



FIRST GRADE FAITH FORMATION CATCH-UP PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome! While recognizing your commitment to preparing children to receive the first sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist, we recognize that situations arise where a child's full participation in the first grade program may not have occurred for any number of reasons.

To assist parish leaders in addressing these challenges, these First Grade Faith Formation Catch-Up Program Recommendations were written by the Office of Lifelong Formation of the Archdiocese of Chicago. This program guide offers recommendations for implementing supplemental first-grade lessons for those children who were unable to fully participate in a first grade faith formation program. These recommendations may also be used by parishes as review for all students entering the second grade. These recommendations will help parish leaders prepare students to receive the sacraments of first reconciliation and first Eucharist without delay while ensuring the best preparation possible.

Many parishes may already have a plan in place for their students who have not attended first-grade. Parishes are not required to follow these recommendations. They are primarily meant to help those who do not have a "catch-up" plan in place or are looking for additional ideas to supplement their current plans. This guide offers a variety of recommendations and is designed to be flexible enough to be used by every parish in the manner that is best for their parish faith formation community.

Please note: While there is an Archdiocesan 2-year Confirmation Policy, there is not an archdiocesan policy for first reconciliation and first Eucharist preparation. Yet, we are aware that it is common for parishes to have local two-year attendance requirements for the reception of these sacraments. As such, individual parishes have the flexibility to decide what is appropriate and feasible for their parish community regarding a first-grade catch-up program. Local expectations for faith formation programs and sacramental preparation along with readiness for sacramental reception are at the discretion of the pastor.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

Offering families a clear and welcoming path to deeper engagement in the life of the Church is a critical pastoral priority. The recommendations and resources presented here are designed to help parishes engage and support families who are seeking to return to fuller participation in Church life and supporting them in their lifelong journey as missionary disciples.

Regardless of your catch-up program model, we recommend that you enhance that program with things that parents can teach or review with their children at home. Keep in mind that you do not necessarily need to plan additional lessons or events that will take place at the parish. Involving and engaging parents in deeper ways during this time of faith formation review and sacramental preparation will lay the foundation for on-going parent involvement throughout their child's faith formation experience.

We recommend that you communicate with parents as early as possible what your parish will require as make-up for non-attendance during the first-grade faith formation program year. If the expectation is for completion of all materials at-home, we recommend that a parish host a parent meeting to share information with parents and review catch-up program components, student and parent expectations, and check-in/due dates.

SETTINGS AND TIMING

The exact setting and timing of any make-up sessions will vary from parish to parish. The make-up program and schedule will depend upon the ability of the parish staff and the available parish resources. Being mindful of the importance of working to accommodate families so children do not experience obstacles to receiving their sacraments, but are still properly formed for the sacraments, parish programs may need to offer a few options to families.

Make-up sessions may take place in the summer prior to the start of the faith formation year. They may also take place as supplemental classes in the fall. Be sure to have an adjustable plan for those students who either register late in the summer or after you've started your catch-up and regular faith formation program sessions.

You have the flexibility of creating a schedule that involves weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly sessions or check-ins. We recommend that you plan at least 8 make-up lessons. These may take place in-person or virtually with parish catechists, completed at-home with parents, or in a combination of those settings.

Please Note: Requirements for make-up lessons are to be decided upon at the discretion of the catechetical leader and the pastor. Requiring completion of make-up work prior to the start of the faith formation year may be difficult for families and you might need to offer opportunities for make-up lessons that take place in the fall in addition to regularly scheduled class sessions.

THREE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARISHES

These catch-up program recommendations can be completed at-home with parents, or a parish may decide to host virtual or in-person sessions taught by a catechist for some or all of the lessons. These possible models are recommendations only. The way in which you ultimately organize your parish first-grade catch-up or review sessions in relation to the other aspects of your parish's faith formation program is up to each individual parish.

Possible Models

Program Overview (details on following pages)

Parish Curriculum

Many parishes already have a process in place for those students who have not attended first-grade religious education which mirrors their parish-based curriculum. With this option, we provide recommendations for:

- Covering main lesson topics of first-grade curriculum

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies Based

We have partnered with Pflaum to provide a "Who is Jesus?" series of lessons which will help parents to very easily:

- Introduce their child to Jesus and his Church

Scripture Based

Engaging with Scripture stories at-home is a helpful model of faith formation for first-grade students. This option provides ideas to help parishes:

- Cover key Scripture stories related to Salvation History

Combination of Models

Each of the above recommendations has its strengths and weaknesses. A parish catechetical leader may decide to incorporate elements of each possible model to create a combined model for the first-grade catch-up program which would:

- Cover main lesson topics and Scripture stories while introducing children to Doctrinal lessons about Jesus

