



ST. CHARLES BORROMEO

**ST. CHARLES BORROMEO
YOUTH FAITH FORMATION
HANDBOOK**

Revised: February 2023

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PHILOSOPHY

At St. Charles Borromeo, our programs for ongoing faith formation and religious education have been designed to assist and support parents rather than to exclude them or usurp their privilege of being the principal educators of the faith for their children. Our programs are built upon the regular practice of the faith by the family. The very necessary minimum for prayer and moral effort for all the faithful is defined as the Precepts of the Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2041-2043):

1. Attend Mass on Sundays & Holy Days of Obligation and rest from servile labor,
 2. Confess one's sins in Confession at least once a year,
 3. Receive the Eucharist at least once a year during Eastertime,
 4. Observe the days of fasting and abstinence as defined by the Church, and
 5. Help to provide for the needs of the Church through stewardship.
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Family Faith Formation for Children in Grades 1-6

Our Family Faith Formation program is designed principally for children in grades 1-6. Children, accompanied by at least one parent, will meet once a month throughout the school year. Rather than dividing children by age or grade level, families will be arranged together into small groups. They will be led through a curriculum that is geared to such a multi-generational audience.

Youth Group for teens in Grades 7-12

Our Youth Group program is designed principally for teens in grades 7-12. Teens in grades 9-12 are invited to attend weekly. Young people in grades 7-8 will be invited to attend twice a month. (It is preferred that youth in grades 7-8 attend Youth Group; however, based on individual circumstances, they may instead participate in Family Faith Formation with parents and younger children.)

Sacramental Preparation Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation

At St. Charles Borromeo, we assist and support parents, who are the first educators of the faith for their children. Our program of preparation for receiving the Sacraments runs alongside our ongoing faith formation of children and teens. Parents may enroll their children in the parish's preparation programs for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Confirmation, and Baptism of Non-Infant Children at the appropriate ages and when they are ready according to the norms enunciated for each Sacrament. See Sacrament Guidelines Manual on page 7 for further information.

Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Children ages 4 and up can expect a week full of faith discoveries, memorable music, and new friends. They'll praise God with a Bible point each day and learn to watch for everyday clues that God is present in their lives - skills that will last way beyond our week together.

STUDENTS

REGISTRATION

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION: Registration takes place each March for the following fall. Every child must be registered each year. Early registration pricing ends May 1. Late registration fee for returning families will begin July 1. Fees will not be refundable after August 1. New children may be registered at any time throughout the year. Tuition assistance is available upon request. Please notify the office for a Tuition Assistance Request form.

YOUTH GROUP: Registration takes place each March for the following fall. Every child must be registered each year. Tuition assistance is available upon request. Please notify the office for a Tuition Assistance Request form.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION: Registrations for Sacrament preparation in the fall session are due by August 1. Registrations for Sacrament preparation in the spring session are due by December 1. Sacrament preparation fees will be collected at the first class.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: Registration opens in March. Children must be age 4 as of June 1 to participate. Fees will be collected at the time of registration.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, or scholarship programs. In addition, these same prohibitions apply to students with disabilities if, with reasonable accommodation, the student can satisfy the parish's program requirements.

MEDICATION/HEALTH PROCEDURES

Emergency information obtained from the registration forms is on file in the Family Faith Formation Office. The information must be kept current at all times. If there is a change in your child's health information (allergies, medications, etc.) or contact information, please inform the Family Faith Formation Office.

Any medication a child would need should be dispensed before or after the parish activity at home. St. Charles Borromeo personnel will not dispense medication. Exceptions to the policy must be authorized by the Director of Family Faith Formation.

Please note – we do not have a nurse on site. If your child has an asthma/allergic reaction during a parish event, this protocol will be followed:

- 911 will be called
- Epipen or inhaler will be administered
- Parent/Guardian will be contacted

If your child has been prescribed an Epipen or inhaler, please make sure we have one in our office during parish events. Please ensure your child's Epipen or inhaler has their name on it and bring it to the Director. Epipen or inhaler will be returned upon completion of the event.

ACCIDENTS/INJURIES

Reporting of Accidents and Injuries - The parish will promptly record in writing and report any known student accidents or injuries to the affected student's parents. Reporting does not constitute an acceptance of liability.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

As required by the Archdiocese of Omaha, and directed by the U.S. Catholic Council of Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, all clergy, lay ministers, paid staff, and volunteers over 19 years of age who have access to children must complete Safe Environment training and a background check prior to working with children.

