

# **St. Agnes Children's Faith Formation Program**

## **Family Handbook**



*"God always knocks at the door of hearts. He likes to do this. It comes from God's heart.*

*But, do you know what God likes best?*

*To knock on the doors of families and find families that are united,*

*to find families that love each other,*

*to find the families that bring up their children and  
educate them and help them to keep going forward and that*

*create a society of goodness, of truth, and of beauty."*

*- Pope Francis*

St Agnes Catholic Community

1025 Masonic Ave. San Francisco, CA 94117

[www.saintagnessf.org](http://www.saintagnessf.org) (415)487-8560, Fax (415)487-8575

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Please note text in red throughout this handbook which indicates special accommodations that will be in place for the 2021-2022 school year for Children’s Faith Formation. Many of these plans will need to be flexible. Your questions and comments are encouraged to help you feel more comfortable with your family being a part of Children’s Faith Formation at St. Agnes.  
Questions? Sr Teresa Malave, VDMF  
[Teresa@SaintAgnesSF.org](mailto:Teresa@SaintAgnesSF.org)

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## **WELCOME**

Dear Parents and Children,

Thank you for choosing St. Agnes to grow in faith with your children! The catechetical team and I hope this handbook will provide you with valuable information about St. Agnes' Children's Faith Formation (CFF) Program. It is important that you read it and discuss it with your family.

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

Sincerely,

**Sr Teresa Malave, VDMF**  
Children's Faith Formation Coordinator

### Office Information

Coordinator: sr Teresa Malave

Email: [Teresa@SaintAgnesSF.org](mailto:Teresa@SaintAgnesSF.org)

Call: (415) 450-5938 or call  
St Agnes Church Main Tel (415) 487-8560 Ext. 225  
Hours: Monday 1pm-3pm; Tues 11am-3pm  
Thursday from 9:30am-5:30pm  
Friday: 1pm-3pm

Address: 1025 Masonic Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94117



## **PHILOSOPHY**

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

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

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

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

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

## **GOALS**

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

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

## PARENTS' ROLE

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

- ☒ **Celebrate Sunday Mass regularly with your children/youth.** The schedule is as follows:
  - o Saturday – 4:00pm
  - o Sunday – 8:30am, 10:30am with Children's Liturgy of the Word, and 6:00pm
    - **Join 10:30am Family Mass every 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of month**
    - Participate actively in the sacramental and community life of the parish.
    - **CHECK MASS SCHEDULE ONLINE AT OUR WEBSITE FOR ALL MAIN EVENTS**
- ☒ Share your faith and what it means to you with your children.
- ☒ Pray with your children and help them learn and memorize the traditional prayers of the Church such as the Our Father and Hail Mary.
- ☒ Attend all parent meetings. **Most will be online. Meeting invitations will go out by email.**
- ☒ Familiarize yourself with the scheduled catechetical sessions and events for your children/youth.
- ☒ Read and act promptly on all communication from the Children's Faith Formation Program.
- ☒ Assure your children's punctual and regular attendance at all sessions.
- ☒ Become a CFF teacher or volunteer

## CHILD'S ROLE

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

- ☒ Be respectful of the catechist and other children.
- ☒ Listen carefully, follow directions, and participate in the session activities.
- ☒ Complete homework assigned, and share what they have learned and experienced with their families. **These responsibilities also apply to online classes that will be offered when we cannot meet in person.**

- ☒ Follow attendance, emergency and safety procedures. This includes extra safety procedures and health measures that we will be practicing in the 2021-2022 school year when we can meet in person including wearing masks, practicing physical distancing, and only attending when healthy and not experiencing symptoms of illness.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

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

GRADES K-8:CFF sessions are held from mid-September through early May on Sunday mornings from 9:15 – 10:15am. Please continue reading to learn about the new plan to have children meet every other weekend starting in October 2021.

2021-2022 school year.

Students are now grouped into 2 cohorts that meet on alternating Sundays:

Cohort #1) Meeting on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. (See CFF calendar for details. Classes will not be held on most holiday weekends.)

- ☒ **Butterflies** - These are Kindergarteners and 1st Graders who have not completed 1st Communion. Butterflies will meet in the St. Francis Room.

(Due to COVID this group does not meet in person)

- ☒ **Confirmation Year 1 and 2** -These are generally 7th and 8th graders. Confirmation groups normally meet in the ISLC. \* ( Due to COVID this group does not meet in person yet)

Cohort #2 ( Meeting on 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. (See CFF calendar for details. Classes will not be held on most holiday weekends.)