Any Model Should Include:

- Family Engagement (prayer, faith discussions, service projects)
- Accompanying Activities (crafts, coloring sheets, worksheets, online games)
- Tools to Assess Comprehension (quizzes, family homework assignments, due dates)
- A check-in process for accountability (phone calls, submission dates, attendance checks)
- An introduction letter to parents with instructions and resources (**sample**). This letter may include the following:
 - Catch-up program schedule
 - Monthly check-in information (email or call)

- Parent, student, and parish expectations
- Supplement resources
- *Reading Scripture with My Family: A Parent Guide to Reading Scripture* (**English, Spanish**)

Tips for Preparing a Curriculum-based “Catch-up” Folder

If you have a strong desire for continuity with the catch-up program lesson content and your current faith formation program curriculum, you may prefer to create your own review packet with information and lessons from the first-grade textbook series that your parish uses which would include first-grade topics, lesson outlines, activities, and prayers, etc.

A simple approach with a catch-up folder is important so parents don’t feel overwhelmed with teaching an entire textbook to their child before classes start in the fall or before a child can receive the sacraments. You may decide to give families a copy of the first-grade textbook for their reference, but it is recommended that you outline specific lessons that should be covered and those that are considered optional.

To determine the contents of the catch-up folder, look through the Scope and Sequence of the first-grade textbook and determine those priority topics to include lessons on. Common first-grade themes include:

- God is Our Creator and Our Father
- Original Sin Turns Us Away from God's Love
- Mary is Jesus' Mother and She Said Yes to God
- Jesus is God's Son, He Loves Us and Died for Us
- The Holy Spirit is Our Helper
- How We Become Members of The Church
- The Sacraments is How God Shares His Life with Us
- Why We Pray, and Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray
- Sunday is the Lord's Day, and We Praise God and Pray at Mass
- How We Respond to God's Love and Care for Others
- Saint Stories Share Inspiration from Holy People Who Followed Jesus

For each of the topics you select, include the following in the catch-up folder:

- Family take-home pages. These can be useful for helping you to select specific chapter information to share with families, especially conversation prompts and family activities
- Blackline Master Activity Sheets (BLMs). These can be copied and shared as lesson activities
- Supplemental prayers, order of the mass, and sacramental information which is included in the appendices of textbooks
- A checklist and copies of prayers that students need to learn (including: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Grace Before Meals, Act of Contrition)

Please Note: There are resource links in the following sections of this guide which you may want to use for supplemental activities in your catch-up folder.

You may want to provide a sample lesson format for parents to follow which would provide a basic structure and timeframe for completing each lesson, such as:

- Begin with prayer (2 mins)
- Read lesson information (5 mins)
- Briefly discuss the lesson (5 mins)
- Complete activities (15 mins)
- Faith-sharing conversation (5 mins)
- End with prayer (2 mins)

Tips for Preparing a “Catch-up” Program with Pflaum Gospel Weeklies

For this option, we have partnered with Pflaum Publishing to provide you with five key lessons from the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies series this past year which are available in English and Spanish. While the selected lessons are dated according to the liturgical year specific to the 2020 – 21 faith formation year, the content of the lessons will provide students with an introduction to Jesus and his church. Included in each lesson are student lesson pages and parent teaching pages which can be used by parents or catechists for teaching each lesson.

At the end of this document, we have provided resources for supplemental lessons for teaching basic prayers and basic introductions to the sacraments and the mass. These supplemental resources may be adapted to best suit your students or parish families.

Please Note: In each lesson, there is reference to a *What the Church Believes and Teaches handbook*. This handbook is part of the main Pflaum Weeklies series and is not included in this catch-up program option. If parents are teaching these lessons at home, please alert them to that so they are not looking for information that is not included in these lessons.

If you are interested in supplementing the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* section of each lesson, we recommend the following:

- The *Promise Activity book* provides activity sheets to accompany the doctrinal handbook and is the recommended solution for supplementing the What the Church Believes and Teaches section of the lessons.
- If you use Pflaum as your regular faith formation program curriculum, you may want to provide copies of the *Promise Activity book* or the *What the Church Believes and Teaches handbook* pages indicated to enhance the lessons.
- If you do not use Pflaum as your regular curriculum and would like to include the doctrinal pieces for each of the lessons, you may contact Jen Miller (jen.miller@pflaum.com) to purchase a copy of the *Promise Activity book* or the *What the Church Believes and Teaches handbook* to make copies of the pages indicated for each lesson.

