

Faith First Program Information Package



Please read the package thoroughly before filling out your form

Welcome to Faith First! You and your family are embarking on an adventure! Not only will you be learning about your families special relationship with God, but you will be meeting members of your “local branch” of his community as you interact with St. John Fisher’s parishioners. We’re a welcoming bunch and we hope you and your child will enjoy spending time with us—in celebration, prayer, study, and community service activities that will bring us closer together as we share our talents and gifts with others in need.

Thank you for choosing us at St. John Fisher to share your spiritual journey. We are honored to be your companions and will do our best to support and guide your child’s education in the Roman Catholic faith.

What is the *Faith First* Program?

Faith First is a 6 year Catholic Education program designed for elementary school children and their families. It teaches the four pillars of the Roman Catholic faith: Creed, Sacraments, Morals, and Prayer. Each of these subjects is studied each year in increasing complexity as the children develop a deeper, more mature understanding of their faith. The program also helps prepare them to receive the sacraments as participating members of the Roman Catholic Church. The children are supplied with colorful workbooks with readings, prayers, activities, and spaces for creative drawing to enhance their learning experience.



Does my child need *Faith First*?

In a word, yes. The Diocese of Montreal has recognized the need for faith formation ever since the dissolution of confessional school boards—and specifically since the introduction of the new Ethics and Religious Culture Program. The schools have distanced themselves from the churches in an effort to accommodate all ethnic and religious beliefs and as a result of this the children have not been prepared to receive the sacraments or even given an understanding of our basic Liturgical calendar. Advent and Lent have been left by the wayside and Christmas and Easter—in the schools—have focused on Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny rather than the true meaning of these Holy Days: the birth, death and resurrection of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ.



In order to address this loss of faith education the Diocese has implemented the *Faith First* program. The 6 year program engages both children and parents and encourages families to continue on a lifelong journey of faith. Sacramental preparation is included in the *Faith First* program.

Does my family need *Faith First*?

Our children are our most precious assets. We pack nutritious lunches, update their vaccinations, coach their soccer teams and drive them all over the city for ballet, birthday parties and play dates. Anything as important as teaching them about their relationship to God and their Catholic community must involve the whole family. The *Faith First* program should not be looked upon as another chore on a par with laundry and grocery shopping. Transmitting our faith to our children should be an everyday way of life. They see how we relate to friends, co-workers, strangers. They watch our behaviour and listen to our conversations. If we attend Mass and participate in our parish community they integrate this into their own faith perceptions.



Ask yourself what you want for your family from this program. If you simply want your children to receive First Communion and Confirmation and then check those sacraments off your “to-do” list, you are doing a disservice to them and the devoted members of the Church. Enthusiasm and participation are key to making this program work for your family. **Regular church attendance is expected of all families** so your children—and you—can practice your faith in community. Please take the time to think about this before you register.



What is expected of me as a parent?

Families are expected to attend mass weekly to practice what the family is learning and share in community worship. Masses are:

Saturday: 5:00pm / Sunday 9:00am (Family Mass) / and 11:00am.

- † You have two options for study: you may choose to place your child in a study group in the church hall with a certified Catechist (see “Who are the catechists?”) or you may choose to work at home with your child. If you choose to work at home you will be provided with materials that will help you guide your child through the workbook. Also the website: www.faithfirst.com offers many activities, games, ideas and answers to questions you may have that will enhance your family’s learning experience.
- † Active participation in the St. John Fisher Parish community is expected of all families.
- † If your child is in a study group there may be homework you will be asked to check and sign as well as making sure any incomplete work is done.
- † There will be 4 parent meetings during the year. For each meeting you have the choice of attending on either Wednesday or Thursday. Meetings are held in the church hall at 7:00pm and last about an hour. One parent is expected to attend, occasionally bringing your child’s workbook so that it may be verified and you can ask any questions you may have about the material. Attendance will be taken.
- † There may be extra meetings for parents of children receiving Sacraments.

What is expected of my child?

Children and their parents are expected to attend mass weekly to practice their faith in community. As well we have a “Family Life” ministry at St. John Fisher that encourages the children to contribute actively by handing out bulletins, greeting parishioners etc. See our website for more information on Family Life.



