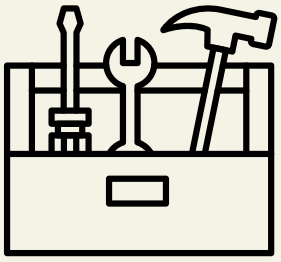
Faith Formation Family Tool Box

December 17th - January 6th

The Holy Spirit

www.st-patricks.org

About the Tool Box



St Patrick's Faith Formation provides these resources to support your family, and to make living your Catholic faith together as a family simple and effective.

We know that fitting everything into an already busy schedule is complicated. So, we aren't asking you to do it all. Instead we invite your family to take on these resources as a challenge. Ask yourselves "What can we do?"

We have intentionally planned and crafted a variety of options to choose from with all families in mind. Look through the options provided and pick a few that work well for your family. Choose an afternoon to do several activities, or sprinkle them throughout your week.

This is your toolbox! Use the tools that are most helpful in building your family's faith together.

What You'll Find in This Tool Box

- **Practical Faith Tools** — Simple prayer practice, Bible readings, saint stories, conversation starters, fun videos, and Sunday Mass support
- **Lived Faith Ideas** — Crafts, recipes, games, pop culture, service projects, faith and science, and more
- **Deeper Learning** — Optional resources for parents wanting to learn more about that session's topic.

A Faith-Filled Afternoon/Evening

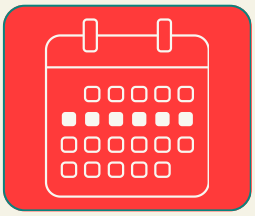
Some families might find it easiest to choose three or four ideas in this packet and make them into an afternoon or evening of faith-focused fun.

- Start your time in prayer or conversation by using one or two of the options in the "Practical Faith Tools." For example:
  - Begin with one of the suggested Prayer Habits
  - Use the suggested Conversation starters
  - Watch one of the recommended video resources.
- Then spend some time together working on one or two of the "Lived Faith Ideas"
  - Choose a craft or recipe to do together
  - Play a game or watch a pop-culture option
  - Complete a faith and science or service project
- Conclude using one of the prayer ideas provided.
  - Read the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday together
  - Learn about this session's Saint and ask for their prayers.

An Intentional Lord's Day

Perhaps it will work well for your family to integrate these resources into the rest of your Sunday before and after Mass.

- Read the Mass Readings as a family before Mass, or have a passenger read them on the drive to Church.
- Utilize the Conversation starters on the drive home from Mass, and practice a recommended prayer habit or Lord's Day idea.
- Integrate a recipe idea into lunch or dinner.
- Utilize a game, pop-culture, faith and science, or service project idea as part of your family time in the afternoon.
- Utilize the saint or art resources to conclude your day as a family in prayer.



Sprinkled Throughout the Week

For some, it might just be most practical to identify your favorite ideas from these materials and plug them in to different opportunities throughout the week, whenever time allows.

- Choose a day to add a recipe idea to dinner.
- Use conversation ideas when driving together in the car.
- Start your weekend with a service or faith and science project
- Read the Mass readings together Saturday evening in preparation for Mass the next day.
- The options are limitless!

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Find easy to use links to all resources on the St Patrick's Family Formation webpage

Practical Faith Tools

Student Workbooks

Your Child's work that they use during Wednesday Sessions with their catechist provides quality resources on the session's topic. We encourage parents to utilize these as a way to debrief the Wednesday session as well as carry the Wednesday session into the rest of the week. Below we have outlined the most helpful parts of each chapter as well as the specific chapter your child worked on with their catechist during our most recent Wednesday session.

- The last page in every chapter is an at home "with my family" page with scripture, activity, and discussion options.
- Each chapter introduces the example of a saint that demonstrates the topic through their lived faith.
- Throughout each chapter, there are a variety of simple Prayer options that you can integrate into other prayer times throughout your week.

December 17th, 2025 – The Holy Spirit	
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Conversation Starters

One of the most consistent indicators of a child who will continue to live their faith into adulthood is growing up in a family that simply talks openly and actively about their faith. Consider using some of the provided conversation starters to discuss your faith as a family this week.

