Welcome to Saint Elizabeth Elementary Faith Formation Program [EFF]!

The desire of EFF is to partner with you as much as possible in the formation of your children in the Catholic Faith. The task of raising children as disciples of Jesus Christ and members of the Catholic Church is not easy. Let us work together!

We invite you to accompany your child through this year of formation. How can you do this?

- **Bring your child to Mass on Sunday.** The celebration of Mass is the “glue” of our faith. What we teach in EFF does not “stick” well, if the children are not experiencing the grace of the liturgy regularly. This is particularly true for those who have received First Penance and First Holy Communion. Jesus longs to be with us at Mass more than we could ever comprehend.

- **Ask your child about their session.** On the way home, at dinner or before bed, be sure to ask, “What was your favorite part of the lesson today?” “What was the main topic discussed?” and “Do you have any questions?” Get to know your child’s catechist; become familiar with the book and the content covered. Check your child’s folder for important notices and homework assignments.

- **Pray with your child**, every day. Pray the *Stewardship Prayer* and other prayers found in the student books and add your own words.

- **Plan ahead to attend the family prayer services** during the EFF school year. To include as many children as possible in these programs, we offer three celebrations: Monday and Wednesday at 5:00 PM and Tuesday at 6:30 PM. Note, attendance is taken at these sessions.

  Please mark your calendar now with these dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advent Prayer Service</td>
<td>December 9-10-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lenten Prayer Service</td>
<td>March 9-10-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing Prayer Service</td>
<td>May 11-12-13</td>
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- **Bring your child to every EFF session** (and for the entire session as much as possible). Be in the classroom for the start time. Limit early dismissal. It is okay for your child to be late occasionally for sports practices and other extra-curricular activities.

- **Special Needs** of your child should be given in writing to the EFF Office and to your child’s catechist.

Please read through this handbook so you can know the policies and procedures for our faith formation process.

**God bless you and your family!**
MISSION OF SAINT ELIZABETH EFF -- to bring children and parents into “Communion with Christ.”

“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and me in you.”
[The Gospel of John 14:20]

The task of our catechists is to help our children encounter God and build a living relationship with Jesus Christ in and through the Catholic Church.

PROGRAM GOALS:
The Saint Elizabeth EFF program supports the parish mission statement by helping form the faith lives of our children in kindergarten through seventh grade and provides special sacramental and catch up tutorial classes as needed. Our goals are to:

- Inflame a desire in the children to learn, know and understand their relationship with Christ through our Catholic Faith and apply it to their lives.

- Prepare the children to regularly receive the sacraments as a statement of a living, vibrant faith and enhance the worship experience of children at Mass.

- Help them recognize, develop and use their God given gifts in stewardship service to others. There are many service projects incorporated within our program throughout the year.

- Encourage the children to engage in faith discussions with their parents/guardians.

- Assist parents/guardians to understand their unique role in the formation of their child’s faith life.

The Saint Elizabeth EFF program is available to all registered members of the parish in kindergarten through seventh grade.

If your child was not baptized at Saint Elizabeth Church, please provide a copy of the child’s Baptismal Certificate at the time of initial registration.

Special classes are offered for older children who have not received any or all of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist). We are happy to work with students and families to develop a path to these sacraments.
UPDATE ATTENDANCE POLICY: Archdiocesan guidelines for elementary school children specify a minimum of thirty (30) sessions of formal religious education each year. Parents are expected to make every effort to have their children attend all the weekly classes delineated in the annual EFF calendar. Consistent attendance is a sign of parents’ commitment to have their children continue to grow in their understanding and their active practice of the Catholic Faith.

Regular EFF attendance promotes positive faith development. When an absence is necessary, parents are expected to contact the catechist and the EFF Office in advance to report that their child will not be in class that day.

Students will be assigned catch-up work for each session they miss. Students will be asked to catch up on missed lessons for every class they miss. If more than 3 classes are missed in a semester, students will also be assigned make-up work to ensure that they understand the concepts covered during the semester.

Should an extended illness or some other serious family circumstances prevent a child’s consistent attendance, parents are expected to contact the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education (610-646-6545) to design an alternate plan for the child’s ongoing faith formation during the extended absence.

Sometimes sports and extracurricular schedules change. We understand and are willing to change the day and/or session your child comes to EFF as long as there is space available. Call us so we can discuss the options available to you.

UPDATE EARLY DISMISSAL: Early dismissals should be requested for special and serious reasons only, not for athletics. (Please note that coaches of teams through St. Elizabeth Athletic Ministry (SEAM) know that no student in EFF is to miss or leave class early for practices/games). Since there is a rhythm to each session, a child leaving early loses the sense of continuity and closure with his/her class.

