



*Divine Mercy of our Lord  
Catholic Church*

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Mesquite, Texas 75149

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Office Hours:  
Monday – Friday 7:00am – 4:00pm  
Thursday – Day Off  
*Lunch Hour: 12 noon to 1:00pm*

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## Mission Statement

We, the Divine Mercy of Our Lord Catholic Church are a culturally diverse community that seeks to grow in faith and in fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As the Body of Christ, we celebrate together and witness to others God's Divine Mercy both in word and in service. We proclaim His Infinite Love by teaching, through evangelization and formation, and by ministering to the needs of all people, in fulfillment of our common baptismal commitment to love one another as God loves us.

# Nurturing Faith at Home

Our Faith Formation Program can only begin to nurture our children in the Catholic tradition. You, as parents, are the primary educators of your children. The following guidelines and suggestions are provided for families to share and nurture faith formation within the home.

- Recognized God's love in daily events by living thanks and expressing enthusiasm about anything you enjoy. Remember what God has done in your own life and family. Birthdays, an anniversary, the beginning of the new school year, etc., are natural times to think about what God has done and is doing.
- Take time to verbalize what you think God is doing, the questions you have, and your awareness of God's presence.
- Read the Bible together. Pray the Lord's Prayer together. Make the Sign of the Cross together.
- Provide family blessings in your home. A wonderful resource is *Prayers for the Domestic Church: A Handbook for Worship in the Home*.
- Regular attendance at Mass by the family will continue the learning experience. Being on time encourages a sense of responsibility to worship together with others. Include a time in your family's Sunday Schedule for sharing your experience at Mass.
- Attend and assist in teaching the Faith Formation classes. Let your children know that learning is important for you also.



# Expectations

## **PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

Ensure that you and your child/children attend classes regularly, if applicable OR, if you are in the At-Home Program, ensure that you and your child/children keep up with the weekly assignments. Please communicate any special need or circumstances that may affect your child during the regular class meeting.

Encourage regular attendance at Mass; Regular attendance enhances a continuity of learning experiences and an opportunity for building community. Being on time encourages a sense of responsibility to worship together with others.

## **PARENTS/GUARDIANS AS CATECHISTS**

Provide a loving, Christian atmosphere within the learning environment so that children will be able to grow in their faith. How can we do this?

- Prepare and teach designated curriculum.
- Be a Christian role model.
- Communicate regularly with other parent/catechists in the program.
- Communicate with the Faith Formation Coordinators to share problems or ideas.

## **STUDENTS**

- Behave in a Christian manner at all times showing respect and being cooperative with adults and other students.
- Listen while others talk.
- Actively participate in activities and discussions.
- Respect others and other's property.

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Divine Mercy of our Lord Faith Formation Program. Faith Formation is the responsibility of the entire community (parents, volunteer coordinators and staff). It is an ongoing process beginning at birth and continuing throughout one's life. Because of the tireless efforts of many, our program is possible. Thank you in advance for your gift of self.

This handbook is primarily a means of communication. It is meant to provide you, the parent/guardian, with helpful information on how we intend to go about our work. Divine Mercy of Our Lord Faith Formation Program reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents and volunteers will be notified if changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this handbook.

## GENERAL POLICIES

### MEMBERSHIP

Participants of the program must be active members of our parish. If you live within the Divine Mercy boundaries we encourage you to complete a ***Parish Registration Card*** and begin using your tithing envelope. (Min \$10/wk)

All Families of the Faith Formation Program must be **active members** of our Parish for a minimum of 1 year. Active members are classified by using their tithing envelopes. (min. \$10/wk). Our responsibility is to serve the entire community of Divine Mercy as set by the Dioceses of Dallas. Those Boundaries consist of:

North – Town East Boulevard - 75150  
East – Dallas County Line - 75149  
South – Interstate Highway 20 - 75159  
West – Interstate Highway 635 – 75181 & 75180

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Faith Formation calendar is designed to meet the number of class sessions suggested by the Diocesan Office of Religious Education. Our calendar consists of approximately 27-28 class sessions. Please remember that regular attendance and punctuality are important and should be encouraged by you as parents. Through regular attendance and participation you and your child will more fully benefit from our Faith Formation Program.

