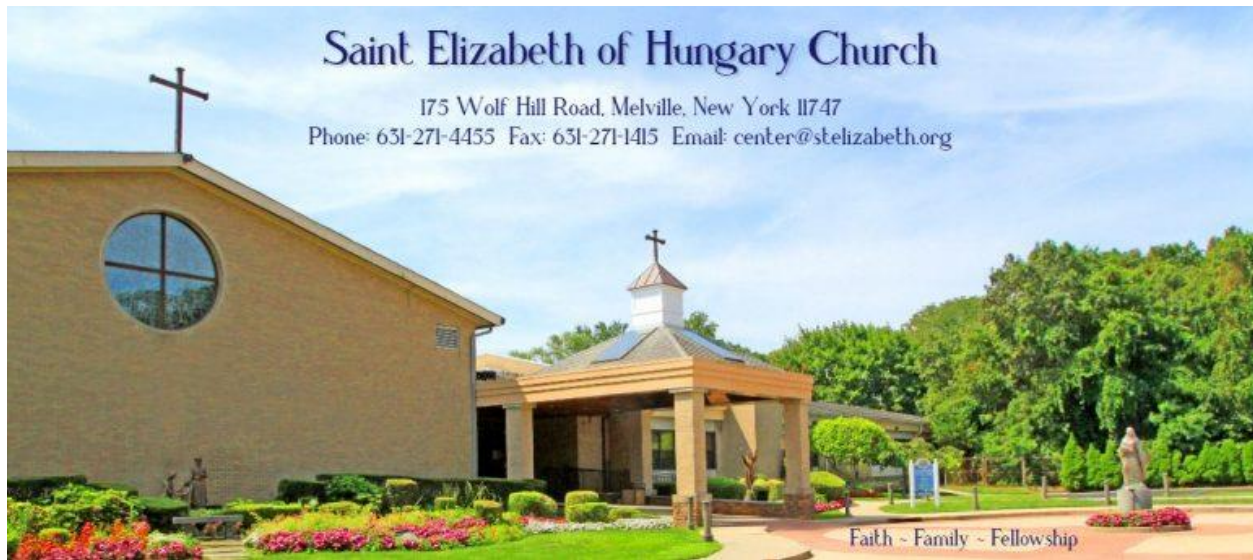


St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish



Faith Formation Program Handbook 2026 - 2027

Revised September, 2026

Introduction

“Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 2222-2226). They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators, or catechists. They catechize primarily by the witness of the Christian lives and by their love for the faith” (National Directory for Catechesis, pg. 234).

In the Scriptures, God commands parents to educate their children in faith: “Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

Parents catechize their children primarily through the lived experience of the faith and through conversations often brought about by specific occasions. The parish Faith Formation program exists to support you in your role as the primary catechists of your household by providing a systematic presentation of the basics of the Catholic faith. When this systematic presentation resonates with the child’s lived experience of the faith in the home, it becomes deeply meaningful and lasts a lifetime.

The presentation of the faith in a gathered setting requires certain policies and guidelines to ensure a smooth program operation. St Elizabeth Parish Faith Formation policies and guidelines are presented in these few pages. Please read them over and use them as a reference throughout the catechetical year.

During this year, which is a **Jubilee Year dedicated to Saint Francis 1226-2026** celebrating the passing into eternal life of Francis of Assisi, we are all reminded of our call to be peacemakers, to listen and follow the Gospel and to care for one another and for all creation.

[The Special Year Of St. Francis Assisi Catholic Guide To Resources - Catholic-Link](#)

[Holy Year of Saint Francis: 8th Centenary of his Life](#)

[Entering the Franciscan Jubilee Year – Genuflect](#)

Pope Leo XIV had announced that 2026 is a Jubilee Year of St. Francis, to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's death. The Holy Father has offered this prayer for the occasion:

*Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago
went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace,
intercede for us before the Lord.
You recognised true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano,
teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation
that breaks down every wall.
You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war
and misunderstanding,
give us the courage to build bridges
where the world raises up boundaries.
In this time afflicted by conflict and division,
intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers:
unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.
Amen*

Faith Formation Theme for this Year 2026-2027

Building Catholic Culture at Home

Building a Catholic culture at home is less about adding many activities and more about creating an environment where faith naturally shapes daily life. The goal is for Catholic beliefs, prayers, traditions, and virtues to become part of the family's ordinary rhythm.

1. Make Prayer a Daily Habit

Establish simple, consistent prayer practices:

- Morning offering before beginning the day
- Grace before meals
- Family prayer in the evening
- Night prayers before bed
- Praying the Rosary regularly, even one decade at a time with young children

Consistency matters more than length.

2. Center the Home on Christ

Create visible reminders of the faith:

- A crucifix in a prominent place
- Images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints
- A family prayer corner with candles, holy water, and a Bible
- Display sacramental items reverently

These signs help communicate that faith is part of everyday life.

3. Celebrate the Liturgical Year

The Church's calendar provides a framework for family life.