We often hear, read, and learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In this season of gift-giving, have some conversations about gifts given, received, and utilized.

1. What is the most unique gift you ever received or given?
2. Have you ever received or given a gift that was better than you expected? How did that make you feel?

At baptism, we are all blessed with seven gifts from the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God.

1. How have you used them to glorify God?
2. Do you use them to help others?
3. How can you do that, if you haven't yet?
4. Which gift do you want to use more?

Memory Verse

The Word of God is important in our faith journey, and memorizing short, simple scripture verses can prove to be beneficial to us at all ages to allow God to more consistently speak to us throughout our daily life.

Isaiah 30:21 “While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: "This is the way; walk in it," when you would turn to the right or to the left.”

OR

Ephesians 4:30-32 “And do not grieve the holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. (And) be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.”

Lord's Day Ideas

As we've been learning about the Holy Spirit and as we recently discussed how music uplifts our souls, one way to celebrate the Lord's Day this session is to listen to this collection of **Songs to the Holy Spirit**.

The Christmas Season is a season of feasting! Divvy up the remaining Christmas treats over the season and have something every night – or pack them in everyone's lunches during the weekdays! Consider having a special meal, dessert, or a special hot beverage each night of this season.

If having a special meal or dessert every day of Christmas is too much for your family this year, try to make the Sundays more festive! There are three Sundays, including the Baptism of the Lord, when the Christmas season concludes. Pizza, lasagna, and ravioli might be just the thing for one family while ham, lamb, and ribs would be more festive for another.

Thinking just a dessert on Sundays is the right start for your family? Here are some ideas for that:

- Make gingerbread cookies together on one of the quieter Sundays. Instead of people cookie cutters, use different sized star-shaped ones. Using frosting to hold them together, stack the baked stars up from largest to smallest to make trees. Use more frosting to secure decorations (small candies or sprinkles) on the trees.
- In remembrance of the Magi visiting the baby Jesus, try one of the Three Kings Cake recipes linked in the Food and Recipes section (p20-1).
- Even berries or instant pudding with whipped topping can be a lovely but quick dessert!

Mass Readings

Reading scripture together as a family before you hear the Word of God proclaimed at Mass is a great way to improve comprehension and impact among people young and old. Spend just a few minutes together reading the assigned readings for Mass from your Bible or by using the link provided. You can even do this together in the car, or as a time of prayer on Saturday evening before bed. You can also listen to the readings using the links provided. If needing to shorten this option, try just reading the Gospel.

Sunday, December 21st
Fourth Sunday of Advent
First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-6
Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7
Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

Thursday, December 25th
Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Holy Day of Obligation
Readings vary, depending on which Mass you attend.

Sunday, December 28th
Feast of the Holy Family
First Reading: Sirach 3:2-6,12-14
Psalm 128:1-5
Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-21
Gospel: Matthew 2:13-5, 19-23

Daily Readings
bible.USCCB.org

Thursday, January 1st
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Holy Day of Obligation
First Reading: Numbers 6:22-7
Psalm 67:2-3,5,6,8
Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7
Gospel: Luke 2:16-21

Sunday, January 4th
Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-2,7-8,10-3
Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Daily Readings
bible.USCCB.org

Prayer Habits

Option 1:
An excellent, simple prayer to practice is just “Come, Holy Spirit.” You can pray this generally for your day, before starting communal prayers, or as an invitation to help you with difficult conversations.

Option 2:
Another good prayer to the Holy Spirit, one that was written by St. Augustine, is below. Perhaps as a family, this will be a new prayer to memorize and pray together regularly.

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
That I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
To defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
That I always may be holy.

Option 3:
On January 4th, be sure to pick up blessed chalk and the Epiphany prayer. Find a time for the whole family to bless your home and all who enter it for 2026. Hint: do the chalk notations on the inside of the doors, not the outside. 😊 It’s usually a bit chilly in January to do this outdoors!