HUMAN SEXUALITY

St. Charles Borromeo parish adheres to The Archdiocese of Omaha Gender Policy for Schools. See attached policy on page 15.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is essential to obtain the maximum benefits of the educational programs. Attendance will be tracked in part to determine readiness for Sacramental Preparation. Refer to the Sacrament Guidelines Manual on page 7 for more information.

If it is necessary for a young person to leave early and a parent/guardian is not present, written permission from the parent/guardian must be obtained. Written permission must also be obtained for the youth to leave the function with someone other than a parent/guardian. Once a youth has left an event, he/she will not be allowed to return.

DOORS/SECURITY

Doors will unlock 30 minutes prior to class time. Doors will be locked during class time. Families may gain access by using the Youth Code which will be given to registered families at the beginning of each school year.

CANCELLATIONS

If weather or another unforeseen circumstance becomes such that classes or activities should be canceled, families will receive a text message via Flocknote notifying them of the cancellation.

CODE OF CONDUCT

SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

Children and adults involved in our Family Faith Formation, Youth Group, and Vacation Bible School programs are expected to maintain high standards of behavior. Conduct unbecoming of a Catholic will not be tolerated. In the case of repeated failure to adhere to parish standards, children and or adults may be asked to leave. Re-admission will not take place until the Director

and the Pastor have met with the family and are satisfied that the behavior problem is under control.

BULLYING/HARASSMENT

Bullying disrupts our ability to form the faith of our children, threatens public safety by creating an atmosphere in which such behavior can escalate into violence, and is prohibited.

Bullying means any intention, hostile or offensive verbal, written, graphic, demonstrative, electronic, or physical act that has the purpose of exerting domination over another person through the act of intimidating, frightening, oppressing, or adversely controlling another person on parish grounds or at a parish event.

This may include, but is not limited to verbal, graphic, written, or electronic activities such as name-calling, taunting, blackmailing, inciting to fight, terrorizing, physical or demonstrative activities such as poking, blocking or impeding, following hair pulling, mock hitting motions, intentionally bumping, tripping, and damaging clothing.

In the case of repeated failure to adhere to parish standards, children and/or adults may be asked to leave. Readmission will not take place until the Director and the Pastor have met with the family and are satisfied that the behavior problem is under control.

WEAPONS

Adults and youth are forbidden knowingly and voluntarily to possess, handle, transmit or use any instrument on parish grounds or in any parish event that is ordinarily or generally considered a weapon. Any object that could be used to injure another person will be considered a weapon. The following are examples of instruments, ordinarily or generally considered weapons: knives of all types; guns; lead pipes; chains; chuck-sticks; throwing stars; darts; metal knuckles; blackjacks; unauthorized tools; fireworks; explosives; or other chemicals. The Director will make the final determination regarding what constitutes a weapon. Police will be contacted when there is a suspected violation of criminal laws concerning weapons. Threats to use a weapon will be investigated and be treated the same as possession of a weapon under this policy.

DRUGS/ALCOHOL

Adults and youth will not use or have in possession beverages containing alcohol or any other controlled substance defined by law as a drug. In the event that a child is found in possession of drugs or alcohol on parish grounds or at a parish-related event, the parish will notify the child's parent or legal guardian.

Law enforcement will be contacted when there is suspected violation of criminal laws concerning drugs and alcohol.

DRESS CODE

Appropriate dress is expected. In order to have programs conducive to prayerful learning and Christian values some clothing may be deemed inappropriate. For this reason, the following guidelines should be followed: 1) shirts and skirts must be of reasonable length, 2) no yoga pants or leggings unless a long shirt is worn, 3) halter tops, tops which do not cover the midriff area, and spaghetti straps should not be worn, 4) clothing with inappropriate slogans or graphics

should not be worn, 5) pants hanging off the hips should be avoided, 6) no hats/caps should be worn in the building, and 7) no shoes with wheels should be worn in the building.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET

The use of electronic devices during Family Faith Formation, Youth Ministry, and Vacation Bible School shall be limited to the discretion of the Director. Ordinarily, electronic devices should be switched off or at least silenced.

