class the student may come dressed in his/her uniform.

Communion – Attire:

Boys: navy suits (NO white suits), white dress shirt & dark or white tie, dress shoes, dark socks

Girls: white dresses (no floor length ball gowns or dresses above the knee) veils, white dress shoes & white anklets, knee socks or tights (no stockings).

The children will not carry or wear: flowers, gloves, armbands, bibles, rosaries etc. in the procession, nor should they be in their seats. Please keep all such articles with you so that they are not lost. Father will be available after the mass to bless any articles and for photos.

Confirmation - Attire:

- Boys:** Khaki slacks, white dress shirt and dress shoes (red tie supplied)
- Girls:** Dresses and dress shoes (white collar - attach to robe)
- Gowns:** Will be given out to the children during rehearsal.

NO: Jeans, short-shorts etc. Remember you can see through these gowns.

Children will not carry or wear: flowers, gloves etc.

Photographers

We will have a photographer for First Communion and Confirmation, the children will take a group picture and you may choose additional pictures from Expressive Image Photography of Wall. The packet will be sent home with your child a week or two before, so that you may choose what individual photo's you would like. **NO** other photographers will be allowed in the Church during the services. Family members may take pictures from their seats during the services.

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SECURITY & SAFETY

No unauthorized visitors are allowed in the classroom at any time during class. No unregistered student may attend class.

Gather & dismissal

Students will gather at Avon Elementary School. This is not the appropriate time to attempt any communication with teachers. All of our time is precious and teachers have preparation to attend to before class and families to attend to after class. Administration will be happy to help you and/or to coordinate a conference time that will be convenient for all concerned. Students are asked to **arrive promptly but not more than 15 minutes early** in order to allow our volunteers adequate preparation time. Class begins at 8:45AM.

All students should know who is picking them up and where to meet them. Any student without a ride will be brought to the 10:00AM Mass. The authorized adult must then come to Mass for pick up. No student will be left unattended, inside or outside of the building, at any time.

Walkers

Parents must supply a note advising us if a student will be walking home and detail whether this is to be a regular or one-time event.

Parking

All drivers are asked to use extreme caution when dropping off and picking up children, keeping in mind the following:

- There is no exception to Borough parking regulations and signs before, during or after class times. All violations will be subject to borough fines.
- Do not allow your child to cross the street unescorted by an adult. Always make sure that your children know who is picking them up and where to look for them.

Fire drills and Emergency Procedures

Fire drills will be conducted during the year. All program staff will be familiar with emergency protocol and will lead students to designated safe zones until the all-clear is sounded.

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EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

There will be a message on the phone system should a need for an emergency closing due to inclement weather call 732-774-4089 ext. 201 or check the web page www.stelizabethavon.com. It's located on the Home Page bottom right.

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MISCELLANEOUS

No Food Policy

Parents – please do not send your children to class hungry. Neither children nor parents are permitted to bring food or drink of any kind into the school at any time. This includes candy and gum.

Lost and Found

In order to have misplaced or lost items returned, please label all items that are brought into class including all clothing and especially books. A “lost and found” will be maintained in the rectory office. All unclaimed items will be donated to a thrift shop.

Materials to be distributed

No unauthorized materials may be distributed to students. All disseminated material must be pre-approved by the program director.

Policy conflict

Where any program policy and/or procedures may conflict with Diocesan policy and/or procedure, Diocesan policy shall be considered first.

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HOME STUDY GUIDELINES

Families may choose to teach their children at home in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 if necessary. This can be accomplished by calling the rectory before classes begin. By accepting the Home Study you accept the following responsibilities:

- You must set aside time each week to complete your chapters and activity book. This will ensure that you will not fall behind.
- In the beginning of January your child will take his/her midterm. During the 2nd semester the beginning of May your child will take his/her final. The test will be mailed/emailed to each student and must be returned to the rectory the following week.
- ALL STUDENTS must take a midterm and final and complete their activity books in order to advance to the next grade level. No excuses will be accepted, if you lose or misplace your activity book you will have to complete another in order to finish the program.

- Give your child any assistance they need. If your child has a problem with **one** of the activities in his/her activity book just tell them to skip over it and mark it **DID NOT UNDERSTAND** so that I am aware they had a problem.
- At the end of the Faith Formation year the activity book must be up to date. **IT MUST BE TURNED IN TO THE RECTORY IN ORDER TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT GRADE LEVEL NO EXCUSES WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

If your child/children are involved in sports and will be absent the first couple of week. Then you would start your child/children in the Home Study Program, and when the sports are over bring your activity workbook to the rectory and we will remove you from the Home Study Program and then return back to the Classroom. This way your child/children would not have be marked absent or fallen behind. If you would like additional information on the Home Study Program, please call the rectory at 732-774-4089 x 205.