- † Your child must be baptized.
- † A child studying at home is expected to read and complete one chapter in the workbook per week with a parent, as well as the applicable chapters during the Liturgical Season.
- † A child studying in a group is expected to attend weekly, on time, and to participate in group activities in a cooperative and respectful manner. Attendance will be taken. The child is asked to do, weekly, the “Faith Choice” activity at home and parents are encouraged to review and follow up on this activity. This encourages family participation and allows the child to witness the faith as lived in family life.
- † The child’s workbook will be collected occasionally at the parent meetings in order to evaluate the work done over the time period and help us gain knowledge of each child’s individual understanding of the material. The workbook will be returned after these evaluations.
- † There will be retreats and activities organized for families whose children are receiving sacraments.
- † Confirmation students and their families will participate in a group study and service program.
- † Children and families are expected to be active participants in parish life.

Who are the Catechists?

St. John Fisher Parish has a devoted group of volunteers who teach our children in groups in the church hall. Our catechists have taken “certification” courses in order to qualify them to lead study groups. These courses are provided by the Diocese and our parish pays for each catechist who wishes to become certified. We could not function without these dedicated, wonderful people and the children love studying in a group with their peers.



- If you choose to place your child in a group we will try to accommodate you. Please take note of the following:
- † Our catechists are volunteers whose availability may change from year to year. We cannot guarantee that there will be a catechist for your child’s Level or that there will be enough space for all the children requesting group study.
 - † The catechists choose their class time based on their own availability. Since they are volunteers and, often, working parents or students, the time choice is left up to them. We will notify you in the fall of their availability.

- † If your child is not available during the offered time slot his/her registration is automatically entered as "home-schooled" and you will be responsible for doing the program at home.
- † Groups usually comprise no more than 8 students but, again, this is left up to the discretion of the catechist.
- † Children studying in group are expected to attend weekly, on time, and to conduct themselves with respect for their teacher and their peers. Children who are chronically tardy, missing or disruptive will be asked to leave the group.
- † If your child is sick or must miss a class for any reason you are responsible for calling the catechist and making sure the work is done at home.
- † The catechist is responsible for calling all students if the class is cancelled for any reason.
- † The catechist may assign up to 4 chapters per year for home-study.

St. John Fisher is hoping to offer more spaces for group study. In order to do this we need *you!* Just like you, our catechists are parents with children in the program or, in some cases, grandparents with grandchildren in the program. We'd like to offer you the chance to join our team and become a volunteer catechist. Certification will be paid for by the parish and we will supply you with materials, a catechist manual and all the moral support you will need to be successful. Your availability dictates your schedule and we are very accommodating about time. Please consider teaching. Without new volunteers our group space is limited. Thank you for your consideration.



How do I register my child?

- † A completed registration form along with payment must be submitted before the deadline of June 01/10 to avoid a \$20.00 late fee.
- † A photocopy of the child's Baptismal Certificate (*not* Birth Certificate) must be submitted at the time of registration. If your child was baptized at St. John Fisher you must supply the *date* of the Baptism only. Any other documentation concerning sacraments received and/or *Faith First* levels done at another parish must be included with your registration.
- † The cost of the program is \$75.00 per child to a maximum of \$150.00 per family not including late fees. Registrations received after June 01/10 are automatically billed an extra \$20.00 per registration.
- † A \$15.00 fee will be applied to all NSF cheques.
- † You must fill out a form for each child, but you may pay for all your children on one cheque or you may pay in two installments: the first dated June 01/10 and the second dated no later than July 15/10. Please make your cheques payable to **St. John Fisher Parish**.
- † We will be collecting registrations during Final Workbook Verification on May 26th and 27th, 2010 from 6:30-7:30pm in the church hall. You may submit your registrations and ask any questions you may have then or:
- † You may drop off or mail your completed forms and cheques in a sealed envelope addressed to **Faith First** at the parish rectory: 120 Summerhill Ave. , Pte. Claire, Qc, H9R 2L7
- † Once your child is registered in the program your renewal forms will be mailed to you in the spring of the following year. Please keep us informed of any change of address.

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Is there anything else we should know?