“Who is Jesus?” Lesson Series *(from Pflaum Weeklies)*

1. Baptism Welcomes Us into God’s Family – When Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River, the Gospel gives us a picture of the Holy Trinity. God welcomes us into the love of the Trinity through the Sacrament of Baptism which makes us children of God and members of God’s family, the Church.
 - a. Parent pages (**English | Spanish**)
 - b. Student pages (**English | Spanish**)
2. Jesus Invites Us to Listen to Him – Jesus invited the disciples to respond to his call and share the Good News of God’s love with others. Jesus also calls us to follow him and to love and help other people.
 - a. Parent pages (**English | Spanish**)
 - b. Student pages (**English | Spanish**)
3. Jesus Cares for All of Creation – Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for others. He will always love us and care for us and wants us to trust him and follow him.
 - a. Parent pages (**English | Spanish**)
 - b. Student pages (**English | Spanish**)
4. We Belong to a Church Family – Jesus shares his life with us, he is the vine and we are the branches. We need Jesus to love us and teach us how to love and serve God. One way we love and serve God is by praying at Mass.
 - a. Parent pages (**English | Spanish**)
 - b. Student pages (**English | Spanish**)
5. Jesus Has One Rule – At the Last Supper, Jesus gives the great command to “Love one another as I have loved you.” Jesus also asks us to love one another, and the Holy Spirit unites us and helps us to love God and others.
 - a. Parent pages (**English | Spanish**)
 - b. Student pages (**English | Spanish**)

Tips for Preparing a Scripture-based “Catch-up” Program

Scripture stories at-home as a model of faith formation for first-grade students in lieu of formal classes will help children to become familiar with the stories of Salvation History. In addition to Scripture stories and related activities, we suggest that you include supplemental lessons for teaching basic prayers and introducing students to the sacraments. We have provided some samples which may be adapted for your own parish use.

We recommend that you focus a Scripture-based catch-up program on the following Salvation History storyline, using main stories from the various periods for children to become familiar with.

This template will help you to plan Scripture-based lessons using some of the following free online resources.

Lesson	Scripture Story	Video(s)	Activities
1	<p>The Creation Story Genesis 1</p> <p>Adam & Eve Genesis 3</p> <p>Noah & The Flood Genesis 6:13-9:17</p>	<p>Bible Stories for Kids! – The Story of Creation (Video)</p> <p>Bible Stories for Kids! – Noah's Ark (Video)</p>	<p>Creation Mobile (Link)</p> <p>The Story of Adam & Eve (Link)</p> <p>Noah's Ark Craft (Link)</p>
2	<p>Moses and the Burning Bush Exodus 3</p> <p>The Plagues, The Exodus & Crossing the Red Sea Exodus 7-14</p> <p>Ten Commandments Exodus 20:2-17</p>	<p>Bible Stories for Kids! – Moses: The Prince of Water (Video)</p> <p>Bible Stories for Kids! – Moses and the Exodus (Video)</p>	<p>Moses Coloring Pages (Link)</p> <p>Ten Commandments Lap Book (Link)</p> <p>Ten Commandments Toolkit (Link)</p> <p>Showing Your Love for God Drawing Activity (Link)</p>
3	<p>The Annunciation Luke 1:26-38</p> <p>The Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1-20</p> <p>The Shepherds & The Magi Luke 2:8-20</p>	<p>Stories of Saints for Kids! – Saint Joseph (Video)</p> <p>Catholic Kids Media – Advent (Video)</p> <p>Catholic Kids Media – The Nativity (Video)</p> <p>Catholic Kids Media – The Epiphany (Video)</p>	<p>Annunciation Coloring Page (Link)</p> <p>Holy Family Coloring Page (Link)</p> <p>We Love Jesus (Link)</p>
4	<p>Jesus Walks on Water Matthew 14:22-33</p> <p>Feeding the Five Thousand Matthew 14:13-21</p> <p>Jesus Heals the Blind Man John 9:1-41</p>	<p>Stories of Saints for Kids! – Saint Peter (pt.1) (Video)</p> <p>Catholic Kids Media – Whispers and Walking on Water (Video)</p> <p>Catholic Kids Media – Unending Loaves, Unending Love! (Video)</p> <p>Catholic Kids Media – From Blindness to Sight (Video)</p>	<p>Jesus Walks on Water Discussion Questions (Link)</p> <p>Jesus Walking on Water Crossword Puzzle (Link)</p> <p>Loaves and Fish Crafts and Activities (Link)</p> <p>Jesus Healing A Blind Man Worksheet (Link)</p>

