

St. Andrew Apostle Parish
2015-2016

Faith Formation Program
Program Handbook

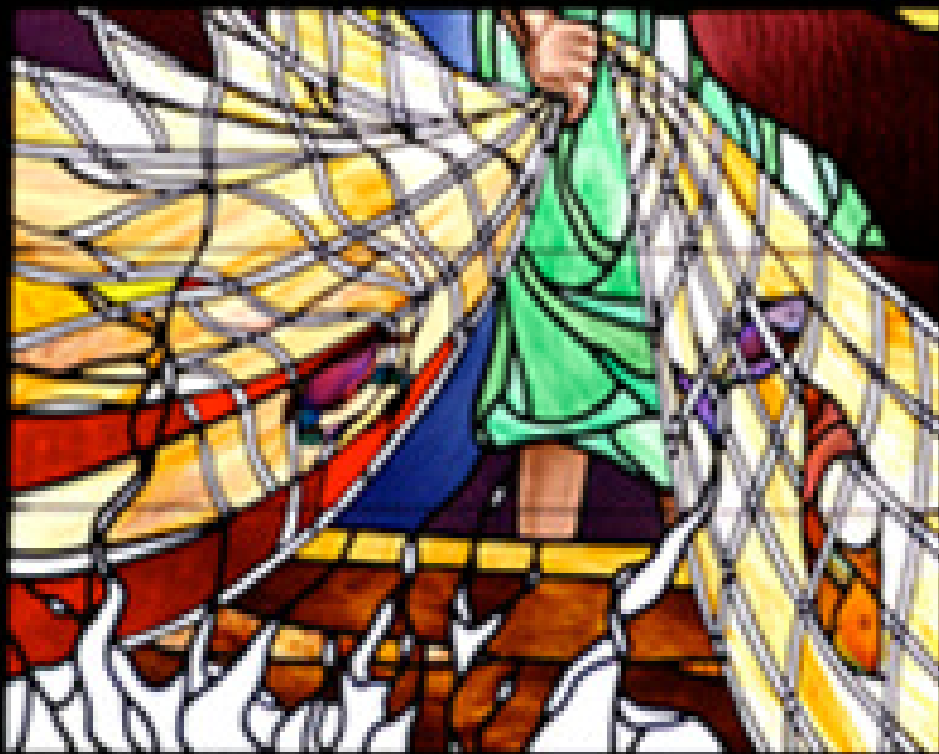
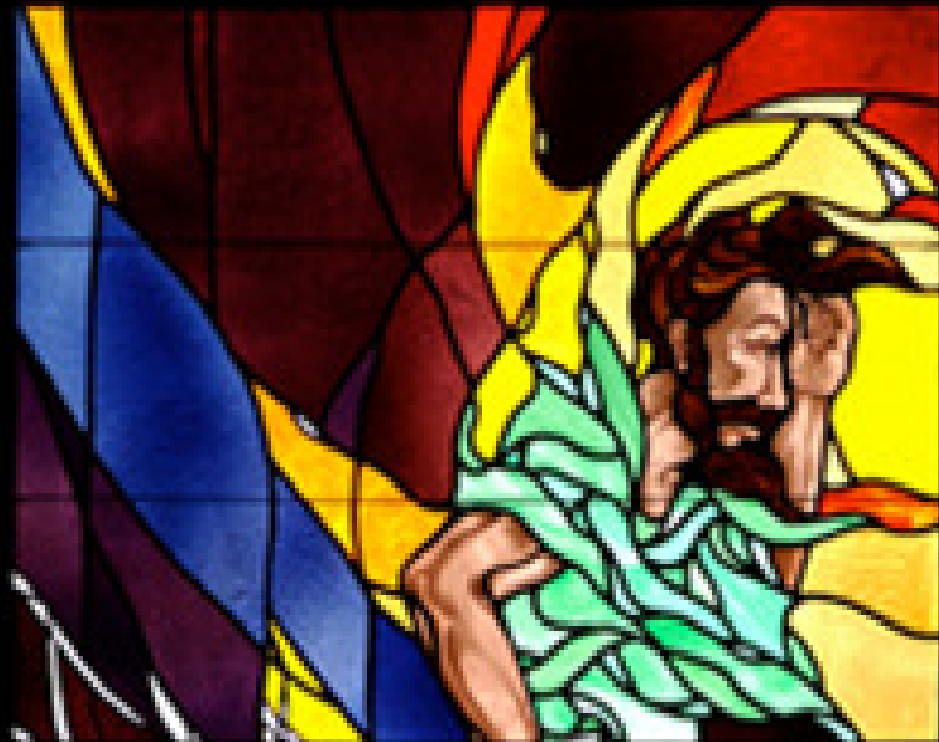


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General Program Information

Faith Formation classes are offered for students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8 every Sunday morning, September through May, from 9:45 – 11:15 a.m.

- Rectory Office**..... 301-649-3700
- Pastor**..... Reverend Daniel Leary
- Associate Pastor**Reverend William Wadsworth
- Faith Formation Program**..... Julie Benjamin, Director (x209)
- St. Andrew Apostle School**..... 301 649–3555
- Principal** Susan Sheehan
- Sacramental Coordinator**..... Kathleen McGovern

Religious Education Overview

St. Andrew Apostle Church, in the Roman Catholic tradition, offers families the opportunity for formation in the faith through our Faith Formation Program. Faith Formation is a continuous program of formation, from Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade, with additional opportunities for growth through Grade 12 through our Youth Ministry Program. Our goal is to help the students discover and have a relationship with Our Lord through Salvation History, the sacraments, Holy Scripture and Tradition. It is our desire that they come to understand the love and mercy of God the Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, with the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Students participate in a loving, nurturing, and age-appropriate environment while attending Faith Formation. Our teaching endeavors to supplement the Roman Catholic teachings the child receives in the home.

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion begin in Grade 1 and if the student is properly prepared and ready, are received at the end of the Grade 2. Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation begins in seventh grade and if the student is properly prepared and ready, is received at the end of eighth grade.

Students at all levels learn doctrine, traditions and scriptural principles through teaching, study, discussions, drama, music, video and hands-on crafts (or object lessons). Children also learn by observation and modeling; therefore, qualified volunteers who are committed to the spiritual development of your child staff each classroom.

Our Mission at St. Andrew Apostle

In partnership with our parents, the Faith Formation Program seeks to nurture a personal relationship between Jesus Christ and our students and staff, provide opportunities for spiritual growth, encourage students to grow in their knowledge of the Roman Catholic faith, and encourage them to participate in the sacramental life of the Church.

For as long as we can remember, Church leaders have been sending us an insistent message: *Parents are the primary religious educators of their children.* Even before Vatican II, the various documents on Christian Education issued by Rome had said it, and more recently, the Bishops of our own country put it this way:

“Parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children. They catechize informally, but powerfully by example and instruction. They communicate values and attitudes by showing love for Christ and His Church and for each other, by reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit and by fostering justice and love in all their relationships. Their active involvement in the parish, their readiness to seek opportunities to serve others, and their practice of frequent and spontaneous prayer, all make meaningful their professions of belief. Parents nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith. -- (U.S. National Catechetical Directory, Sharing the Light of Faith)

Responding to the challenge of this teaching, our Faith Formation Program recognizes that parents are indeed the primary religious educators. It is through parents, together with, and supported by other members of the faith community, that the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed and celebrated.



Our Beliefs

- Each child is made in the image and likeness of God and possesses an individual dignity which should be nurtured and developed.
- The doctrine of the Catholic faith is presented in its fullness and entirety as both knowledge to be learned and as life to be lived.
- Sacramental life is central to developing the Catholic faith.
- The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the center of our faith.
- The frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist is promoted.
- Reverence for God's Word is fostered.
- Mary's example, as the first disciple of Jesus, is our model.
- Parents are recognized and respected as the primary educators of their children.
- The Gospel values and moral life expressed in the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are professed, cultivated and practiced.
- The virtues are fostered and practiced in everyday life.
- Reading and studying the lives of the saints as an example for us are encouraged.
- Prayer is important for growth in spiritual life. e.g.: the Rosary, personal prayer, etc.

Our Goals

- For all students, staff and families to come to a deeper personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ through the sacramental life of the Church, prayer, Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.
- To uphold Church teachings in all aspects of Faith Formation.
- To help each child know Jesus and understand His message in order for them to become a living witness of the Gospel of Christ.
- To provide a safe, secure, loving environment for children to participate in and where parents feel comfortable leaving their child.
- To promote and nurture the individual dignity of each child.
- To help each child develop a lifestyle that is built on his/her relationship with Jesus Christ.
- To provide Godly men and women who are well trained to serve as positive Catholic role models.
- To support the family in their responsibility for the spiritual growth of their child.

Attendance and Absence Policy

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure regular attendance and timeliness of each student. Regular attendance of weekly Faith Formation classes is critical to your child's faith development and is assumed once you have made the commitment to this program.

We ask that you notify the Director of Religious Education directly about any absence of your children) from the program. The individual classroom catechists are not responsible for administrative record keeping, however, contacting them for homework following an absence is advisable.

The Attendance Policy for Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. is 80%. We ask that you be proactive in contacting us if an issue arises that would prevent your child from regular attendance so that a solution may be found before the situation is critical, if at all possible. In keeping with the ADW's policy, if a child has more than 5 absences from religious education, parents will be contacted and a possible meeting with the Director of Religious Education and the Pastor set up to discuss future participation in the program.

Tardiness, although the child is ultimately in attendance, is disruptive to class continuity and distracting for both the catechist and students who have already begun the week's lesson. Students who arrive after the start of class are considered tardy. Excessive tardiness will be brought to the parents' attention and cannot be allowed to continue.

To report absences: 301-649-3700 x209

Student Drop-off and Pick-Up Policy

There is quite a bit of activity and traffic Sunday mornings before and after classes. We ask all families to use caution when dropping off and picking up their children. Students are asked to arrive 10 minutes before class begins. If they arrive prior to a catechist being in the classroom, for their safety, they are asked to remain outside the classroom until an adult is present.

Parents are responsible for the prompt pick-up of their children. Students not picked up within 5 minutes after classes are dismissed, will be asked to remain with the Director of Religious Education until pick-up.

All students in grades Pre-K through three must be picked up at the classroom door by a parent or other designated adult. Students in grades four through eight may be dismissed to meet parents at the outer doors.

Students will not be released to anyone except those authorized by the legal parent or guardian. The legal parent or guardian should notify the DRE if an ex-spouse is or is not allowed to pick up a student. Specific notice of custody arrangements should be on file with the Office of Faith Formation.

Code of Conduct - Discipline

In order to create a climate where students can learn and enjoy their time in the Faith Formation classes, standards are necessary. Our goal in setting these standards is to help students develop a sense of self-discipline and responsibility to themselves and others. Behavior standards for the Faith Formation Program are:

- ◆ All students are expected to be Christ-like in their behavior at all times, both in and outside the building. As a young Christian, they should show respect for all priests, catechists, aides, administrators and other students in the manner in which they greet people and carry on conversations.
- ◆ Respect for church and personal property is required. Damage or theft done by a student to a room or personal property must be paid for or replaced by the student.
- ◆ Students should bring their assigned books and required materials to each class session. Distracting materials are not allowed in the classrooms.
- ◆ Students are expected to follow any specific rules in their classroom or group, as set down by their catechist or other person in charge.
- ◆ Appropriate and modest clothing promotes and often elevates good behavior.

Discipline Procedures

If a student fails to meet the above expectations and his or her behavior disrupts the education process for themselves or others, the following actions will be taken:

- 1) When minor infractions or behavior problems occur, the catechist will attempt to correct the situation directly with the student. The student will be given a verbal warning.
- 2) If the student's behavior does not improve and he or she continues to be disruptive or disrespectful, the child will be brought to the Director of Religious Education. Parents will be notified and they will be expected to pick the child up.
- 3) If a student is asked to leave class a second time during the year, the parents will be called and asked to take the student home. When this occurs, a conference will be scheduled involving the parents, student, and director to discuss the student's continuation in the program.
- 4) In extreme cases, a student may be dismissed from the program if he/she fails to make a sincere effort to improve.

Student Records

Parents or designated guardians have the right to look at all their child's Faith Formation Program records maintained at the parish.

