



FIAT

“FAITH IN ACTION TOGETHER”

FAMILY-LED FAITH FORMATION

2026-2027 HANDBOOK

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Mary 1, 2026

Dear Parents,

Throughout this year, the formational staff and I have been discerning how we can best form our children – not just in their knowledge of the Catholic faith, but for a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ.

What has become increasingly clear is something the Catholic Church has always taught: families are the primary educators of their children in the faith. Not the parish. Not the catechists. But you.

The role of the parish is not to replace that responsibility, but to support and equip families to form their children, while walking alongside them throughout the process.

With this in mind, we are excited to share that, beginning this fall, the parish will transition from a classroom-based Faith Formation model to **Family-Led Formation**. This new approach will be supported by the parish while remaining rooted at home. We are calling this new approach **Faith in Action Together (FIAT)**. This is a name that reflects both our mission and our response. Just as “fiat” means “let it be done,” we are inviting families to say yes to living the faith together in the home, supported by the parish, and rooted in a shared commitment to grow in Christ.

WHY THIS CHANGE? For many years, Faith Formation has been seen as a weekly class or an obligation. It has become something that happens for an hour each week, outside the home. While this approach has served many families well, it can unintentionally send the message that faith is something we *attend*, rather than something we *live*.

Our Catholic faith is not meant to be contained to a classroom. It is meant to be prayed in the home, practiced in daily life, witnessed through family relationships, and woven into our rhythm of everyday living.

Inspired by the Church’s teaching on the family as the “domestic church,” we are embracing a model that recognizes that formation happens most deeply in relationship – especially within the family. Parenting is not separate from your faith. It is one of the primary reasons you live your vocation.

WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE? Beginning this fall, our parish will offer a five-level structured pathway of formation. This will be a structured, age-appropriate program that will provide families with clear content and direction, simple and meaningful ways to teach the faith at home, and flexible pacing that works within your family life.

We recognize that this shift is significant, and you are not expected to do it alone. The parish will also offer monthly gatherings for parents and families, opportunities for continued discussion and formation for parents, and practical guidance and support on how to lead in the home. We will have staff and volunteers ready to walk with you through the whole process.

In looking at the sacramental years for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, the parish will continue to provide dedicated preparation opportunities. These will include retreats and other formation experiences for students, families, and godparents/sponsors.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU AS PARENTS? This model invites you into something deeper and more meaningful. You are not expected to be theologians, and you are not expected to be classroom teachers. You are simply being invited to do what you already do best: talk with your children, pray with them, guide them, and model a life of faith.

This transition is not just a program change, it is a renewal of vision for both the parish and for our diocese, which is making strides to assist every parish in moving toward this type of formational approach. The bottom line is that when faith is lived in the home, children will develop a more personal and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ. Families will grow stronger together and the parish will become a community of truly formed disciples.

We are honored to walk alongside you in this important role and are committed to helping and supporting you every step of the way. More detailed information regarding structure and registration are enclosed with this letter, and a full schedule of opportunities will be shared with families soon.

In the meantime, please know of our prayers for you and your family. Thank you for the gift of your vocation as parents and for all you do to raise your children in the faith.

Sincerely Yours In Christ,



Lindsay M. Sartorio
Director of Formation & Evangelization

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We recognize that this transition may bring both excitement and uncertainty. Any time something changes – especially something as important as how we form our children in the faith – it is natural to have questions.

Please know that this shift has been made prayerfully, thoughtfully, and in alignment with the teachings of the Church. Our goal is not to make things more difficult, but to make them more meaningful, more lasting, and more rooted in the life of your family.

Below are some of the most common questions and concerns we anticipate hearing.

1. Why is the parish making this change?

The Catholic Church has always taught that parents are the first and primary catechists of their children. This shift is not a new idea. It is a return to what the Church has consistently taught: the home is the first place where the faith is lived, taught, and passed on. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis*, and Sacred Scripture place the responsibility for forming children directly on parents and reinforce the idea that faith is meant to be lived in daily life, not only taught in structured settings.

2. What is the role of the parish now?

The parish remains essential, but its role is to support, not replace, the family. The Church further emphasizes that catechesis should be family-centered and community-supported.