Advent

- Use an Advent wreath
- Pray and prepare for Christmas
- Perform acts of charity

Christmas

- Display a Nativity scene
- Read the Gospel accounts of Christ's birth
- Celebrate throughout the Christmas season

Lent

- Practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving
- Attend Stations of the Cross
- Encourage simple sacrifices

Easter

- Celebrate the Resurrection with joy
- Emphasize hope and new life

4. Read Good Catholic Books

Fill the home with stories that inspire faith and virtue.

Consider:

- Sacred Scripture
- Lives of the Saints
- Catholic children's literature
- Classic Christian works

Reading together creates opportunities for discussion and spiritual growth.

5. Practice Hospitality and Charity

Catholic culture is lived through love of neighbor.

- Welcome guests warmly
- Serve those in need
- Volunteer as a family
- Pray for others regularly

Children learn generosity primarily through example.

6. Honor the Saints

Help family members develop friendships with the saints.

- Celebrate feast days
- Learn about patron saints
- Choose a saint of the month

- Ask saints for intercession during family prayer

7. Foster Virtue in Daily Life

Focus on forming character:

- Gratitude
- Patience
- Kindness
- Obedience
- Courage
- Humility

Connect everyday choices to the Gospel.

8. Make Sunday Special

Treat Sunday as the Lord's Day.

- Attend Mass faithfully
- Share a family meal
- Limit unnecessary work
- Spend time together
- Reflect on the Sunday readings

This helps anchor the week in worship and rest.

9. Use Music and Beauty

Beauty draws hearts toward God.

- Listen to sacred music
- Display meaningful religious art
- Celebrate feast days with beauty and joy
- Encourage creativity that reflects truth and goodness

10. Lead by Example

The strongest influence on a family's Catholic culture is the witness of parents and caregivers.

When children see adults:

- Praying sincerely
- Going to Confession
- Attending Mass faithfully
- Forgiving others
- Serving those in need

They learn that faith is real and worth living.

A Simple Family Motto

"Pray together, worship together, serve together, and grow together in Christ."

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's participation in our program, please get in touch with us, and we will be happy to discuss your questions or concerns.

Director of Faith Formation:

Brother Richard Contino, OSF

Phone 631-271-4455 ext. 308

Email faithformation@stelizabeth.org

Website www.stelizabeth.org

Online Coordinator

Gabriella Gentile

ggentiletile.faithformation@gmail.com

Communications Regarding Religious Education

Email

It will be our main form of communication to ensure you receive all information regarding faith formation promptly. If you unsubscribe from the website, you will be missing important information.

Website www.stelizabeth.org

The website is an essential form of communication that we use regularly. It contains all forms and paperwork about our faith formation program and sacramental preparation, as well as information on parish events.

Social Media

Our Facebook account serves a twofold purpose: 1) provides a quick and easy way to remind our families about special events and schedule changes, and 2) serves as a forum for the parish to provide parents with information related to parenting, child and teenage trends, and personal formation.

Parish Bulletin

Weekly parish bulletins are an essential source of information about our faith formation program for children and youth—the upcoming calendar that is posted there, as well as any special announcements or reminders.

Calendar

A yearly faith formation calendar is included on the last page, beginning with the first class of the catechetical year in September. It will also be available on the parish website.

Updates and information about special events will be sent home as needed. Please keep the calendar for reference throughout the year. **When not in session due to a holiday on a Monday, students will be responsible for that weekly lesson.**

Curriculum

Purpose and Guidelines

The goal and purpose of all catechesis is to support parents in their task of forming their children into disciples of Jesus Christ and life-long active members of His Church. In a continuing effort to do this, the faith formation program of the parish attempts to propose the beliefs of the Catholic faith comprehensively and systematically through instruction and active participation, as well as providing special prayer opportunities throughout the year.

Textbooks

Students use the curriculum provided by *Our Sunday Visitor, Alive in Christ Series*. The sacramental preparation *includes Our Sunday Visitor; Encounter with Christ: Reconciliation and Eucharist* for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. The Sacrament of Confirmation: Confirmation preparation *includes Gifted with the Spirit, Faith Fusion, Knowing, Loving and Serving Christ in the Catholic Church, and Called to Celebrate Confirmation*.

Online Formation

The use of our Online Faith Formation Program has been an opportunity to help families and students manage multiple activities and calendars while still prioritizing Faith Formation. Online students should follow a disciplined format at home, under the guidance of their parents, that will foster growth in their faith. **We ask that all parents, whether online or in person, take an interest in their child's course of study and assist them where they can. Make Faith Formation a family activity.**

Sacrament Years and Records

Baptismal and First Communion Certificates

A copy of a child's baptismal certificate is REQUIRED for a child who is preparing for their First Communion (1st and 2nd grade, as well as any older student who missed the opportunity in 2nd grade). Please submit this information at registration so we have verification. (All sacramental records are kept on file in the office of the parish where the Sacrament was received, and parishes will mail the certificate(s) to a parent if you call and request one.)

