

Frequently Asked Questions about Faith on Fire 2021-2022

Saint Maximilian Kolbe Parish

Here are responses to some of the most frequently asked questions/comments we have heard from our parents.

What will Faith on Fire look like in 2021-2022? I invite you to look through the Faith on Fire 2021-2022 Formation Chart at www.saint-max.org/faithonfire that outlines the formation journey over different grade levels. The chart will explain what our formation options are for the 2021-2022 year and will help you choose your favorite options.

Will this family catechesis model permanently replace traditional faith formation classes? We have seen some benefits of the model this past year in how it has begun to transform family faith life, actually strengthening parent/child engagement in the Faith. We were excited to receive positive comments about the new Faith on Fire formation model. However, this past year also added much stress and anxiety in the lives of our families. We learned that this format was difficult for some families who have multiple children, and the flexibility hindered the ability to establish a reliable pattern to complete work. We are asking for your patience as we explore this model in a year when COVID is not disrupting our lives. We are busy making changes to better support you.

I struggled with the family lessons last year. What will be different about this program in 2021-2022? There are many things we are already working on to better support you next year. We are developing a better presentation of lessons for families with multiple children, there will be more video guidance and activity options for different ages, and homework will be submitted online with specific dates for turn in. This extra year will give us time to develop a 'better than normal' home study program for our families and will give us some insight as to how to get students more engaged at in-person future setting. We don't know where this year will take us. As always, we rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us in a direction that is ultimately the will of God. Please read over the "Rationale" document for 2021-2022 to learn more.

Will there be more in-person offerings for 2021-2022?

In 2020-2021 we offered five in person 'optional' family sessions in our Fuel with Pflaum program to supplement the home study lessons. The January event was 'virtual' because the complex was closed for three months due to COVID. In 2021-2022 our Blended Learning track for Fuel with Pflaum will include **monthly** in-person meetings for a total of nine sessions. These family events will be for parent and child; however, children will be with catechists, learning about our monthly themes and parents will attend a separate presentation. How the children will be grouped will depend on the number of catechists we secure. Note: There will also be a home study track for families who prefer the home study model. There will be four dates during the year for these families to pick up their materials.

Is this model going to continue because of COVID restrictions? While the uncertainty of COVID restrictions in 2020-2021 made it necessary for us to move to a home study model for everyone, COVID is not a factor for continuing this model in 2021-2022. Here is what is driving our move this year: Did you know that children decide whether or not to leave the faith around 12-13 years of age? (From: Going, Going, Gone, The dynamics of disaffiliation of Young Catholics. A study by St. Mary's Press of Minnesota, Inc. In collaboration with the Center of Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). This alarming statistic and others like it have been cause for us to consider what is happening in our own parish. We have seen that students are disengaged, parents are exhausted, and volunteer catechists are hard to come by. We also asked ourselves, "Are students sticking around after Confirmation?" Sadly, a majority were not actively engaged in their Catholic faith after being confirmed. Our goal is to provide a formation experience for our parish youth that promotes life-long engagement in the Faith. Our team feels like this family model has greater potential than our traditional efforts in reaching this goal and we have full staff support in piloting this model during a more traditional year.

What if parents don't want to be bothered and remove their children from religious instruction all together?

Wouldn't it just be better maintaining the status quo? It is likely that some parents will decide to forego instruction rather than participate in this program, and others may even move to another parish that offers a weekly classroom model. However, we are obligated to offer our families our best effort to ensure these years will penetrate the hearts of our children. Otherwise, we have failed at doing our job in supporting you!

Furthermore, we are in the business of a faith in which we cannot see and hope in a future we don't fully understand. This model will likely transform over time to something totally different than what we will experience this coming year. It will certainly take time to see the fruits of this journey. However, I can say that fruits have already been realized. Some families have found this family model has strengthened their faith life, enabling them to transform the family activities they already do into encounters with God.

Why are most of your in-person offerings for junior high youth and older? It seems like you are not looking out for the families with younger children. Many people do not realize that during 2020-2021, our junior high students had the opportunity to participate in bi-weekly in-person sessions. One reason for offering this in person option for the older students is because we felt they were most in need of this interaction with their peers. It is no surprise that junior high years are times of greater influence from peers and the surrounding community, and some suffered significantly from the isolation that COVID brought on. We found that students responded positively to the Ignite format and many opened up in their small groups about some important topics. We will continue this in-person offering to build on the momentum from last year.

Does this mean that younger children don't need interaction with their peers in the faith? Definitely not! However, facilitating faith discussion in the home during the younger years is the catalyst for children to open up about heavier faith topics when they are older. Put into perspective, our traditional weekly classroom setting was a total of 30 hours of instruction over the year... that's 0.3 % of a child's life over the course of a year. Going to a monthly in-person setting is a little less class time, BUT children also have the DAILY teachable moments of everyday life that can lead parents into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, which is beneficial, most of all, to their children. There is no comparison!

I enjoy teaching my children about the faith, but I want my children to hear about the faith from others as well. As long as we can secure enough catechists for the year, we are looking forward to catechists teaching students at our monthly meetings. Age level groupings will be determined by the number of catechists who volunteer. We will also have parent/child interaction for a short period of time at the events.

God intended for us to be together, learning from each other. Why are we doing lessons in the home? Our Church teaches that the parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. The faith is first learned in the home. That's why the Church calls the home the Domestic Church. There are numerous Church documents that support the Domestic Church as the primary setting to pass on the faith. However, this does not mean that the Church does not support this effort. We are absolutely obligated to support our families and we are thrilled to continue coaching you through the formal years of formation and beyond.

Have more questions about the Faith on Fire Family Formation Program at St. Max?

Please contact Mary Lou at 513-777-4322 ext.120 or mbaker@saint-max.org