3. What if I don't feel qualified to teach my child?

You are not expected to be an expert. You are expected to be a witness. Your children learn the faith most deeply not from perfect explanations, but from seeing you pray, hearing you speak about God, and experiencing faith as part of your daily life. The parish will provide clear materials, guidance, structure, ongoing support, and formation for parents and families. You are not alone in this. We are walking with you.

4. Will my child still be prepared for the sacraments?

Yes, absolutely. The parish will continue to provide focused sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. This preparation will build upon what is already being lived in the home, making the sacraments more meaningful and rooted in lived faith.

5. What about community? Won't we lose that?

Not at all. In fact, our hope is to strengthen it. We will offer monthly parent gatherings, family opportunities for connection, and parish-wide formation and events. Rather than

limiting formation to a classroom for children only, this model will expand it into a lived parish culture of faith.

6. Why move away from the classroom model?

Classroom-based models can be helpful, but they can also inadvertently create the impression that the faith is taught by others, faith happens once a week, and parents are secondary to the process. This new model restores the proper order that the home is primary, and the parish is in a supporting role.

7. What curriculum will we be using?

We will be using Sophia Institute for Teachers' *Family of Faith* program for Levels 1-5, along with an optional PreK/Kindergarten resource. This curriculum is faithful to Catholic teaching, diocesan approved, designed specifically for use by families in the home, and it is simple and structured. Each level provides clear lessons, Scripture-based content, and guided conversations. It will help you lead your child in the faith without needing to be a classroom teacher, regardless of the experience or knowledge you already have. The parish will provide all materials, guidance, and ongoing support – along with sacramental preparation. This ensures your family has both a trusted Catholic foundation and a practical, manageable way to live the faith at home.

8. Is this more work for parents?

It is not meant to be more work, it is meant to be more integrated and more flexible. Instead of adding another obligation, this model invites your family to bring faith into what you are already doing. You can have simple, meaningful conversations and pray together in small, natural ways. It is less about doing and more about living differently. There will be a curriculum to complete, but it can be done in a way that works with your family's own schedule.

9. What is the ultimate goal of this change?

Our goal is not simply that children “complete a program,” but that families grow in relationship with Jesus Christ, live the faith together, and remain connected to the Church long after sacraments have been celebrated. At the end of the day, the Catholic faith is not a subject to be learned or a box to be checked. It is a life to be lived.

KEY STATISTICS ABOUT FAMILY-LED FORMATION

Parental Influence

- 30% of children continue in their faith when led ONLY by mothers, with 60% leaving the faith entirely.
- 70-75% of children continue in their faith when led by BOTH parents, and 53% become lifelong churchgoers
- 70% of highly engaged Catholics read/listen to Scripture outside of Mass
- 75% are more likely to marry another Catholic

Family-Centered Practices

- Family-Centered models promote Faith as a “lived” concept, rather than a school or academic subject
- Classroom-Centered models promote a “drop-off” mentality and sacraments are seen as graduations

Long-Term Outcomes

- 1973 84% of “Cradle Catholics” identify as Catholics as adults
 - 40% attend Mass regularly
- 2022 66% of “Cradle Catholics” identify as Catholics as adults
 - 11% attend Mass regularly

Cited Factors

- Parents attend Mass with children
- Prayer life at home before dinner, at bedtime, and additional prayer
- Participation in charitable service to others
- Parents are the “most significant” influence on their child’s religious and spiritual development

Sources

- National Catholic Register (Nov 2025); EWTN News (Feb 2024)

REFERENCES

At the heart of this transition is not a new idea, but a faithful response to what the Church has always taught about the role of the family. The Church consistently affirms that parents are the first and most important teachers of the faith, and that the home is where that faith is first lived and passed on.