Please discuss with the D/CRE any situations which require more than occasional early dismissals. Follow this procedure:

- While not encouraged early dismissal requests, up to 20 minutes before the end of class, will be allowed. **Requests for earlier dismissal will be counted as an absence.**
- Please submit an Early Dismissal Form or written note to the EFF OFFICE before class. We will notify the teachers.
- At the time of the dismissal, come to the entrance of the education center and sign your child out of session.
- We will call the classroom to request your child come to the office. Your child will meet you in the vestibule.
**UPDATED TARDINESS:** Students should be in class for at the start time for the session 4:45 or 6:30 PM on weekdays and 10:30 AM on Sundays. Our classes are short and each minute is valuable. Sign-in by parents is required for children arriving late.

**STUDENT ARRIVAL:**

**Week One** – Students are expected to attend the first session with a parent. Bring your child to church at the start of the session. After a prayer service, parents will remain in church for an overview of the coming year. Parents will be dismissed approximately 15 minutes prior to the end of the session to go to class and meet their child’s teacher.

If you have multiple children in the program, follow this guideline:
Sacramental year students (2nd or 7th grade) or youngest child first.
Dismissal will be announced five minutes early to allow time for you to pick up your other children and meet their teacher.

**Weeks Two and Three**

1) If you wish to walk your child to class, park in the area protected by cones in front of the Education Center, the first two parking aisles closest to the woods.
Keep your child close to you in the parking lot as cars are backing up to leave or arriving.
You may walk your child to the classroom during these weeks to assist them in learning the location of their classroom.
2) Use the Car Line to drop off students (see below).

**Week Four and Beyond**

1) You may still park and walk your child to the entrance to the building. **Sign-in will be required by all adults who prefer to continue to walk their child to class.**
2) Use the Car Line to drop off students.

**UPDATED CAR LINE:**
The EFF Car Line operates from 4:30 – 4:45 PM and from 6:15 – 6:30 PM.
For the first two weeks of classes we will post signs for you to follow.

**Children should exit curbside.** A volunteer will open the car door to assist children to the sidewalk.

**Do not** allow children to exit the car in any area other than the designated drop-off spot. (Note: Anyone who attempts to drop off a child at another location will be re-directed to the parking areas or to the car-line.)

**Tardy:** Students arriving tardy (after 4:45 or 6:30 PM) must be dropped off in the Parent Walk-Area in parking aisles, then sign in at the office.

**Volunteers:** We need 2-3 volunteers for each session. To volunteer call 610-646-6545.
WEATHER RELATED EMERGENCIES:

Check the Saint Elizabeth parish website: www.stelizabethparish.org or

Call 610-646-6545 for a recorded message.

Go to KYW News radio 1060 and kyw1060.com website for announcements of closings. Our number is 1187.

NOTE: In most cases, if Saint Elizabeth Parish School is closed for bad weather, Elementary Faith Formation classes will also be cancelled for that day. If the weather clears significantly, EFF classes may be held. Updated notifications will be posted on the parish website.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: Your child’s safety is paramount to us.
All volunteers are required to submit to a Pennsylvania state criminal record check and a child abuse clearance. They are also required to take Archdiocesan training: “Protecting God’s Children” a Safe Environment training course, Mandated Reporting and any additional paperwork or training based on specific circumstances.

An Archdiocesan “Safe Environment” class will be presented to your child’s class. You can find helpful information at https://childyouthprotection.org/, go to Protect Children, then scroll down to Resources for Parents. If you wish to have your child “opt out” of this class, please contact the D/CRE.

UPDATED PREPARATION FOR CLASS:
To insure that students are ready for each session, please consider the following:
  CLOTHING AND ATTIRE: should be age appropriate for a school or church setting.
  FOOD AND GUM: neither are permitted in the building.
  SNACKS: please be sure your child has had a snack or meal before arrival at class
  RESTROOM: classes are relatively short, please have your child use the restroom prior to class to reduce the number of classroom interruptions. Unfortunately, we have had several mischievous events in the restrooms with water and toilet paper.

APPROPRIATE CONDUCT: Being faithful to our Catholic tradition, we promote acceptance and practice of the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes as laws for living. We strive to guide each child in a positive manner, affirming the good that is done to encourage positive behavior.

Examples of Inappropriate conduct:
  • Being disrespectful to anyone
  • Hitting or physically hurting anyone
  • Bringing any dangerous item into the school
  • Inappropriate use of electronics during class
  • Stealing or damaging property
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Should a child decide to misbehave, consequences are determined on an individual basis. It is our hope that each student will come to accept rules and regulations as a necessary part of our society and understand EFF rules are in place to promote the general wellbeing of all.