Lesson	Scripture Story	Video(s)	Activities
5	The Parable of The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37	Catholic Relief Services – Who Is My Neighbor? (Video)	Good Samaritan Worksheet (Link)
	The Greatest Commandment Mark 12:28-31	Catholic Kids Media – The Greatest Commandments! (Video)	Greatest Commandment Activity Page (Link) (cut out the phrases of the Greatest Commandment, scramble them and put them in the right order)
6	Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem John 12:12-19	Palm Sunday and the Passion (Video)	Holy Week Activities Pack (Link)
	The Last Supper Mark 14:12-25	Stories of Saints for Kids! – Saint Peter (pt.2) (Video)	The Last Supper Coloring Page (Link)
	The Passion & Death of Jesus Mark 15:16-39		Jesus in the Holy Eucharist Craft (Link) Easter Story Wreath (Link)
7	Jesus’ Resurrection John 20:1-10	Catholic Kids Media – Easter Sunday! (Video)	Resurrection of Our Lord Coloring Page (Link)
	Jesus Appeared to the Disciples Luke 24:36-49	Stories of Saints for Kids! – Saint Thomas (Video)	Easter Fill-in (Link)
	The Walk to Emmaus Luke 24:13-35	Catholic Kids Media – What Does the Resurrection Mean for Us? (Video)	Jesus Appears to the Disciples Worksheet (Link)
		Catholic Kids Media – On the Road to Emmaus (Video)	
8	Jesus’ Ascension into Heaven Luke 24:50-53	Catholic Kids Media – What is the Ascension? (Video)	Feast of the Ascension Craft (Link)
	The Descent of the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-6	Catholic Kids Media – What is Pentecost? (Video)	Ascension Coloring Page (Link) The Holy Spirit Helps Us Worksheet (Link) Gifts to Share Worksheet (Link)
Additional Resource	Comprehensive Lesson Plan Ideas for 26 Bible Stories		A to Z Bible Story Lesson Plans (Link)

Supplemental Lesson Resources for Any Catch-Up Program

As noted above, it is important that any model of a first-grade catch-up program includes lessons on basic catholic prayers, the seven sacraments, and an introduction to the mass. The following links will assist you in providing teaching resources for catechists or parents, student activity ideas, and short videos for children. **This supplemental lesson template** will help you to plan these lessons as you select from the following resources or include some of your own lesson print-outs or activities.

1. Basic Catholic Prayers

a. Resources for catechetical leaders, catechists, parents

- i. 15 Ways to Teach Children to Pray ([Link](#))
- ii. Pop-Up Catechesis: Praying at Mealtime ([Video](#))

b. Resources for student lessons and activities

- i. Printable Catholic Prayers for Kids: Posters and Copywork ([Link](#))
- ii. Prayers to Know ([English](#) | [Bilingual](#))
- iii. Catholic Prayers ([Link](#))
- iv. Printable Catholic Prayer Book ([Link](#))
- v. Prayer Doorknob Hanger ([Link](#))
- vi. Ways to Pray Worksheet ([Link](#))
- vii. A Word of Prayer ([Link](#))
- viii. The Lord's Prayer Chart ([Link](#))

c. Video resources:

- i. Our Father – The Lord's Prayer ([Video](#))
- ii. Let's Pray the Glory Be ([Video](#))
- iii. Let's Pray the Our Father ([Video](#))
- iv. Let's Pray the Hail Mary ([Video](#))

2. Basic Introduction to the Seven Sacraments

a. Resources for catechetical leaders, catechists, parents

- i. Lesson Plan Helper - What Sacrament Is It? ([Link](#))
- ii. Lesson Plan Helper Resources – The Sacraments ([Link](#))

b. Resources for student lessons and activities

- i. Sacraments Study Guide ([Link](#))
- ii. Seven Sacraments Draw & Tell ([Link](#))
- iii. Baptism Worksheet ([Link](#))
- iv. Baptism Booklet ([Link](#))

c. Video resources:

- i. The Sacrament of Baptism - Brother Francis ([Video](#))
- ii. Corpus Christi ([Video](#))
- iii. Jesus Gives Us the Eucharist ([Video](#))
- iv. Miracle of the Eucharist ([Video](#))
- v. What is the Real Presence ([Video](#))

- 3.** Basic Introduction to the Mass
 - a.** Resources for catechetical leaders, catechists, parents
 - i.** An Overview of the Mass (**Link**)
 - ii.** The Structure and Meaning of the Mass (**Link**)
 - iii.** Activities for Exploring the Mass (**Link**)
 - b.** Resources for student lessons and activities
 - i.** Give Glory to God Worksheet (**Link**)
 - ii.** We Belong to Jesus' Church Quiz (**Link**)
 - iii.** Together at Mass Booklet (**Link**)
 - iv.** We Celebrate the Mass (**Link**)
 - c.** Video resources:
 - i.** The Liturgy of the Word (**Video**)
 - ii.** Kids Explain the Holy Eucharist (**Video**)
 - iii.** What Makes Sunday Special (**Video**)
 - iv.** Listening to God at Mass (**Video**)
 - v.** Act of Spiritual Communion (**Video**)