The Religious Education Program will not disclose anything to their parties unless a parent or guardian consents in writing prior to the disclosure, or the request for information meets one of the limited circumstances described in the Federal Family Educational and Privacy Rights Acts.

Sacramental records are maintained in the vault at the parish office and may be accessed upon request. When records are not on file at the parish office, the Religious Education Program has the right to require parents to provide copies of baptismal and first communion certificates.



Emergency Procedures / Inclement Weather

In the event of severe weather or other emergency situations, the Faith Formation Program will post the status of class, *open or closed*, on the St. Andrew Apostle website—www.standrewapostle.org. In addition, we will do our best to contact parents who have provided email addresses and to provide a recorded message on the Office of Faith Formation line (301) 649-3700 x209. In the event that we are unable to contact parents (power outage, etc.), parents are asked to exercise common sense in a given situation. Absences will be excused by the Director of Religious Education under these conditions, in accord with the judgment of the parents.

In the event that a tornado or hurricane warning or civil defense alert is in effect at the time of dismissal, students will be held at the church until an all-clear signal is made known or released to a parent or guardian only.

Medication/Illness/Accident/Early Dismissal

Except in extraordinary circumstances which must be approved by the Director of Religious Education, those administering the Religious Education program will not maintain, supervise the take of, or administer medication to students.

If a student becomes ill or is injured during religious education class, the office will immediately make every attempt to contact the parent or guardian. In the event that no one can be contacted or if time is of the essence, the Director of Religious Education or a designated party will act in a manner that is both reasonable and responsible.

The early dismissal of a student will be granted only by the presence of a parent or guardian or prior written consent.

Doctrine and Curriculum

Each grade level in the Faith Formation Program is important and each level builds on the previous material covered. Students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8 use Loyola Press' *Finding God* program. Our Confirmation classes are a combination of curricula.

Catechists also follow the detailed guidelines for grade-level instruction developed by the Archdiocese of Washington. These guidelines are meant to compliment the text and aid the judgment of the catechist. Parents will be provided a copy of the Archdiocesan grade-level guidelines upon request.

Grade-level completion for a given year is determined by the Director of Religious Education and catechist for that grade. Two consecutive years of preparation are required for reception of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation.

Parental involvement is vitally important in all aspects of the child's spiritual growth and development. The effort to pass on the faith will not root without the participation, cooperation, and example of the parents. For this reason, we encourage the following:

- ◆ Allow time each day to make God a part of our lives.
- ◆ Church attendance each week and on holy days of obligation.
Participation in and support of any assignments given in class for homework.
- ◆ Attendance at parent meetings and events connected with the program.
- ◆ Participation as a volunteer in the program, if time permits.

Sacramental Programs

Every sacrament is a gift from God. To realize the value of each gift, it is necessary that the community reflect and prepare itself to celebrate each sacrament. It is our hope that the following policies will help us all -- catechists, parents and children -- become more aware that we are truly a sacramental people.



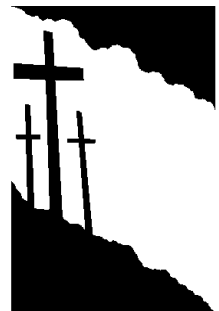
BAPTISM

The sacrament through which an individual is welcomed into the Catholic community.

Most children entering school or religious education have been baptized as infants. It is becoming increasingly more common however, to meet school age children who are either unbaptized, or baptized but uncatechized. Our goal is catechetical formation of all children which will parallel as closely as possible to that of their peers who have already received the sacraments. Their eventual reception into the community will be planned with the parish priests and the Director of Religious Education.

FIRST RECONCILIATION

“Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion.”
(Catechism #1422)



In general, a child is eligible for First Reconciliation if:

- a parent supervises the preparation process;
- the child has participated in a formal Catholic Faith Formation program for one year before the year of immediate sacramental preparation;
- the child has reached the age of reason.

Parental Obligations

Parents will be expected to supplement sacramental preparation through these meetings. They are designed to update parents’ understanding of the Sacrament, its historical development and assist the parent in faith formation of their child(ren). Schedule of meetings to be determined.

Baptism Certificate. A Baptismal certificate is required for all children receiving Eucharist and Reconciliation for the first time.