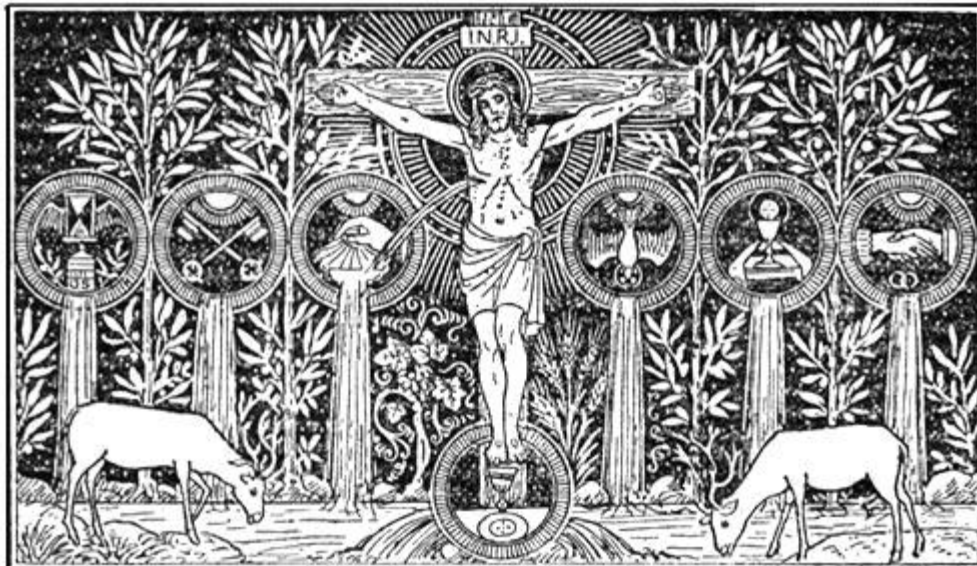
STUDENT PHOTOS

Photographs of adults and/or youth may appear on the parish website or on other publications. If parents do not wish to have their children's photographs placed in public media, parents must notify the Director in writing prior to the beginning of the session.

HOMESCHOOLING

While building a community through learning together is preferable, it is acceptable in some circumstances for a parent to teach the faith to their children at home. Parents who wish to homeschool their children for ongoing faith formation and/or sacramental catechesis must provide the Director of Faith Formation with the curriculum being used. Before being admitted to the Sacraments, one or more meetings with the pastor or his delegate will be scheduled to ensure the child is sufficiently catechized and properly disposed to receiving the Sacraments.

Guidelines for Preparing Children & Teens for the Reception of the Sacraments



**St. Charles Borromeo Parish
Gretna, Nebraska**

updated: July 2021

Introduction

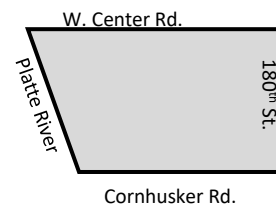
The Sacraments, instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church, are actions of both Christ and the Church. They are the signs and means by which the faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is rendered to God, and the sanctification of humankind is effected. Therefore, both the sacred ministers and the rest of the Christian faithful must employ the greatest reverence and necessary diligence in their celebration (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 840).

It is for the Church alone to approve or define those things which are required for their validity, lawful celebration, administration, and reception. Sacred ministers cannot refuse the Sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times if they are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them. Pastors of souls and their collaborators have the duty to see that those who seek the Sacraments are prepared to receive them by the necessary evangelization and catechetical formation (*Code of Canon Law*, cann. 841 & 843).

At St. Charles Borromeo, we assist and support parents, who are the first educators of the faith for their children. Our program of preparation for receiving the Sacraments runs parallelly to our ongoing faith formation of children and teens. Parents may enroll their children in the parish's preparation programs for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Confirmation, and Baptism of Non-Infant Children at the appropriate ages and when they are ready according to the norms enunciated for each Sacrament.

General Norms for Sacramental Preparation

- First and foremost, preparation for the Sacraments begins with the regular practice of the faith by the family. The very necessary minimum for prayer and moral effort for all the faithful is defined as the Precepts of the Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2041-2043):
 - 1) Attend Mass on Sundays & Holy Days of Obligation and rest from servile labor,
 - 2) Confess one's sins in Confession at least once a year,
 - 3) Receive the Eucharist at least once a year during Eastertide,
 - 4) Observe the days of fasting and abstinence as defined by the Church, and
 - 5) Help to provide for the needs of the Church through stewardship.
- Church law requires that sacramental preparation take place in the parish where one has domicile (cann. 867, 890, 914). Therefore, St. Charles Borromeo Parish is the proper parish of preparation for the Sacraments for anyone who currently lives within the parish's territorial boundaries, regardless of where he or she is registered as a parishioner. These boundaries are: West Center Road, Cornhusker Road, 180th Street, and the Platte River.



*Any Catholic who does not live within the territorial boundaries of the parish but is registered as a member of St. Charles Borromeo (for at least six [6] months and is **known to be active in the life of the parish**) may enroll in Sacramental Preparation.*

- Sacramental Preparation may only begin after one has completed at least one (1) semester of Family Faith Formation or Youth Group here at St. Charles.
- While attending Sacramental Prep classes, one must also be enrolled in and attending:
 - Family Faith Formation (for parents and their children in grades 1-6) *or*
 - Youth Group (for teens in grades 7-12)

It is preferred that youth in grades 7 & 8 attend Youth Group; however, based on individual circumstances, they may instead participate in Family Faith Formation.