After five (5) absences, the Faith Formation Advisory Council will contact you to discuss whether your child will receive credit for the year. If we are unable to contact you by mail or telephone due to incomplete information from our database, then your child will be dropped from the program and receive an incomplete for that year. However, the Faith Formation Office does recognize extenuating circumstances. These situations will be handled on an individual basis. Every effort will be made to be sensitive to each family's needs.

- The students and their parent/guardian must attend the Faith Formation classes unless otherwise stated at registration.
  - The students are required to complete the following:
    - No more than 5 absents
    - Participate in class
    - Bring book and folder to class



## SACRAMENT PREREQUISITES FOR THE SACRAMENTAL STUDENT

**VERY IMPORTANT: YOU MUST SUBMIT A COPY OF YOUR CHILD'S BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE NO LATER THAN 6 MONTHS BEFORE THE SACRAMENT IS RECEIVED.**

### Penance and Eucharist

Provisional Guidelines for Sacramental Preparation requires that there be a discernment of readiness for each child:

Article 1.4 – Any child who has reached the age of reason and has expressed a desire to learn about the Eucharist is to be presented for catechesis.

*Canon Law 97§2 - Age of reason A minor who has not completed the seventh year of age is called an infant and is considered incapable of personal responsibility; on completion of the seventh year, however, the minor is presumed to have the use of reason.*

Prior to receiving the Sacrament of Penance and Eucharist, the student must complete the following:

1. Be Baptized in a Catholic Church (*a copy of the Baptismal certificate must be in the file*)
  2. Complete two (2) consecutive years of Faith Formation. (*if one year was completed in another parish, you must obtain a letter from that parish*)
  3. Fulfill the requirements mentioned below
  4. Attend Mass
- The students of second year preparation for the **Sacrament Penance and Eucharist** must attend the scheduled sessions required for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students as their weekly classes. Students must fulfill the following requirements:



- No more than 3 absents for the year
- Know Basic Prayers
- Know Basic Teachings of the Catholic Faith
- Understand the importance of Penance
- Attend parish Penance service during Advent and Lent.
- Interview with Father Ernesto Torres
- Attend workshop
- Pass the final exam

The sacrament of Eucharist will be delayed for any of students that do not meet these requirements. The delay will be on a per student bases.

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## Pre-Confirmation (1<sup>st</sup> year Confirmation)

Pre-Confirmation is considered as the first of the two year preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The students of **Pre-Confirmation** must attend their designated class. This class is to help prepare them for their Confirmation the following year. The Pre-Confirmation class will cover material which has previously been introduced in other Faith Formation classes, but this material will be more in depth.

A student may help in any of the other Faith Formation sessions to receive service hours, but may not substitute it for their class. Parents do not ordinarily need to attend pre-confirmation class; **however**, *if we experience disciplinary problems with a student or if a student fails to turn in an assignment by the due date, a parent or the sponsor will be required to attend classes until the problem has been resolved.*

The 1<sup>st</sup> day of class will be an orientation for both students and parents.

- All students of Pre-Confirmation must fulfill the following requirements:
    - No more than 5 absences
    - Know Basic Prayers
    - Know Basic Teachings of the Catholic Faith
    - Complete service hours as follows:
      - 5 family – Service to help at home with your family
      - 5 religious – Service which promotes or further the mission of the Church
      - 5 community – Service to the community
- (Must have at least 6 hours accumulated before the Christmas Break.)**
- Participate with Team to complete a Group Project
  - Research and Present a Saint to their Team
  - Participate in Reception for Confirmation Class
  - Pass the final exam

Any Pre-Confirmation students that do not fulfill these requirements will be held back until student demonstrates knowledge of the Basic Teachings and Importance of Sacrament.



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## SACRAMENTAL STUDENT - CONTINUE

### Confirmation

Provisional Guidelines for Sacramental Preparation requires that there be a discernment of readiness for each child:

Article 1.5 – Any person who has reached the age of reason and has expressed a desire to learn about the Confirmation can be presented for catechesis. He/she should have an awareness of the gift of the sacrament by which he/she is enriched by the fullness of the Holy Spirit and is bound more perfectly to the Church.

The preparation for Confirmation is not just another year in a formal religious education program, and preparation is more than academic knowledge or social action. Confirmation requires an informed act of faith on the part of the candidate.

For such a religious act minimum readiness requires that besides the normal course of catechetical instruction and training, the youth must participate in the Confirmation program which includes the entire academic, spiritual and services activities. Furthermore, a candidate's growth in personal faith must be identified by parents, sponsor, pastor, catechists, and representative members of the local believing community.

Prior to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, the student must complete the following:

1. Be Baptized in the Catholic Church (*a copy of the Baptismal certificate must be in the file 6 months prior to receiving the Sacrament*)
2. Have received the Sacrament of Eucharist
3. Complete two (2) years of Faith Formation. (*if one year was completed in another parish, you must obtain a letter from that parish*)
4. Fulfill the requirements mentioned below
5. Attend Mass

The students of **Confirmation** must attend their designated class. This class is to help them understand the importance of Confirmation which completes their sacraments of initiation by being sealed with the Holy Spirit. The Confirmation class will explain the importance and responsibilities which follow Confirmation and becoming an adult in the eyes of the Catholic Church.

A student may help in any of the other Faith Formation sessions to receive service hours, but may not substitute it for their class. Parents do not ordinarily need to attend confirmation class; **however**, *if we experience disciplinary problems with a student or if a student fails to turn in an assignment by the due date, a parent or the sponsor will be required to attend classes until the problem has been resolved.*

The 1<sup>st</sup> day of class will be an orientation for both students and parents.

- Parents and Sponsors must attend designated meetings scheduled by teachers.
- The students of Confirmation must fulfill the following requirements:
  - No more than 3 absences
  - Know Basic Prayers
  - Know Basic Teachings of the Catholic Faith
  - Complete a total of 30 service hours (10 family, 10 community and 10 religious). **Must have at least 15 hours accumulated before the Christmas Break.**
  - Visit a nursing home and write a 1 page report (how you felt before & after)
  - Go to the parish Penance and Reconciliation service
  - Attend the Confirmation Retreat
  - Write a letter to the Bishop of the Dallas Dioceses
  - Write a Saint essay
  - Be interviewed by Father Ernesto Torres
  - Pass the Final Exam



The sacrament of Confirmation will be delayed for any of students that do not fulfill these requirements:

#### NOTES:

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**COST FOR THE FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM**

Active members of Divine Mercy Parish (min of 1 year) *Active members are classified by using their tithing envelopes.* (min. \$10/wk). Members within Divine Mercy boundaries as set by the Dioceses of Dallas:

- North – Town East Boulevard - 75150
- East – Dallas County Line - 75149
- South – Interstate Highway 20 - 75159
- West – Interstate Highway 635 – 75181 & 75180

Registration Fees for Active Members

1 Child.....	\$30.00
2 Children.....	\$50.00
3 Children.....	\$70.00
Family of 4 or more .....	\$100.00

Non-registered families will be assessed an additional fee which is double the registration fee.

*The Money for the registration fees is to cover the cost of books and supplies that the children will use in the Faith Formation Program. All Tuition must be paid prior to start of program. Late fees will be applied after the determined registration dates.*

Supplementary Fee for Sacramental Activities

First Communion .....	\$20.00
Confirmation.....	\$30.00

*This supplementary fee is due the year they receive their sacrament. This money is used to cover the cost for additional material, retreats/workshops, robe rentals and other expenses. All tuition must be paid prior to start of program.*

**Payment arrangements will be made for family that desire to pay over several months. If you are unable to pay due to special circumstances, please contact the office and talk to the director of religious education. NO CHILD OF A REGISTERED FAMILY WILL BE DENIED FORMATION FOR FINANCIAL REASONS.**

**VERY IMPORTANT: YOU MUST SUBMIT A COPY OF YOUR CHILD’S BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE BEFORE THE YEAR IN WHICH THE SACRAMENT IS RECEIVED. NO COPY IN FILE WE BE REASON FOR DELAY OF SACRAMENT.**



## **GROUP FORMATION**

All sessions will meet for 1½ hours every week beginning with the second week in September. *See calendar at the end of the handbook.*

It is required that an adult attend the Group sessions with the child. All will receive the lesson for the day. Since the safety of the children ultimately rests with the parents/guardians, our policy states that if at least one adult parent/guardian cannot attend the group session, the child may not attend. For safety reasons, name badges must be worn by all adults during the sessions within the Faith Formation. All volunteers must wear their badges visibly during the session. This allows us to implement our Safe Environment Policy during the Faith Formation sessions.

## **BAD WEATHER POLICY**

If on the weekend or regularly scheduled Faith Formation classes in which the Mesquite schools have been closed due to bad weather, then the Faith Formation classes will be cancelled. For those in the regular group sessions, if on any scheduled day of meetings the weather becomes threatening, please call your Coordinator or DRE to see if classes have been cancelled for that day. Faith Formation office 972-289-7376

## **SUPPLIES**

Each student is expected to bring their book and folder to each class. Other supplies will be furnished by office.

## **VISITORS**

In keeping with our Safe Environment policy, the following guidelines must be followed:

- Occasionally, a student may wish to invite a friend to attend the class with him/her. Visitors are welcome, but the parent/guardian must first fill out a Visitor Pass, which will be available from Coordinator or DRE. Please limit the visitors due to space and other limitations.
- If the visitor is older than 14 years old, they must remain with the adults the duration of the session and will not be allowed to join the children at any time except the general group welcoming and ending the session.
- All adults older than 18 years must remain in the general area with the parents. For safety reasons they will not be permitted in the classrooms unless they have met the required screening process as stated by the Dioceses of Dallas and receive their identification. This is a procedure that is required by the Dioceses of Dallas. All information shall remain confidential.

## **REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

The registration forms are located at the church office. These forms include:

- Registration Application
- Available Times
- Fee Schedule

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT REQUIREMENTS**

***It is required that an adult attend the Group sessions with the child, unless otherwise stated in the requirements.*** All will receive the lesson for the day. Since the safety of the children ultimately rests with the parents/guardians, *our policy states that if at least one adult parent/guardian cannot attend the group session, the child may not attend.* Identification badges must be worn by adults during all group meetings within the Faith Formation. This allows us to implement our Safe Environment Policy during all meetings.

All adults older than 18 years that wish to volunteer in the FF program must complete a background screening form and receive their identification. This is a procedure that is required by the Dioceses of Dallas. This is only a screening and everything shall remain confidential.

### **Meetings and Study groups:**

1. Two cleared adults must supervise each group of students at all times. A teen aide may help in place of one of the adults. *(A husband and wife working together do not count as two cleared adults. A teen aide and his/her parent do not count as two cleared adults.)*
2. Students younger than 17 must be accompanied by a parent or two cleared adults if they leave the classroom area.
3. Students younger than 18 are not allowed to leave the building unless they are accompanied by their parent or two cleared adults.

### **After the event:**

1. Parents must pick up their child promptly.
2. ALL minors must wait inside the narthex doors for their parents (this applies to anyone under 18).
3. Two cleared adults must remain with the minors until they have been picked up.
4. Minors who have driven themselves to Faith Formation must go directly to their cars and leave the parking lot. Parents must sign a permission slip and provide office with copy of Diver's License.
5. If parents have made arrangements for someone other than a family member to drive a student home, a signed note from parent must be on file.

For those of you in the At-Home Program, if you wish to volunteered, or plan on volunteering to assist the Coordinators during the 6 general meetings, must complete the screening process.

## **SPRING BREAK**

Spring Break will be observed the same weekend as the break in the Mesquite Schools. No Faith Formation classes will take place during that week.



# Family Agreement

2008-09

As a family, we have read this handbook and agree to the adhere policies of Divine Mercy of Our Lord Faith Formation Program. We realize that we are part of a team, which is inclusive of other families, parish volunteers and staff. We agree to work with a positive attitude of open-mindedness.

We realize that we have certain responsibilities for which we will be held accountable. Our signatures hereto testify that we agree with the above statement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Parent/Guardian)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Parent/Guardian)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Children in the Family:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Grade \_\_\_\_\_