The following passages from Scripture and the teachings of the Church help illuminate this vision.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- *"The home is the first school of Christian life and 'a school for human enrichment.'"* (CCC 1657)
- *"The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families... it supports and strengthens them in their mission."* (CCC 2179)
- *"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children in the faith. Bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule."* (CCC 2223)
- *"Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children."* (CCC 2225)
- *"Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years."* (CCC 2226)

General Directory for Catechesis

- *"Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches all other forms of catechesis. Parents are the first educators in the faith ... their catechesis is irreplaceable."* (GDC 226)
- *"The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates."* (GDC 255)

Sacred Scripture

- *"You shall teach them diligently to your children ... when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way."* (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)
- *"Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* (Ephesians 6:4)
- *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* (Joshua 24:15)
- *"Train up a child in the way he should go..."* (Proverbs 22:6)
- *"What you have heard from me... entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also."* (2 Timothy 2:2)
- *"One generation shall commend your works to another."* (Psalms 145:4)

OVERVIEW OF OUR FAMILY-LED FORMATION (F.I.A.T) *

The following chart is designed to help families understand the curriculum and program sequence for *Family of Faith*. Grade-levels are a minimum requirement, and 2 years of Formation is required for the celebration of sacraments. If you have questions about which program to enroll in, please contact the parish office for guidance.

	Program Level	Minimum (Suggested) Grade-Level	Program Focus
Optional	<i>His Little Way: Level I</i>	Pre-K (3/4)	Love of Jesus, Virtues, Prayer
Optional	<i>His Little Way: Level II</i>	Kindergarten	Basic Prayers, Saints, The Liturgy
Required	<i>Family of Faith: Level I</i>	Grade 1	The Profession of Faith
Required	<i>Family of Faith: Level II</i>	Grade 2	The Sacraments
Required	<i>Family of Faith: Level III</i>	Grade 3	Life in Christ
Required	<i>Family of Faith: Level IV</i>	Grade 4	Christian Prayer
Required	<i>Family of Faith: Level V</i>	Grade 5	Created in God's Image

* Students enrolled in St. Pius X Catholic School are exempt from Faith Formation, however they are welcome to enroll and complete any of the programs listed above.

Role of Catechists

Each Level will be assigned a support catechist (or catechists) to assist you if you have questions throughout the process. They will be available for monthly virtual "office hours" through Zoom for guidance, questions, and support.

Class Rosters

In addition, families will have the option to connect with others in their child's level through a shared roster, making it easy to gather, collaborate, or form small learning groups if desired.

ADDITIONAL MONTHLY FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Office of Faith Formation will provide optional formational programs every month that any of our FIAT families can attend. They will vary with respect to the content, structure, and audience, and they will follow key themes throughout each month that are liturgically aligned.

- **June** – FIAT Theme: “Saintly Leisure”
 - Ongoing Registration & Summer Activities
 - *Kingdom of Happiness: Living the Beatitudes in Everyday Life* – June 24 – August 12
- **July** – FIAT Theme: “Patriotism & Community”
 - Ongoing Registration & Summer Activities
 - Steubenville Youth Conference in Atlanta – July 10-12
 - Parish Movie Night *Young Washington* – July 11
 - *Totus Tuus* Summer Program for Grades K-12 – July 19-24
- **August** – FIAT Theme: “Renew All Things in Christ”
 - FIAT Materials Pick-Up – Weekend of August 29-30
 - FIAT Workshop & Youth Ministry Kick-Off – August 30
- **September** – FIAT Theme: “Modeling Servant Leadership”
 - *Living Your Strengths* Workshop by Tammy Simmons – Dates TBD
 - Bradley Banning, Catholic Speaker & Musician – September 18-19
- **October** – FIAT Theme: “Forming Our Conscience”
 - Formational Talk on Morality, Respect Life, Forming Hearts & Minds at Home
- **November** – FIAT Theme: “Gratitude as a Lifestyle”
 - Service-Learning Project for Families – *Grateful Hearts in Action: Honoring Those Who Have Served*
- **December** – FIAT Theme: “Trust & Surrender”
 - Holy Family Hospital Weekend – December 4-6
 - Formational Talk on the Virgin Mary & Other Biblical Examples of Surrender
- **2027 Monthly Themes** (Dates & Activities TBD)
 - **January** – FIAT Theme: “Managing Time & Routines”
 - **February** – FIAT Theme: “Prayers & Devotions”
 - **March** – FIAT Theme: “St. Joseph & Our Vocation to Beatitude”
 - **April** – FIAT Theme: “Sharing the Good News”
 - **May** – FIAT Theme: “Welcoming the Stranger”

OVERVIEW OF SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION **

The following chart is designed to help families understand the Sacramental Preparation programs offered through St. Pius X.