In addition, the following requirements have been established to properly prepare students:

- **Attendance.** Please see Attendance Policy.

- **Prayers.** Throughout the year, the following prayers will be required to prepare for the Sacraments. Parents are responsible for teaching their children these prayers. Catechists will provide a review prior to reception of sacraments. Copies of common prayers are provided at the back of the student book. If there are additional questions, please consult the director of religious education.

- * Sign of the Cross
- * The Lord's Prayer
- * The Hail Mary
- * Doxology (Glory to the Father)
- * Act of Contrition

Additional Milestones: The following goals have been set as important milestones for the children:

- * Know Jesus;
- * Understand the concept of right and wrong;
- * The Ten Commandments;
- * The Last Supper;
- * Sin;
- * Forgiveness;
- * Examination of Conscience and the steps of Confession.

FIRST EUCHARIST

The central sacrament of the Catholic community through which God gives us the greatest sign of his love; his abiding presence under the ordinary forms of bread and wine. In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." (Catechism #1327)



In general, a child is eligible for First Eucharist if:

- they meet the same requirements as given for First Reconciliation (please see previous page);
- they have received First Reconciliation prior to receiving First Eucharist;
- they regularly attend Mass with parents and can participate in basic parts of the Mass;
- they attend the First Communion Retreat, held in spring, with a parent.

Parental Obligations

Parents will be expected to supplement sacramental preparation through these meetings. They are designed to update parents' understanding of the Sacrament, its historical development and assist the parent in faith formation of their child(ren). Schedule of meetings to be determined.

CONFIRMATION



The sacrament of Confirmation is 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. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.” (Catechism #1285).

Confirmation Preparation in the Archdiocese of Washington is a **two year process**. The first year is focused on reinforcing the candidate’s knowledge and understanding of the principals, precepts, and commandments of our Catholic faith. The second year is focused on exploring the candidate’s personal faith and beliefs while journeying with the class toward full initiation into the church. Preparation for Confirmation culminates in the student’s conscious decision to live out his/her Catholic faith commitment.

A candidate for reception of Confirmation meets these expectations:

- Students in Grades 7-12 may enroll in the first and second years of the program, depending on their previous Faith Formation experience.
- Must have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Reconciliation before receiving Confirmation.
- Select a sponsor who will journey with them through this two year process, participating in formation sessions.
- Complete interviews with our priest and/or Director of Religious Education at least once during the second year of the program.
- Full weekend retreat for the second year of the program.

Parent Obligations

Parent will be expected to supplement sacramental preparation through these meetings. They are designed to update parents’ understanding of the Sacrament, its historical development and assist the parent in faith formation of their child. Schedule of meetings to be determined.

Baptism Certificate. A copy of the Baptismal certificate is required for all students receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, except if the student was baptized at St. Andrew’s.

In addition, the following requirements have been established to properly prepare students:

- **Attendance.** Please see Attendance Policy.
- **Student education and formation programs.** This involves classroom instruction and activities, retreats and service.
- **Service.** Each candidate and their family will be asked to select a family service project once each semester, with the second one being completed no later than March.

- **Assignment Binder.** Students will be assigned a binder of assignments, with due dates provided, that they will be responsible for completing by the assigned dates.
- **Saint Report.** Each candidate will choose a Confirmation name which may be their baptismal name or taken from one of the saints, research, and complete a written report, explaining the importance of that patron, the reason why they chose that name or the reason why they want to keep their baptismal name.
- **Retreats.** Students will attend a one-day retreat in the fall and a full weekend retreat in the spring. More information to follow.
- **Parish celebration of Confirmation.** This is celebrated within the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Sponsor Selection

The Confirmation candidate must select a sponsor at the beginning of the first year. The Catholic Church has the following requirements for Confirmation sponsors:

- The individual be at least 16 years old.
- The individual be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- The individual be a practicing Catholic, leading a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.
- If the individual is married, they must have had their marriage blessed in the church.