Specific Norms for Sacramental Preparation

The following pages describe the basic theology, guidelines, and laws governing each Sacrament and should be used by parents to determine when their children are ready to begin proximate preparation for the Sacraments. The “Request for Sacramental Preparation” form, which can be found on the parish website, must be completed and turned in by the requested deadlines to be admitted to the desired program.

Homeschooling for Sacramental Preparation

Parents who wish to homeschool their children for ongoing faith formation and/or sacramental catechesis must provide the Director Family Faith Formation with the curriculum being used. Before being admitted to the Sacraments, one or more meetings with the pastor or his delegate will be scheduled to ensure the child is sufficiently catechized and properly disposed to receiving the Sacraments.

First Reconciliation

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Divine Physician of our souls and bodies. He willed that His Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit, should continue His ministry of healing and salvation. Therefore, He instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation for all sinful members of His Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1421 & 1446.) The Sacrament of Reconciliation—also known as Penance or Confession—is the ordinary means by which Christ’s faithful who are aware of serious sin are reconciled to God and His Church after Baptism. Every Catholic after attaining the age of discretion is bound by obligation to confess serious sins at least once a year (*Code of Canon Law*, cann. 960 & 989).

Parents, as models of faith and Christian witness and in virtue of their duty as the primary educators of their children, are to be actively and intimately engaged in preparing their children for the first reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents and children attend the catechetical sessions provided by the parish which include: a theology of the Sacrament, the psychological and spiritual development of children, the norms for celebrating the Sacrament, and the roles of all involved (*Archdiocesan Pastoral Policies Handbook*, 3.2.4.5.a).

At St. Charles Borromeo, our program for preparation for First Reconciliation includes a set of six (6) catechetical sessions and one (1) retreat day for parents and their children. The program will be offered two times each year: once in the fall and once in the spring. First Reconciliation will be celebrated at the conclusion of each session. In order to receive the Sacrament the program must be completed in its entirety.

Minimum Requirements to Register for Preparation for First Reconciliation:

- Child must be Catholic and be open to receiving the Sacrament.
- Child must be at least seven (7) years old.
- Child has been attending the monthly Family Faith Formation program with at least one parent for at least one (1) semester.
- Child is attending weekly Sunday Mass with parents and knows how to participate in the celebration of the liturgy.
- Child should know basic prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
- Parent completes and submits the “Request for Sacramental Preparation” form by the registration deadline along with the program fee.

First Eucharist

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. At the Last Supper, our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood in order to perpetuate the Sacrifice of His Cross throughout the ages until He comes again. The Lord Himself urges to receive Him in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: “Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). To respond to this invitation, we must prepare ourselves for so great and so holy a moment (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1323, 1324, 1384 & 1385). All the faithful are bound to receive the Most Holy Eucharist at least once per year during the Easter season (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 920).

After a suitable period of time has passed since First Reconciliation (*Archdiocesan Pastoral Policies Handbook*, 3.2.3.9.a), it is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents as well as of the pastor to see that children who have reached the age of reason are correctly prepared to receive the Most Holy Eucharist. It belongs to the pastor to determine if a child is sufficiently disposed to receive his or her First Holy Communion (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 914).

At St. Charles Borromeo, our program for preparation for First Eucharist includes a set of six (6) catechetical sessions and one (1) retreat day for parents and their children. The program will be offered two times each year: once in the fall and once in the spring. First Eucharist will be celebrated at the conclusion of each session. In order to receive the Sacrament the program must be completed in its entirety.

Minimum Requirements to Register for Preparation for First Eucharist:

- Child must be Catholic and be open to receiving the Sacrament.
- Child must be at least seven (7) years old.
- Child must have already received First Reconciliation.
- Child has been attending the monthly Family Faith Formation program with at least one parent for at least one (1) semester.
- Child is attending weekly Sunday Mass with parents and knows how to participate in the celebration of the liturgy.
- Parent completes and submits the “Request for Sacramental Preparation” form by the registration deadline along with the program fee.

Confirmation

The Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For by the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Those who are confirmed are more firmly obliged to be witnesses to Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1285).

The faithful are obliged to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation at the appropriate time. Their parents and pastor are to see to it that young people are properly instructed to receive it (*Code of Canon Law*, 890). Likewise, parishes are to make suitable provision for the catechesis of the parents of those to be confirmed (*Archdiocesan Pastoral Policies Handbook*, 3.2.2.2.b).