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TEACHERS AND CLASSROOM AIDES

We are very blessed to have the involvement of so many dedicated parishioners who volunteer to be teachers (catechists) and classroom aides. Their service to our program is deeply appreciated, and we encourage parents to meet their child's catechist at the start of the school year.

Our catechists are carefully screened and trained in an attempt to ensure the safety and best learning experience for our students. Theses measures include:

- All catechists and aides complete an application prior to being accepted as teachers in our program. They are required to be active parishioners and are required to provide both personal and professional references.
- All volunteers who participate in any children's ministry in the Church are required to be fingerprinted and have a federal background check done. These child protective measures are monitored by the Office of Child Protection at the Trenton Diocesan Center.
- All volunteers involved in children's ministry are required to attend a 3 hour VIRTUS awareness training session which deals with the steps we can all take to prevent sexual abuse of children. Compliance of this requirement is carefully monitored on both a parish and diocesan level.
- Our catechists and aides are offered catechist certification. This involves up to 52 hours of training and educational opportunities that cover a range of liturgical topics. Certificates are awarded upon completion of each level of certification.

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CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Altar Servers (Grades 3 – 12)

The role of the Altar Server is to assist the Priest in the celebration of the liturgy during Mass. Some of the Altar Server responsibilities include:

- Caring for the altar candles
- Bearing the cross and candles in the entrance procession
- Assisting with holy water, water, wine and offertory gifts at Mass

This ministry is open to boys and girls in grades 3 through 12. Training sessions are held regularly. Young people may join at any time during the year.

If you are interested in becoming an Altar Server, please contact: Father Dean, Deacon Bob or Mr. Paul Bergin the Music Director.

Readers of the Word (Grades 7 – 12)

The ministry of the reader is vital to the life of our parish because it is through the reader that the Word of God is proclaimed (i.e., “*comes alive*”). A love for the Scriptures and their meaning in the life of the parish is central to this role. If interested speak with your teacher, Father Dan or Deacon Bob.

Youth Choir (Must be able to read – Grades 3 – 12)

If you would like information of this ministry please contact our Music Director Paul Bergin at 609-789-8004 or stop him after Mass.

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VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Without volunteers our program would not be able to run. Please consider being a parent volunteer in the Religious Education Program or in Church ministry.

- **Adult Classroom Aides:** Volunteers are needed to assist in the classroom every week and possibly substitute for the teacher when needed.
- **Substitute Teachers:** When a teacher is absent, the substitutes will serve on a rotating basis to cover the class. The more volunteers we have, the fewer times you will be scheduled. WE NEED YOU!
- **Teen Aides:** Volunteers who are in High School are needed to help out in the classroom every week.

VIRTUS Training and fingerprinting are mandated by the Diocese for all volunteers. For more information call the rectory at 732-774-4089 x 205.

FAMILY COVENANT

In order to form a cooperative union, dedicated to the formation of strong religious values, we are requesting that each family in our program enter into the following covenant acknowledging the important role that we all play in the religious education and formation of our children. The three parties of this covenant are identified as parents, students and program (acknowledged as the administration and staff of our Parish Religious Education Program). After reading thoroughly, please sign and return to class with your child/children.

The program acknowledges parents as the primary teachers of their children and agrees to support and nourish the family to the best of our ability. We will function in ways that encourage and respect the right of all students to learn more about their Church, faith and their personal relationship with God.

As **Parents** we understand that:

- faith is “caught, not taught” and that children will learn from our example (positive or negative)
- we are expected to model our faith by attending mass regularly, thereby actively supporting the religious education of our children
- regular attendance in class is imperative to the success and yearly progression of our child/children in the program and that religious education is expected to be consecutive from 1st to 8th grade
- the program does not exist as a disciplinarian and that any and all discipline problems will be referred to us as soon as they manifest and will be expected to be resolved within
- we are expected to support the efforts of our child’s teacher and the program
- books are intended for family use as well as classroom use
- our child must acknowledge and live up to the responsibilities outlined in this covenant

As a **Student** of our Parish Religious Education Program I understand that:

- I come to class to learn more about God and my relationship with Him
- God gave me a free will to enable me to make my own choices and that I will be held accountable for the choices I make
- my freedom of choice does not give me the right to infringe on another student’s rights/choices to learn about God
- if I fail to control myself I may be excluded from certain activities and/or from the class/program
- I am responsible for bringing my book(s) to class and maintaining it/them in good condition
- all home assignments given by my teacher are expected to be completed in a timely fashion
- the more I learn about God, the closer I may come to Him and that the best way I can do that is to attend Mass and religion classes regularly