Hymn

Hymns are sung to lift the soul and draw our hearts closer to God. Many are based on Scripture, giving us another avenue to understanding and reflecting on the Sacred Word. Some hymns teach doctrine and express beliefs, reinforcing Catholic teachings and traditions. Below is a hymn about the Holy Spirit that your family can listen to, learn, or sing during the next few weeks.

Come, Holy Ghost

Come Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up Thy rest.
Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
To fill the hearts which Thous hast made.
To fill the hearts which Thous hast made.

O Comforter, to Thee we cry,
Thou heavenly gift of God most high
Thou font of life and fire of love,
And sweet anointing from above.
And sweet anointing from above.

Praise we the Lord, Father and Son,
And Holy Spirit with them One.
And may the Son on us bestow
All gifts that from the Spirit flow.
All gifts that from the Spirit flow.

The Witness of the Saints

This session's saint is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.
Feast day: January 4th
Born August 28th, 1774, New York City
Died 1821 of tuberculosis
Patron saint of Catholic schools, educators, loss of parents, widows.

First native-born American to be canonized a saint.

"Go to him with faith, love and confidence - He will help. Fill yourself with his Spirit and He himself will govern."

At the early age of 3 Elizabeth's mother died. Born two years before the American Revolution, Elizabeth grew up in the upper class of New York society and was raised in the Episcopal Church. She was a prolific reader and read everything from the Bible to contemporary novels.

In spite of her high society background, Elizabeth's early life was quiet, simple, and often lonely. As she grew a little older, the Bible was to become her continual instruction, support and comfort - and she would continue to love the Scriptures for the rest of her life.

The Witness of the Saints

At the age of 19, she married William Seton, a wealthy businessman. Within four years, she suffered the death of her father-in-law which left William in charge, not only of his father's business but the seven half-brothers and sisters as well. The business failed, forcing bankruptcy.

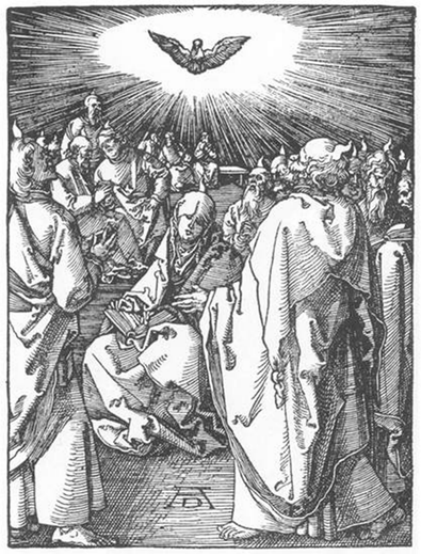
William became ill with tuberculosis. In an attempt to find a cure, they moved to Italy. He died while living in Italy, leaving Elizabeth to raise 5 children on her own. Elizabeth grew very close to God. She accepted and embraced the will of God. Elizabeth eventually was led into the Catholic church. She had a strong devotion to the Virgin Mary – she took great comfort in the idea that the Blessed Virgin was truly her mother, after losing her earthly mother at such a young age.

To support her family, she opened a school in Baltimore, Maryland. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton established there the first free Catholic school in America. On March 25, 1809, she took a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience. She became the founder of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, the first American religious community for women. By 1818, the Sisters had established two orphanages and another school. Before her death in 1821, two of her daughters had passed away.

What can we learn from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton? When life doesn't go our way, what do we do? Do you turn to God when feeling low? If not, why do you think that is so?

"I am satisfied to sow in tears if I may reap in joy.
And when all the wintry storms of time are past,
we shall enjoy the delights of an eternal spring."

Praying with Art



Descent of the Holy Spirit by Albrecht Direr

Each session, your family will receive a print out of a work of sacred art related to that session's topic. Over the Church's history, it was known — long before anyone had heard of multiple intelligences — that some people learned better through visuals and images can also be helpful for prayer experiences.

For this reason, the Church has a tradition known as visio divina ("divine seeing" or prayer in which we invite God to speak to our hearts as we look at an image).