- ☒ **Doves** - These are generally 3rd-6th graders who have completed the sacrament of 1st Communion. Doves will meet in the St. Francis Room.\*
- ☒ **1st Communion** - Generally 2nd graders, but children of all ages are welcome to join. It is important to note that at least one parent or guardian must attend with children enrolled in this class. 1st Communion Whole Family Catechesis meets in ISLC.\*

\*We will try to have classes meet in person when possible, however we will offer online classes when it is not possible or advisable to have children congregate together. For all in-person classes, we will practice physical distancing and rigorous safety procedures including temperature/health screening and sanitization of the site and materials that students will use. We will also use outdoor or open air spaces in the ISLC and St. Francis Room whenever possible.

We will communicate these plans regularly through email so that parents can be sure if the Sunday plan includes and in person or online class.

CFF for Children/Youth with Disabilities is provided in regular or specialized religious instruction, particularly with regard to preparation for the sacraments. Please contact [Teresa@saintagnessf.org](mailto:Teresa@saintagnessf.org) regarding the specific needs of your child/youth.

## GRADE LEVEL THEMES

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

Grades K-1 and 3-6: [Pflaum Gospel Weeklies](#)

**Grades K and 1 – Promise**

**Grade 3-6 – Venture**

**Grade 2/First Reconciliation & First Communion Preparation:** Please note that children from older grade levels are welcome to participate in this training class. Our model is called “**Whole Family Catechesis**” meaning that at least one parent attends this class with their children throughout the entire CFF School Year. Parents are assisted by trained catechists to help parents become the primary teacher of our faith in this process! [www.GrowingUpCatholic.com](http://www.GrowingUpCatholic.com)

(Note that this is different from the past! Formerly 1st Communion/Reconciliation preparation began in January. With meeting only 2 Sundays a month, it is necessary to meet throughout the school year to be prepared for the sacrament in May. Do not wait to sign up!)

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

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

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The first step in the sacramental preparation process for new families is a meeting with the Coordinator of the program. All parents are expected to assist in the sacramental participation of their children and to attend the parent meetings for this purpose. **Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, many of these meetings will occur**



online. But we will be ready to begin in-person classes as soon as we are able, following the SF City guidance. Parents may also call or email the CFF Coordinator at [Teresa@SaintAgnesSF.org](mailto:Teresa@SaintAgnesSF.org), for more questions and details.

**FIRST EUCHARIST (FIRST COMMUNION):** Preparation for most children in this program occurs in the second grade although older children are welcome if they have not completed the sacrament. *Parents of children preparing for the sacraments of First Eucharist and First Reconciliation will join their children in all classes from September to May.*

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

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

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

**INFANT/YOUNG CHILDREN'S BAPTISM:** Baptism upon completion of the Parent Baptism Preparation Program. Contact the Parish Office at 415-487-8560 for more information.

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

## REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

### A. REGISTRATION

All families currently registered with St. Agnes Parish are invited to register online for Children's Faith Formation Classes and newcomers to the parish are asked to call the Rectory so that we can properly welcome your family into the community! Registration Should be completed by week 1-2 of classes.

### B. FEES

These fees help us cover the expenses of books, materials, and refreshments for the year. Scholarships are available and financial need should not stop anyone from participating. Everyone is entitled to catechesis regardless of their ability to pay registration fees. Fees should be completed by week 1-2 of classes. (See registration for up dated fees.)

#### Children's Faith Formation Class Registration Fees One

Child	\$150.00	Two Children	\$200.00
Three+ Children	\$250.00		

**Sacrament Registration Fees - These fees are in addition to the base registration fees listed above.**

First Reconciliation & First Eucharist (Communion): \$75/child\*

Confirmation: Year 1: no additional registration cost;

Year 2: \$75/child\*\*

*\*This includes the cost of the photographer*

*\*\*This includes the cost of the retreat*

To register as a non-parishioner, there will be an additional fee of \$50/child.

**C. BAPTISMAL INFORMATION**

A baptismal certificate is required for all children who are preparing to celebrate First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation.

**D. CHANGE OF ADDRESS/PHONE**

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

**E. EMERGENCY CARDS**

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

**F. CONFIDENTIALITY**

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

**F. ALLERGIES AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS**

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

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

**The following applies for in-person sessions only.** Supervision is provided up to 10 minutes before and after the catechetical session. Children/youth should not arrive earlier than 10 minutes before their session.

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

**A. BY CAR**

Children/youth should be accompanied to their classroom. **Parents must sign children in and out of CFF sessions.** We strongly recommend parents park at the John Adams lot of CCSF on the corner of Masonic and Hayes so that parishioners attending the 8:30am Mass do not get blocked in tandem parking in the garage.