These programs are separate from FIAT.

Sacramental Preparation	Minimum Grade Level	Prerequisite
First Communion Preparation	Grade 2	- Completed <i>Family of Faith: Level I</i> - Simultaneously enrolled in <i>Family of Faith: Level II</i> - Must be baptized no later than the start of their start of their Level I (Grade 1) year.
Confirmation Preparation: Year I ***	Grade 6	Completed <i>Family of Faith Levels I-V</i>
Confirmation Preparation: Year II ***	Grade 7	Completed <i>Confirmation Preparation: Level I</i>

** Students enrolled in St. Pius X Catholic School must still participate in the parish Sacramental Preparation programs for First Communion and Confirmation. Please see the *First Communion* page for program requirements.

*** Beginning in the Fall of 2026, the minimum grade-level for the celebration of Confirmation at St. Pius X will be Grade 7. However, students must complete two consecutive years of Confirmation Preparation (Levels I & II). Therefore, the minimum age for entering a Confirmation Preparation program is Grade 6. Please see the *Confirmation* page for program requirements.

FIRST COMMUNION PREPARATION

Program Contact: Lindsay Sartorio, Director of Formation & Evangelization
lsartorio@stpiusxnc.com; 336.373.4681 ext. 108

This is a required Sacramental Preparation program for all students – regardless of enrollment in a public school, private school, Catholic school, or homeschool.

Students must have completed *Family of Faith: Level I* (or equivalent, Grade 1 Faith Formation, or Grade 1 Catholic School) in order to enroll in the First Communion Preparation program.

Catholic Baptism is also a pre-requisite to the celebration of First Holy Communion. If your student has not been baptized, please inquire with the Office of Faith Formation for the most appropriate course.

Students will be prepared to celebrate their Sacraments of First Reconciliation (winter) and First Communion (spring).

The program will consist of:

1. Mass Attendance Requirement
2. Several Parent and child meetings throughout the year

Important Dates for 2026-2027:

- The program dates will be finalized by mid-Summer. Please check back for meeting and retreat dates at that time.
- Fall Parent & Child Meeting Date TBD *Baptismal Certificates Due
- Fall Parent & Child Meeting Date TBD
- First Reconciliation Service Saturday, December 12, 2027 (10:00 am)
- Spring Parent & Child Meeting Date TBD
- Spring Parent & Child Retreat Date TBD
- First Holy Communion Mass Saturday, May 15, 2027 (10:00 am)

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Program Contact: Kat Manzella, Confirmation Program Coordinator
kmanzella@stpiusxnc.com; 336.373.4681 ext. 105

This is a required Sacramental Preparation program for all students – regardless of enrollment in a public school, private school, Catholic school, or homeschool.

- Students must have completed *Family of Faith: Levels I-V* (or equivalent, up through Grade 5 Faith Formation, or up through Grade 5 Catholic School) in order to enroll in the Confirmation Preparation program.
- Catholic Baptism and First Holy Communion are also pre-requisites to the Sacrament of Confirmation. If your student has not celebrated these sacraments, please inquire with the Office of Faith Formation for the most appropriate course.
- Students will be prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in the spring of their second year of preparation.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Both program years will consist of 3 Pillars of Preparation:

1. To Know – Formation

Candidates grow in understanding of the Catholic Faith through:

- Participation in parish Confirmation preparation classes
- Participation in parish formational opportunities
- Study of the core teachings of the Church (Creed, Sacraments, Moral Life, Prayer)
- Engagement with Scripture and catechetical materials
- Intentional conversations about faith within the family

Goal: Candidates will be able to articulate what the Church teaches and how those teachings shape their lives.