Based on the parent's role as primary religious educators, parents of all children and adolescents preparing for these sacraments are required to participate in the formation aspects of the individual sacramental programs. Parents will receive notices about these preparation sessions through email. In addition, parents are expected to support and encourage their children's efforts by their own example of each of the sacraments in their own lives. This is particularly true of the Eucharist. **It is assumed and expected that parents and children will attend Mass regularly.**



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Children (RCIC)

Our religious education curriculum is organized as a systematic, developmental process. This curriculum for religious education is essential for the continuing spiritual development of quality catechesis. At the same time, within the context of Christian family life and of the nurturing parish community, young people are engaged in a lifelong process of becoming authentic followers of Jesus Christ.

RCIC is a **two year**, comprehensive faith development program tailored to the needs of children, age 7 and above, who:

- have not been baptized, or
- have been baptized, but have not been in a formal religious education program nor received the sacraments of Reconciliation or First Eucharist.

Students Preparing for Baptism

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is to be followed with all children of catechetical age who are being prepared for Baptism. Their formation process must take into consideration their growth in faith and the catechetical instruction that they receive (cf. RCIA, 253).

The student's progress in the formation they receive depends on the help and example of their companions and on the influence of their parents. Since the children to be initiated often belong to a group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for the sacrament of Eucharist, their initiation progresses gradually and within the supportive setting of this group of companions.

It is to be hoped that the children will also receive as much help and example as possible from the parents whose permission is required for the students to be initiated and to live the Christian life. The period of instruction will also provide a good opportunity for the family to have contact with priests and catechists.

The initiation of children is marked by the same steps and liturgical rites that adult catechumens participate in throughout the RCIA process. They are to participate in the Rite of Acceptance and other related rites. Baptism will generally occur one year after the Rite of Acceptance, which will take place near the end of the religious education year (date to be determined; April-May).

Baptized Children Preparing for Eucharist and Reconciliation

The Catholic Church recommends that children have at least one full year of faith formation before studying and preparing for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Therefore, the second year of the RCIC program will focus on these sacraments with all of the children during this two year program.

In general, children are eligible for the sacraments of initiation if:

- a parent or legal guardian supervises the preparation process;
- the child has participated in formal religious education for one year before the year of immediate sacramental preparation;
- they participate in the family retreats each year;
- they regularly attend Mass with parents and can participate in basic parts of the Mass.

Parent Obligations

Parents will be expected to supplement sacramental preparation through these meetings. They are designed to update parents' understanding of the Sacrament, its historical development and assist the parent in faith formation of their child(ren). Schedule of meetings to be determined.

In addition, the following requirements must be met:

- **Baptism Certificate.** A Baptismal certificate is required for the children preparing for First Reconciliation or First Eucharist.
- **Class Attendance.** Attendance for religious education is important to the child's understanding and being prepared. Please see Attendance Policy.
- **Mass Attendance.** Students are required to attend weekly Mass with their parents.
- **Prayers.** Throughout the year, the following prayers will be required to prepare for the Sacraments. Parents are responsible for teaching their children these prayers. Catechists will provide only a review prior to reception of sacraments. Copies of common prayers are provided at the back of the student textbook.

- * Sign of the Cross
- * The Lord's Prayer
- * The Hail Mary
- * Glory to the Father
- * Act of Contrition

Additional Milestones. The following goals have been set as important milestones for the children:

- * Know Jesus;
- * Understand the concept of right and wrong;
- * The Ten Commandments;
- * The Last Supper;
- * Sin;
- * Forgiveness;
- * Examination of Conscience and the steps of Confession.

Sponsor Selection

The RCIC candidate must select a sponsor. The Catholic Church recommends that parents not be sponsors for candidates in the RCIC program and has the following requirements for Confirmation sponsors:

- The individual be at least 16 years old.
- The individual be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- The individual be a practicing Catholic, leading a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.

Based on the parent's role as primary religious educators, parents of all children and adolescents preparing for these sacraments are required to participate in the formation aspects of the individual sacramental programs. Parents will receive notices about these preparation sessions through the mail or in "take home" notes sent with the students.

In addition, parents are expected to support and encourage their children's efforts by their own example of each of the sacraments in their own lives. This is particularly true of the Eucharist. **It is assumed and expected that parents and children will attend Mass regularly.**

EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

DEC. 8, 2015 - NOV. 20, 2016



"IT WILL BE A HOLY YEAR OF MERCY."
-POPE FRANCIS