At St. Charles Borromeo, our program for preparation for Confirmation includes a set of six (6) catechetical sessions for parents and youth and one (1) retreat day for those to be confirmed. The program will be offered two times each year: once in the fall and once in the spring. Confirmation will be celebrated in the spring.

Minimum Requirements to Register for Preparation for Confirmation:

- Child must be Catholic and is open to receiving the Sacrament.
- Child is between the ages of 10 and 18 (before graduation from high school).
- Child has been attending one of the following for at least one (1) semester:
 - Family Faith Formation program (grades 1-6) *or* Youth Group (grades 7-12).
It is preferred that youth in grades 7 & 8 attend Youth Group; however, based on individual circumstances, they may instead participate in Family Faith Formation.
- Child is attending weekly Sunday Mass and knows how to participate in the celebration of the liturgy.
- Parent completes and submits the “Request for Sacramental Preparation” form by the registration deadline along with the program fee.

Baptism of Non-Infant Children (Ages 7-17)

The Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation and is the gateway to the life in the Spirit and the door to the other Sacraments. It is the way by which a person is freed from sins, is reborn as a child of God, is configured to Christ, is incorporated into the Church, and is made a sharer in the Church's mission (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213).

Parents have a grave responsibility to present their infants for baptism as soon as possible, usually within the first weeks after birth. Parishes are to provide a catechetical program of instruction for parents and godparents which includes: the meaning of Baptism, the obligations attached to the Sacrament, the scriptural foundation for the Sacrament, the sacramental life of the Church, and the Rite of Baptism itself (*Code of Canon Law*, cann. 851 & 867; *Archdiocesan Pastoral Policies Handbook*, 3.2.1.3).

Children ages six (6) and under are considered "infants" by the Church (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 97.2). For the Baptism of infants, parents should contact the parish office to register for instruction and to set a date for the celebration of the Sacrament.

Children who have attained the age of seven (7) must be prepared according to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age (RCIC) (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 852.1; *Archdiocesan Pastoral Policies Handbook*, 3.2.1.2). Anyone who is baptized at age seven (7) or older also receives the Sacraments Confirmation and Eucharist in the same celebration. Ordinarily, this takes place at the Easter Vigil of the Lord's Resurrection.

At St. Charles Borromeo, our RCIC program preparing children for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist meets on a schedule to be determined by our Director of Family Faith Formation and the parents of the children. This program runs the length of the academic year, beginning in September and continuing through Easter.

Minimum Requirements to Register for Preparation in the RCIC:

- Child must be age 7 or older.
- Child is open to receiving the Sacraments.
- Child is beginning to attend weekly Sunday Mass with parents.
- Parent completes and submits the "Request for Sacramental Preparation" form by the registration deadline along with the program fee.
- Parent must contact the Director of Family Faith Formation, to discuss scheduling.

ARCHDIOCESE OF OMAHA GENDER POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

All efforts to form and accompany young people, especially in relation to human gender, must recall the intrinsic dignity of the human person. It is necessary to affirm that “the dignity of the human person is rooted in [their] creation in the image and likeness of God.”¹ Image and likeness find their expression in each of the two sexes as they provide an “image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way.”² Thus, male and female are unique and complementary. Moreover, “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated.”³

Today, this reality of creation, sex, and gender is sometimes misunderstood and ignored. Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children; therefore, Catholic schools partner with parents in communicating the Gospel and drawing young people closer to Jesus Christ. The Archdiocese of Omaha provides this school policy, rooted in the Catholic understanding of gender, to guide the accompaniment offered to those experiencing gender dysphoria and/or incongruence in our school communities.

1. In the Archdiocese of Omaha, all Catholic schools shall respect the biological sex of each student and shall apply all policies and procedures in relation to that student according to each student’s God-given biological sex.
2. All students shall conduct themselves in accord with their God-given biological sex as it relates to the use of personal pronouns, dress code, use of public bathrooms, and participation in school-sponsored activities. All official school documents shall likewise reflect the student’s biological sex.
3. Admission or retention will not be denied based solely on a student’s experience of gender dysphoria. If a student experiences gender dysphoria and/or incongruence, school leaders and pastors shall partner with parents to establish an accompaniment plan. This plan must follow the teachings of the Catholic faith.
4. If at any time, parents, guardians or students desire accommodations or accompaniment that do not follow this policy, it may be necessary to begin the school transfer process for the good of the student and the school community. At every stage of this process, parents and guardians will be invited to their parish for pastoral support.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1700.

² *Ibid.*, 2335.

³ Pope Francis, *Amoris laetitia*, 56.

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