First Reconciliation and First Communion

Second grade is the usual grade for children to receive these sacraments. Children must attend faith formation in First and Second grade to receive these sacraments. Parent meetings, home preparation, regular attendance at faith formation classes, and regular attendance at Mass are required. If your child was not baptized in the Catholic Church, please inform us immediately so that we can facilitate their reception of these sacraments.

Confirmation

After completing the 7th and 8th Grade requirements, students usually will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation either during the Fall or Spring of the completion of their studies. The Diocese, not the parish, set the date for this Sacrament. All students preparing to receive the Sacrament are required to attend a retreat that the parish will host before the reception of Confirmation.

Confirmation Preparation:

Service Hours

All 7th and 8th graders preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation will be required to submit five service hours as part of their preparation year. Such service hour requirements will continue into 8th grade. These hours can include opportunities related to the parish, sports, club activities, community service, or religious volunteering. Faith Formation will provide forms for submission that will be available online.

Sunday Gospel reflections

All 8th graders preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation will be required to submit reflection papers on assigned Sunday Gospels and homily for the Mass attended.

Celebration of Sacraments

Please remember to keep the Sacrament as the center of your celebration. As your child receives First Reconciliation, First Communion, or Confirmation, remember that receiving the sacraments of the Church is entirely about your child's growth in faith and the relationship s/he shares with Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Please keep these special days in the life of your son and daughter holy by showing reverence to the Sacrament being received. If you feel your child is not ready to receive a sacrament, please call us. Families will receive information on meetings, home preparation, dress requirements, etc. Full and Active Participation is expected for sacramental preparation programs.

Parent Opportunities

Throughout the year, the parish provides many opportunities for parents to enrich their faith in an adult setting. These opportunities include guest presenters, parish missions and talks, as well as other organized events. These are for you. Our learning and understanding of our faith are LIFELONG!

Faith Formation Workshops

Three times a year, both in-person and online students are required to attend workshops on specific themes in the life of the Church. Parents are welcome to join us during those sessions.

Program Policies and Guidelines

Sunday Worship

Sunday Mass is a vital component of every Catholic's formation, whether they are children or adults. Weekly Mass attendance as a family is critical for effective faith development and community building. During faith formation sessions, the children are being taught the importance of participating in liturgy and need opportunities to do so. Families are expected to indicate their participation and attendance at Mass by signing in after every Sunday Mass.

Child Protection Policy

The Diocese of Rockville Centre and St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish take your child's safety seriously. Each Catechist and Volunteer MUST attend the Diocese-mandated Virtus Program offered throughout the year. Annually, a review of this policy is shared with our Catechists and volunteers. According to Diocesan regulations, we will present a yearly safety policy presentation regarding the Protection of our children to all students.

Attendance

Children are encouraged to attend all sessions. Thank you in advance for your efforts to prioritize faith formation amidst busy family schedules. When planning family trips, please check the calendar to see when classes are not in session. Repeated absences will have an impact on faith formation and sacrament preparations.

Absences

Occasionally, a child will be unable to attend due to sickness or other reasons. If your child is absent from faith formation class, we will assume that you, as a parent, have determined that your child(ren) is/are unable to attend for a valid reason; you do not need to call the

Director with a reason unless you prefer to do so for your own peace of mind. Students are responsible for covering the material that they miss with their parents. There should be no more than four absences during the catechetical year.

If a student misses three consecutive lessons, either in person or online, parents or guardians will be contacted by the Director of Formation to schedule a meeting. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss the reason for missing work, provide support, and ensure the students remain on track in their faith formation journey.

Illness or Injury Outside of Faith Formation

If your child is ill or unable to attend class for any other reason, please do not send them to class. If your child will not participate in faith formation class for an extended time due to illness or injury, please let us know, and we will make arrangements for them to remain current with their class.

Tardy Arrival and Building Security

Please make every effort to ensure your child arrives on time, as tardiness is disruptive and can cause the student to miss important announcements. Parents, please drop off their children at the Church entrance. Once Faith Formation begins, all entrances are locked. Once Faith Formation has ended, parents should pick up their children from the classrooms. No student will be allowed outside the building unless accompanied by a parent. Please respect this request to maintain safety for all our children and members of our Faith Formation Team.

Behavior and the Code of Conduct

We expect all the children in attendance to behave respectfully toward all other students and all adults.

Reminder that **online work** submitted in the designated area should be treated with the same respect as it would be in the classroom. Any form of misconduct or engaging in online bullying is strictly prohibited. Such actions will result in a mandatory meeting with the Faith Formation Director and the student's parents or guardian. We appreciate your partnership in fostering a safe, respectful, and faith-filled environment for all.

Beginning September 2026 we will begin a **Pass/Fail Option** for all classes. Students and families are strongly encouraged to make Faith Formation a family priority. Numerous absences, inadequate work in class, erratic Mass attendance and failure to complete

assignments including attendance for workshops, will result in a failure for the year and student is unable to advance to the next grade level.

Conclusion

We exist to help you catechize your family. Please do not hesitate to contact the Director if you need resources or support, or if you have any questions or concerns.