"O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams." — St. Augustine

Experience visio divina or lead others by following these steps:

1. Choose a comfortable, quiet place where you will not be distracted. Quiet yourself and relax by focusing on your breathing.
2. Begin by paying attention to the details, including shapes, colors, lighting, and facial expressions/body language of characters in the image. Identify the parts of the image that stand out to you and share them with your family.
3. Take a moment to prayerfully consider how God is speaking to your heart and why you think God has drawn your attention to this specific part of the image. Pay attention to your feelings, and allow God to speak to you through the image.
4. Respond to God, expressing your thoughts, feelings, desires, or yearnings. This can be done silently or together as a family.
5. Conclude by taking a few moments of silence to rest and savor the beauty of the image.

Video Resources

For younger children:

Watch these video resources on Formed.org. All St Patrick's families have free access to Formed as part of being parishioners.

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? | Adventure Catechism - Formed: Brother Francis explains who the Holy Spirit and how He helps us.
2. Marcam's Christmas Gratitude List | Formed: In this episode, Marcam will teach young saints the importance of gratitude in this season. Marcam writes a gratitude list to give thanks to God for all the blessings in his life before thinking of a few gifts he may wish to ask for!

For older youth:

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? | Formed: For our bodies, breathing is necessary. And for our souls, the Holy Spirit is necessary. Just as our lungs breathe air, our soul breathes God. And we need this breath of God to live our life as Christians. The Holy Spirit, the 'breath of God' can seem vague or illusive, but when we consider further, we discover that the Holy Spirit is one of the secrets to being fully alive.

How Do I Use Formed?

- Go to formed.org/signup
- Select your parish by entering name, city and/or zip code
- Enter your name and email address
- Check that email account for a link to begin using FORMED.

Find easy to use links to these video resources on the St Patrick's Family Formation webpage

www.st-patricks.org/formation/youth/family-formation

Lived Faith Ideas

Crafts

Fruit of the Spirit Ornaments

Supplies:

- Fruit-of-the-Spirit-Ornaments-Printable.pdf
- paper or cardstock
- scissors
- stick pins
- felt in different colors
- embroidery thread
- needle
- cotton batting or cotton balls
- thin satin ribbon or Christmas tree ornament hangers

Instructions:

1. Download and print out the pdf. (lifeasmom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Fruit-of-the-Spirit-Ornaments-Printable.pdf)
2. Cut out each of the fruits and the word labels.
3. Pin each fruit to felt of your preferred color and cut out around the pattern. Cut two of each.
4. Thread your needle and sew two of the same shape together.
5. Once you have most of the individual fruit sewn, stuff it with a little cotton batting or cotton balls.
6. Once all the fruit are sewn you can add the details. I added seeds to the strawberries, a stem to the orange, stems to the cherries, and leaves to several of the fruit.
7. Add a loop of green ribbon for a hanger.
8. Stitch a label onto each piece of fruit.

Bonus craft: Make a Lego Nativity Scene.
(https://frugalfun4boys.com/lego-nativity-set-instructions/)

Food and Recipes

For Epiphany, make a Middle Eastern dish! Perhaps you are up for a culinary adventure and will tackle curry, shawarma, or falafel. **Or, maybe the chickpea salad recipe below sounds easier.**

Whisk together:
Tsp Dijon mustard
1 lemon juiced
1 clove garlic minced
Tsp Aleppo pepper
Tsp sumac
Salt and pepper to taste

Drizzle in:
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

Whisk again until emulsified.

Add:
2 cans (15 oz) of chickpeas, drained & rinsed
1 large English cucumber, chopped
2 cups grape tomatoes, halved
16-ounce jar roasted peppers in oil, drained
1 small red onion, finely chopped
1 cup chopped parsley leaves
½ cup chopped mint leaves

Toss gently before adding:
1 avocado, pitted and roughly chopped

Toss again, gently.