## **B. BY FOOT**

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

# **ATTENDANCE**

## **A. ABSENCES**

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

## **B. VISITORS**

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit their child's catechetical session. If you are able to assist the catechist when you visit the class, please indicate your willingness to volunteer!

# **OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES**

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

# **COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES**

Parents/guardians and CFF staff work in partnership in helping children/youth grow in faith, therefore good communication is essential. If a parent/guardian wishes to talk to a catechist they may do so after the session or they may make an appointment with the catechist by calling the Director's office. Parents/guardians may also email, call the Coordinator at (415)450-5938 or email [Teresa@saintagnessf.org](mailto:Teresa@saintagnessf.org) or make an appointment to visit.

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

# **DISCIPLINE POLICIES**

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

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

1. Behave respectfully and courteously toward all catechists, adults, and other children/youth. Inappropriate behavior includes disrespectful verbal and body language.
2. Participate positively and be attentive in the catechetical session.

3. Respect parish property and the property of others.
4. Follow the rules of the program and the class.

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

## **HARASSMENT/PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

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

Letter from Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone on the Protection of Children:



## THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ONE PETER YORKE WAY, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109-6602 (415) 614-5500

November 1, 2017

Effective today, November 1, 2017, the Archdiocese of San Francisco will offer safe environment training through VIRTUS, which offers programs and services to a majority of the dioceses in the United States. VIRTUS will now replace SHIELD THE VULNERABLE in the training of children in parishes and schools of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. VIRTUS will also be used to train our clergy, adult educators and volunteers of the Archdiocese.

The job of ensuring children's safety is challenging for parents, teachers, catechists, youth ministers and educators, and requires more than adult awareness, education, and training. Children must also be given the tools needed to overcome the advances of people who might intend to do them harm. After a careful review of its training modules, we are pleased to introduce VIRTUS's **Touching Safety Program for Children**, and its accompanying guide, **Teaching Touching Safety**. This is a school-based curriculum with lesson plans created for four age groups:

Grades K through 2

Grades 3 through 5

Grades 6 through 8

Grades 9 through 12

Each school year, VIRTUS will provide a theme that introduces and builds on basic safety concepts through its **Teaching Touching Safety Guide**. The material is developmentally appropriate for each age group and includes content and activities that reinforce the important concepts presented.

We continue to affirm parents as the first educators of their children. All VIRTUS programs offer opportunities for parental involvement. Please take time to review the VIRTUS website and its programs at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). We are interested in your input, and invite you to send your questions or comments about the programs to Fr. Charles Puthota, Director of Pastoral Ministry, at [Puthota.Charles@sfnarch.org](mailto:Puthota.Charles@sfnarch.org), and his assistant, Karen Guglielmo, at [GuglielmoK@sfnarch.org](mailto:GuglielmoK@sfnarch.org). Thank you for all that you will be doing to implement these important programs as we work together to keep our children safe.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Salvatore Cordileone  
Archbishop of San Francisco

## EMERGENCY/SAFETY PROCEDURES

The safety of the students and catechetical staff is of paramount importance. All actions taken shall bear in mind the safety and well-being of both students and staff members. In case of emergency/natural disaster the Emergency Procedure Plan will be followed.

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

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

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

**B. CHILD ABUSE**

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

**C. CHILD PROTECTION**

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

**D. DANGEROUS MATERIALS**

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

**E. GANGS**

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

## RIGHT TO AMEND

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

This family handbook has been approved by:

Rev. George Williams, S.J.  
Pastor, St. Agnes Church

Sr Julia Prinz, VDMF  
Director, Ignatian Spiritual Life Center

Sr Teresa Malave, VDMF  
Coordinator, Children's Faith Formation

September 2021

## Parent Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have access to the St. Agnes CFF Family Handbook. I have read and understand the policies and procedures stated in this handbook and my family agrees to follow these guidelines.

I understand that I have the right to ask questions regarding any aspect of the policies outlined in the Handbook. Questions may be directed to Sr Teresa Malave, Children's Faith Formation Coordinator  
[Teresa@sainttagnessf.org](mailto:Teresa@sainttagnessf.org).

Please note that this handbook is subject to change reflecting the needs of the program and children and families that we serve. Should there be a change in the handbook, families will be notified through email and changes posted to the handbook on our website.

(This signature may be completed electronically through the online registration sign up <http://www.saintagnessf.com/cff.html>. A hard copy of this signature form should be submitted if you do not register online.)

Child(ren) Name(s):

Parent Signature(s):

Date: