



2025-2026 FAITH FORMATION HANDBOOK

St. William the Abbot
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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The Office of Faith Formation

Located in the Convent Center Building (on the corner of Jackson Avenue and Maple Street), we're here to help with anything you and your family may need on your journey within our parish. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us!

Office Hours:

Monday - Wednesday: 10am - 4pm

Thursday: 10am - 3pm

Contact Information:

516-783-2528

faithformation@stwilliam.org

stwilliam.org/faith-formation

2020 Jackson Avenue; Seaford, NY 11783

Our Team:

Rev. Joseph H. Fitzgerald - Pastor

Mrs. Laura Walsh - Director of Religious Education

Ms. Carly Spadafora - Confirmation Coordinator

Mrs. Maria Paguaga - Office Assistant

General Class Information

Level 1:

All classes for Level 1 are parent-taught. There will be monthly parent meeting and/or parent/child sessions to reinforce the lessons being learned at home. Completion of Level 1 is required to make First Holy Communion.

Levels 2:

For the first half of year, lessons are parent-taught. In-person classes begin in January and meet in St. William the Abbot School. Once your class and meeting time/day has been assigned, we are unable to make any changes. Typically, students receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in Level 2.

Levels 3-6:

Classes are assigned and meet in St. William the Abbot School. Once your class and meeting time/day has been assigned, we are unable to make any changes.

Levels 7 & 8:

Levels 7 and 8 are part of our two -year Confirmation preparation program. Each level meets bi-weekly in the Abbey (lower church). Completion of both levels is required before a student receives Confirmation, which is usually held in the spring for Level 8 students.

Pick-Up and Dismissal Guidelines

Levels 2-6:

All classes meet at St. William the Abbot School from either 4:30pm-5:30pm or 6pm-7pm. Children should be brought to the back entrance of the school, using the Washington Avenue gates, where the doors will open 5 minutes before the start of classes. Please park in designated spots and escort your child to the door. All students should have their books, any assignments, and other supplies ready.

Dismissal will also be from the back doors of the school, using the Washington Avenue gates and parking lot, 5 minutes after the end of class. No other entrances/exits will be used. Please park in designated spots and collect your student from dismissal. All students must be met by an adult. If someone other than the students' parent/guardian has permission to pick them up, please call or email the Office of Faith Formation to make a notation.

Levels 7 & 8:

Classes meet bi-weekly on Wednesdays from either 5pm-6:30pm or 7pm-8:30pm in The Abbey (the lower church). Children should be dropped off at the Abbey Entrance in the main parking lot in the back of the church 5 minutes before the start of class to ensure they have enough time to check-in and find their seats. Please have your books, any assignments, and other supplies ready.

Levels 7 and 8 will be dismissed from the church parking lot and will be monitored by the Office of Faith Formation until they are released to a parent/guardian. If another adult has permission to pick them up, please call or email the Office of Faith Formation to make a notation.

Early Dismissal from Class

Commitment to our Faith Formation classes is important. If a student must be excused from class for an urgent or unavoidable reason (ie, a doctor's appointment), a note signed by the student's parent/guardian and indicating the reason for the early dismissal must be given to a member of our Faith Formation team upon arrival. Please note that sports practices and games, after school activities, other classes, or participation in other groups does not constitute a valid reason for early dismissal. In these cases, a parent/guardian must sign the child out at the front desk while a member of our team escorts the child from class.

Attendance and Lateness

As the members of the Faith Formation team are committed to your child's faith education, we ask that you be as committed in return. Lateness and excessive absenteeism interferes with your child's progress and is disruptive to both the volunteer catechist and the rest of the children in the class, and can effect your child's preparedness for sacraments and/or moving on to the next level of our program.

We ask that you please contact the Office of Faith Formation in advance if you know your child will be absent. We permit a maximum of four (4) absences per academic year.

If your child is late three (3) times, this will count as one (1) absence. We consider any child who arrives any more than 5 minutes past the start of class to be late. Please allow yourself enough time to get your child to class.

If an extended illness results in your child missing three (3) consecutive classes, we will require a doctor's note explaining the reason for the absences. A temporary catechetical plan can they be created to keep your child on track to meet the program requirements.

Food and Drink

Absolutely no food or drinks (other than plain water) are permitted at any point during class times. "Treats" or "goodie bags" for any holiday, birthday, or other celebration cannot be distributed. Non-food items may be distributed with the advance permission of the Director of Faith Formation.

Cell Phones/Tablets/Smart Watches/Etc.

As class time is limited, any devices that are causing a distraction to your or any other child in class will be confiscated and held for the duration of the class by a member of the Faith Formation team. The same policy is in effect for toys, fidget spinners, stuffed animals, desk pets, etc. Ideally, we ask that you keep these items at home or in your car until you pick your child up.

Books & Supplies

Each week, students are expected to bring their book, a writing instrument, and any homework or assignments given to them by their catechists. If a book is lost or destroyed beyond the ability to be used during the year, you will be responsible to pay a \$20 replacement fee.

All textbooks/workbooks that are used in our program meet the guidelines set by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Conduct & Discipline

We are all called to live by the words and examples of Jesus. We expect everyone - including all students, catechists, volunteers, staff members, clergy - to be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect at all times.

The Director of Faith Formation shall use reasonable judgement in responding to student misconduct, investigations, and accusations. Suitable penalties may include a verbal warning, or in the case of serious misconduct, the student may be removed from class and a parent/guardian may be asked to pick them up immediately. For flagrant or repeated misconduct, the Director of Faith Formation may determine it necessary for a student to be removed from a program permanently at any point during the year. Bullying of any kind will not be tolerated.

Vandalism - Any student vandalizing any surface anywhere on parish/school property will be financially responsible for the repair or replacement of the damaged item. This includes, but is in no way limited to writing in or on another students' books, marking desks/tables/walls/surfaces, ripping/tearing any books, papers, or decorative items, or removing/rearranging the contents of a desk or desk caddy.

Substance Abuse - Any student found in possession of any illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property or at any parish-sponsored event will be immediately expelled from the Faith Formation program.

If you are concerned about a situation concerning your child, please contact the Director of Faith Formation immediately.

Dress Code

Please dress with the respect our surroundings deserve and be mindful that our students will be making frequent visits to church. Hats and hoods are not permitted to be worn in any of our buildings. No clothing may be worn with suggestive or questionable language or graphics. No bare midriffs/low-cut tops, clothing that allows undergarments to be seen, short skirts/shorts.

Class Placement

Preferences may be indicated during regular registration and we do our best to accommodate your schedule. Once a class is assigned, we are unable to make any changes.

Program Closings & Cancellations

Any changes to our schedule will be posted on the parish social media channels (@stwilliamabbot). We encourage you to follow the parish social media for these and other important and time-sensitive updates as we will likely not be able to monitor our office phones or emails. When time permits, we will also make every effort to post closings on News12 Long Island. Please note that if St. William the Abbot School or the Seaford School District is closed because of weather or federal holidays, our program will follow suit.

Medical & Safety Issues

Your child's safety is our first priority, and as such, we have put the following plans in place:

Medical Issues - For the safety of your child, we ask that you notify the Director of Faith Formation of any medical conditions (including but not limited to allergies, asthma or other breathing impairments, auditory or visual impairments, seizure disorders, etc.). We also ask that you alert us to any gluten sensitivities as alternate arrangements for low-gluten hosts can be made for receiving Holy Communion. Please understand that no medication of any kind may be given to a student by another student, catechist, volunteer, or parish employee. If your child requires the use of an Epi Pen, please contact the Office. In these cases, a VIRTUS-trained adult may accompany this child to their classes in the event an Epi Pen needs to be used.

Entrances & Exits - All doors to the school are locked from the inside. For the safety of all children, all visitors/guests must be buzzed in and provide proper identification. We cannot allow parents or other family members inside the school during classes for any reason, including the need for the restroom. No child will be permitted to leave the premises without a parent or other authorized person present. Identification is required if someone other than the custodial parent/guardian is picking up the child, along with a note from the parent/guardian.

Custodial Issues & Orders of Protection - Where there is an order of protection in effect, a copy of such must be submitted to the Office of Faith Formation along with a photograph of the party named in the order.

Mass Attendance

In your role as Catholic parents, it is essential that you guide and teach your children in their daily prayers, how to read the scriptures, practice devotionals, and to become a faithful Catholic disciple. Children learn what they live, and the Celebration of the Eucharist must be on the top of the list of the priorities you embrace as a family. As such, weekly Mass attendance is required for all students enrolled in our program. After each weekend Mass, QR codes will be displayed in the church at. Once you scan them, you will need to enter the primary email address for your family (the one used for registration) or use “The Mass” app for instant recording.

If you attend Mass at another parish, please fill out the form on our website (stwilliam.org/faith-formation), which may be turned in at your child’s next class along with a copy of the bulletin from the parish you attended.

Students in all levels must attend at least 75% of weekend Masses. Attendance by QR code will begin the weekend of September 20th/21st and go through Palm Sunday weekend. Mass attendance will impact your child’s success in the program, ability to advance to their next class level, and their readiness to receive First Holy Communion or Confirmation.

Sacramental Preparation

Receiving First Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation are important steps in your child’s faith formation, and two-year preparation is required for both. This will help your child understand the sacraments and deepen their relationship with God as they prepare their hearts.

First Holy Communion – Levels 1 and 2 must be completed in preparation for First Holy Communion, which takes place in the spring. Dates will be provided before Christmas break. Dates/times are assigned by class and we cannot accommodate requests for changes. Students will also prepare for their First Reconciliation, which occurs during their class time a few weeks before Communion. More information will be provided at the Level 2 parent meetings.

Confirmation – Levels 7 and 8 must be completed in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, which takes place in the spring. The date will not be released until January. The time of the Confirmation service is assigned by class and we cannot accommodate requests for changes. In addition to passing an interview, students are required to complete a series of assignments and Apostolic Service Hours as they prepare for Confirmation. They will also be expected to attend a retreat in the weeks leading up to the sacrament. More information will be provided at the Level 7 and 8 parent meetings.

Program Volunteers

Without dedicated volunteers, our program would not be able to exist. We encourage you to discern if you are able to volunteer with us as a catechist, substitute, hall monitor, safety monitor, or table facilitator.

In accordance with the Diocese of Rockville Centre, all volunteers must be VIRTUS certified. Our office will be happy to provide more information.

Parent volunteers are also eligible for a partial rebate in registration fees.

Registration

Registration is required each year your child participates in our program. Registration typically opens in May and closes in August. While we take your family's indicated preferences into account, class placements are done on a first-come; first-served basis.

All students of our Faith Formation program must be registered parishioners of St. William the Abbot. We are unable to place students who are not registered or registered to another parish in our program.

Baptism Certificates - Baptismal certificates are required for all students. These can be obtained by contacting the parish in which your child was baptized.

Transfer Students - Students transferring from another program must obtain a transfer letter from their previous program and a baptismal certificate.

Students without Prior Faith Formation - Situations where students are registering beyond Level 1 without any formal faith formation/religious education will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine placement level and a personalized catechetical plan. For children aged 10 and above, we advise you to contact rcia@stwilliam.org

Children with Special Needs

Providing a faith formation experience for children with special needs is an important part of our ministry. Our Director will meet with the families of those with special needs to determine how we can best serve your child and make every effort to provide the best possible experience and environment for your child. If your child has an IEP, please submit it annually to faithformation@stwilliam.org.

Expectations for Confirmation Preparation Classes (Levels 7 & 8)

Faith Formation Attendance

Our Confirmation Preparation students will receive their Confirmation Preparation within the context of their regularly scheduled Faith Formation Class. Classes provide our students with a solid review of the basic doctrines of the Catholic Faith that they have been studying since they were small children. In order to remain eligible to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, the student must attend all Faith Formation classes. No more than two absences are allowed for the year.

Late Arrival/Early Dismissal

Students are expected to arrive for class several minutes before class is scheduled to begin. Classes will begin promptly. If a child arrives fifteen minutes late for class, he/she will be marked "Late," and it will count as ½ of an absence. An early dismissal will be recorded in the same manner as a "Late."

If you have a special situation that will require your child to have multiple absences, call the Director of Faith Formation to make alternate arrangements. Conflicts with sport schedules, dance classes or family travel are not considered serious situations.

Switching Class Times

We want your child to attend classes, so switching sessions is permissible. You need to let us know by the morning of your scheduled class so we can be prepared with seating and materials. Please email faith formation at faithformation@stwilliam.org.

Parental Involvement

The role of the parent of a Confirmation candidate is indispensable because it is primarily within the family that a child will learn how to live the teachings of Jesus. Parental support and encouragement during this preparation process is vital for their child's spiritual growth. We have added three occasions during class time where parents are asked to join their child for instruction and prayer. If a parent cannot attend, a grandparent or the child's sponsor may go instead. Please mark your calendar accordingly.