**UPDATED STE WEBSITE:** Please take a few minutes to review the EFF page on the parish website, [www.stelizabethparish.org](http://www.stelizabethparish.org), dropdown Education/EFF. Weekly parent letters are posted to the site, updated calendars and session information is also available on the site.

**STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS:** Progress reports are issued twice a year, December and May. Students will be evaluated on attendance, prayers, knowledge of the faith, and effort. Conferences are held only if requested by the catechist or parent.

**RESOURCES:** All students are issued the appropriate grade level materials at the beginning of the school year. Students are expected to bring their books, bible, prayer book and any other items designated by the teacher, to every session.

A replacement fee may be assessed for any books/materials that are lost and need to be replaced. The standard book replacement fee is $20.00 per book. Bibles and specialty items may have higher cost.

**STUDENT PICK-UP:**

**Parent ID Cards:** We have a large program with many people picking up students. To ensure safety of the children, we must identify all adults entering the building. Each family will be issued two cards at the beginning of the year. If you do not bring your card, **you will be required to present a photo ID (e.g. driver’s license) to the office staff.**

Let us know if you require replacement cards.

**Park, enter the Education Center and walk to your child’s classroom to pick up your child.** The catechist or assistant will dismiss children only and directly to parents. This allows the catechist or assistant to ensure we are dismissing to a parent or guardian.

If someone other than the parent or guardian will pick up your child, **before class, please complete and sign a Carpool Permission Slip and give it to your child’s catechist.**

**VISITATION OF CLASSES:** Parents are permitted to visit periodically by invitation or for special events. Unless there are special circumstances, parents are not permitted to sit in on classes on a routine basis during the year.

**COMMUNICATION:**
Parents who wish to consult with a catechist should do so outside of regular class time. Parents who wish to meet with the D/CRE may arrange an appointment by calling 610-646-6545.
RESOURCES:
Have you signed up for FORMED yet? This online program has Catholic resources, movies, books, audio content, pod casts and more for your use. To sign up simply go to ste.formed.org, enter your e-mail address and set up a personal password. You are then ready to go....

There is an adult spirituality lending library available to all parishioners. The library is located in the Holy Family Room, on the right side of the church narthex (vestibule). It is open whenever the church itself is open. You will find materials there that may be helpful to you.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES: Students are required to abide by all class rules, as well as to:

- Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.
- Pray for one’s catechist and fellow students each night.
- Bring books and other appropriate materials to every class.
- Be respectful in attitude and speech to the catechist, other adults and fellow classmates.
- Put forth one’s best effort by coming prepared and completing all class assignments.
- Be respectful of the personal space of others, keeping hands and feet away from others.
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Preparation for Sacraments

The Archdiocese requires two consecutive years of formal Catholic religious education prior to the reception of a sacrament. Readiness for the reception of a sacrament is determined by more than just the age and class level of the child. Discernment of readiness is shared by the parents, parish staff and the child. The pastor will be consulted if postponement of a sacrament is deemed advisable.

At Saint Elizabeth, the Sacraments of First Penance/Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are normally received in the second grade. Saint Elizabeth Parish Confirmation preparation begins in January of sixth grade, with emphasis on engagement with the parish community. The Sacrament of Confirmation is normally received in the seventh grade. Special formation classes are also offered for children and teens who have not yet received the Sacraments of Initiation.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THOSE RECEIVING SACRAMENTS IN 2019-2020:

FIRST PENANCE/FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Sacramental Workshop for Parents: Saturday, October 26, 2019
Starting with 8:30 AM Mass, followed by the workshop, 9:00-11:00 AM

Blessing of First Penance/First Holy Communion Candidates: Sunday, December 8, 2019
Blessing at 9:30 AM Mass, with social for candidates & their families following Mass

Celebration of First Penance: Saturday, February 8, 2020 at 11:00 AM
Candidates & their families arrive in church by 10:45 AM

Celebration of First Holy Communion: Weekend Masses, April 18-19 thru May 30-31, 2020,
[Specific Dates & Masses will be identified at the parent workshop in October]

CONFIRMATION

Sacramental Workshop for Sixth Grade Candidates & their Parents: Saturday, November 16, 2019
Starting with 5:30PM Mass, followed by formation gatherings in church & social hall

Blessing of Confirmation Candidates: Sunday, January 12, 2020
Sixth AND Seventh Grade Confirmation Candidates & Families
Blessing at 9:30 AM Mass, with social for candidates & their families following Mass

Confirmation Ceremony Rehearsal: Thursday, March 26, 2020, 6:30 PM
For 7th Grade Confirmation Candidates only; begin in the social hall

Confirmation Liturgy: Saturday, March 28, 2020 [begins promptly at 11:00 AM]
Students- arrive in social hall by 10:15 AM
Sponsors- arrive in church by 10:15 AM
Family Members- arrive in church, no later than 10:45 AM