Absolutely!! Our *Faith First* families are active in a number of parish projects and events. We produce a newsletter, *FFYI*, which you can access from our website to keep you up to date on what's happening. When you pick up your child's workbook at the Blessing of the Books Mass in September you will receive information and a calendar of events that are planned for the fall. The website also contains information about:

- † Our **Community Service** program for Level 6 students.
- † **Parent Volunteering** for activities
- † Our very successful and popular **Benedict Labre Meal Team** and **Sandwich Team**.
- † **Altar Service, Children and Adult Choirs**, our **Ministries of Hospitality** and **Family Life** and our **Adoration Chapel**.

If you have any questions about the program or other activities feel free to contact us:

Beverley Caughlin (PCL): Coordinator, *Faith First* 514-697-3788

Please visit our website: www.sjfp.org

On behalf of the *Faith First* program and St. John Fisher Parish, we welcome your child and your family to our community. May you find your family's faith journey rewarding and filled with the Holy Spirit. We guarantee you will meet many interesting people, discover fascinating things you didn't know about our faith, and that you will have a few laughs along the way,

God Bless you and your family,

Beverley Caughlin

Beverley Caughlin (PCL)
Faith First
St. John Fisher Parish

Our Fridge Reminder:



Registration due date: **June 01/10**

"Blessing of the Books" Mass:
Sunday, September 19, 2010 9:00am

All families are asked to attend and pick up their workbooks after the mass

Faith First Registration Policies

It is understood by all families registering for the Faith First Program that regular Mass attendance is expected. Special services such as Christmas, Ash Wednesday, etc. are considered part of regular Mass attendance.

Families registering for the first time at St. John Fisher must submit a photocopy of their child/ren's Baptismal Certificate with the registration form unless the child was baptized at St. John Fisher, in which case the date must be entered. Without the certificate the registration will not be processed.

Level 2 and Level 6 students are asked to submit a wallet-size picture of themselves with their registration form for our Parish Prayer Boards.

Our catechists choose their class times. If your child is not available for the given time, he/she will automatically be registered as a "home program" student. Children working in groups are expected to maintain a level of behaviour and participation. Chronic tardiness, frequently missed classes, or disruptive behaviour will disqualify your child for group study.

Children working at home are expected to complete a chapter a week with a parent or suitable guide.

Parent meetings are held four times a year in the church hall. One parent is expected to attend meetings. Attendance will be taken. Workbooks will be checked twice during the year at parent meetings with a final verification at the end of May.

Special meetings, family gatherings, retreats, and prayer services are all part of the Faith First experience and families are requested to attend them.

For families preparing for Confirmation:

Families of children in Level 6:Confirmation Program are expected to attend all 8 retreats over the year. Sponsors are welcome as well. For those who miss a retreat, there will be one make-up retreat given in June of the Faith First Year. If two retreats are missed, the child must write a short essay to be discussed with either a deacon or Fr. Tom about his/her readiness for Confirmation. If three or more retreats are missed, the child will have to wait until the next year to re-take them in order that they be properly prepared for their Confirmation.

All Level 6 students are expected to complete a minimum of 4 hours of Community Service, at least half of which must be served in the Parish Community. Details are included with your registration package.

The Confirmation Program is not available for completion over the summer of any given year.

All Level 6 students must submit a photocopy of their Sponsor's Baptismal Certificate not later than September 15th of the year they start the Confirmation Program.

Registration for the 2010-2011 Faith First year must be received no later than June 1, 2010 to avoid a \$20.00 late fee per child. The cost of the program is \$75.00/child to a maximum of \$150.00/family for the year not including late fees. These fees are established by the wardens of St. John Fisher Parish. Forms received after this date will not be eligible for registration or group placement until paid in full. Please make your cheques payable to : ST. JOHN FISHER PARISH. A fee of \$15.00 will be applied to all NSF cheques. You may pay in two installments: the first dated June 1, 2010 and the second dated no later than July 15, 2010. You will be contacted with catechist availability in the fall of 2010. Completed forms with documentation may be mailed to: FAITH FIRST PROGRAM 120 Summerhill, Pte. Claire, Qc, H9R 2L7

Thank you for taking the time to read this page. Please note that your signature indicates you have read and understood these policies and that an unsigned form is not eligible for registration.

Beverley Caughlin (PCL) 514-697-3788

Comments ? _____