2. To Love – Worship & Prayer

Candidates will develop a lived relationship with Christ through:

- Regular participation and attendance at Sunday Mass
- Regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Personal and family prayer (daily prayer encouraged)
- Participation in parish liturgies, Adoration, or other prayer opportunities

Goal: Candidates will demonstrate an active and growing prayer life and a desire to encounter Christ in the Sacraments.

3. To Serve – Charitable Works

Candidates live out their faith through acts of service, such as:

- Parish-based service opportunities
- Outreach to those in need in the community
- Participation in ministry, mission experiences, or charitable initiatives
- Acts of service within the family

Goal: Candidates will recognize that faith is lived through love of neighbor and will demonstrate a heart for service.

Primary Requirement: Witness & Presentation

At the conclusion of the two-year preparation period, each candidate will complete a **Confirmation Presentation**. This presentation is the only “formal” requirement for receiving the Sacrament.

The presentation will include:

- What they Did – How did they live out the 3 Pillars of Preparation?
- What they Learned – How did they grow in faith and their relationship with God?
- Why they Desire Confirmation – A personal expression of readiness and intention.

Presentations will be delivered in a small group setting with parental involvement.

Other Considerations

The Role of Families – Families (as primary educators of the faith) will intentionally model formation in the home, encourage shared participation in Mass, prayer, and service, and promote ongoing faith conversations.

The Role of the Parish – The parish will serve as a partner and guide, offering structured formation and resources, service pathways, mentorship, and pastoral support.

Readiness for Confirmation – Readiness will be DEMONSTRATED through lived experience, a personal desire for the Sacrament, and the ability to articulate that desire.

Guiding Principle - Confirmation is not a graduation from Faith Formation, but a step into a life of active discipleship. This model reflects both the teaching of the Church and current research, which consistently shows that faith practiced within the family is the strongest predictor of lifelong Catholic identity.

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION (CONTINUED)

Important Dates & Yearly Topics for 2026-2027:

- The program dates will be finalized by mid-Summer. Please check back for meeting and retreat dates at that time.
- **YEAR I (Foundations of Faith)**
 - **Session Meeting Times TBD**
 - September __ Parent & Student Meeting
 - October __ Session 1 - The Person of Jesus Christ **Commitment Form Due*
 - November __ Session 2 - Revelation in Scripture & Tradition
 - December __ Session 3 - The Trinity **Baptismal Certificates Due*
 - January __ Session 4 - The Church & Apostolic Succession
 - February __ Session 5 - Sacraments of Initiation
 - March __ Session 6 - Sacraments of Healing
 - April __ Session 7 - The Four Last Things
 - May __ Session 8 - Old Testament & Salvation History
- **YEAR II (Discipleship & Life in the Spirit)**
 - **Session Meeting Times TBD**
 - September __ Session 9 - The Holy Spirit & Gifts
 - October __ Session 10 - Prayer & Spiritual Life **Sponsor Forms Due*
 - November __ Session 11 - Catholic Social Teaching
 - December __ Session 12 - Theology of the Body **Patron Saint Form Due*
 - January __ Session 13 - Vocation & Discernment
 - February __ Session 14 - The Saints & Mary
 - March __ Session 15 - Moral Theology & Conscience
 - April __ Session 16 - Participation & Mission (Confirmation & Beyond)
 - May __ Practice for Confirmation Mass (Time TBD)
 - May __ Confirmation Mass (Date TBD)

HOW TO REGISTER & ACQUIRE MATERIALS

Registration:

Beginning on May 5, 2026, please look on our parish website at www.stpiusxnc.com/faith-formation for links to register for all programs.

You may also scan the QR codes here to register through Realm.

FIAT PreK – Grade 5



First Communion Preparation



Confirmation Preparation



What program should I register for?

Catholic School Student:

- + No FIAT Required
- + First Communion Prep
- + Confirmation Prep

Public/Private/Homeschool Student:

- + FIAT Family Led Faith Formation
- + First Communion Prep
- + Confirmation Prep

Material Pick-Up:

FIAT Materials will be available for family pick-up in the parish office at the main desk the weekend of August 29-30 after all Masses.

Materials will consist of:

- Leader Guides (for support staff & catechists)
- Parent Guides
- Student Workbooks
- Mass Logs (for Sacramental Preparation)