You could keep the Epiphany celebration even simpler with a mezze platter that everyone eats from. Place on a large platter:

- pita bread
- hummus and/or tzatziki
- olives
- feta or chevre cheese or mozzarella balls
- vegetables (roasted, pickled, and/or some fresh ones for dipping)
- dried fruits

Three Kings Cake

An Epiphany Tradition

Three kings cake, also known as baby cake or just a king cake, is shaped into a circular, crown, or ring shape. It is often eaten during the Christmas season, on Epiphany, or throughout the time between Epiphany and Mardi Gras. Most traditions include hiding an object – a coin, a bean, or even a baby figurine – that represents the baby Jesus hidden inside, similar to when Jesus was hidden during Herod's killing of the innocents. Depending on the tradition of the locale, whoever finds the object in their slice gets to be king for the day, make next year's cake, or host a party that day, on Candlemas, or on the next Mardi Gras.

Though the classic Three Kings' Cake is a simple sweet bread ring in Switzerland, regional and modern variations abound.

- Swiss Dreikönigskuchen is shaped into pull-apart rolls and topped with almonds and pearl sugar.
- Bavarian Version often includes raisins soaked in rum and is sometimes flavored with nutmeg or cardamom.
- Rhineland Variation is enriched with more butter and glazed with icing for extra sweetness.
- Modern Variations include chocolate chip versions for children, almond-filled rolls for a richer flavor, and vegan versions.

The variations don't end with Switzerland! Louisiana, Mexico, Germany, Spain, Greece, France, as well as other European nations, all have their own three king cake recipe and tradition.

While most three kings cakes are a type of brioche dough, one French version uses fluffy puff pastry. Many Latin and Spanish cultures enjoy roscón de reyes with a whipped cream center. The sweet southern US version is more of a blend of coffee cake and cinnamon rolls, sometimes with a cream cheese or praline filling, and usually topped with the yellow, green and purple colors of Mardi Gras.

Despite the differences, the essence remains the same: a soft, festive bread meant to unite people around the table.

Faith and Science

Consider starting a Calendar of Firsts in early January. Use a calendar or a journal with numbered lines (one for each day of each month). As you notice “firsts” of the year in nature, note them in your calendar or journal.

This is similar to phenology but can be broader – note visible constellations, tracks of animals you see above the snow, when the late oak leaves start falling, the first dripping icicles, the first rain, the first sunset later than 5PM! **Enjoy the wonder as you try to notice new things and be thankful for such a creative God!**

Some other things to learn about and watch for this winter:

- Cattails breaking open
- Springtails
- Flowers on silver maple trees
- Other astrological events (meteor showers, Aurora lights, planets, etc)

Tip: If you want to use the same notebook/journal for multiple years, write in one color for 2026 and use a different color for each year thereafter.

Pop-Culture

Although you'll hear about the birth of Jesus during Christmas Mass, it's always nice to watch the story as well. Get cozy under blankets with some popcorn and enjoy a video rendition of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus. Some possibilities are below.

1.The Star: A small but brave donkey and his animal friends become the unsung heroes of the first Christmas.

2.Little Drummer Boy (1968 claymation): Based on the song, an orphan drummer boy finds his life changed when he meets three wise men en route to Bethlehem.

3.Nativity Story: Starting shortly before the Annunciation, this film follows the Holy Family until they are leaving for Egypt. *May not be suitable for sensitive children.*

Some suggested discussion topics: Did you enjoy what was added to the Biblical account? Did anything in the video help you understand better the significance of Jesus' birth – or perhaps how all of us have a part to play?

Service Projects

This session, try to embrace one or more of these seasonal opportunities of service:

- Clean out closets, toys, and books & donate appropriate items.
- Send thank you's. Include a selfie of you with the gift if sending any electronic notes of gratitude.
- Cheerfully help your family and neighbors with snow and ice removal!

Deeper Learning

Parent Videos

Bishop Barron on The Holy Spirit
Bishop Barron discusses how you know if the Holy Spirit is working well in you, how the gifts appear in your life, Who the Holy Spirit is, and the power of the prayer, Come Holy Spirit.

Reflections on Christmas
Bishop Barron compares Jesus to the political leaders in the book of Luke and shares some lesser familiar observations of the subversive Nativity story.

God Was Not Content to Remain Separated from His People
Archbishop Hebda reflects on the Incarnation and how this happens to us, undeserving sinners.

Christmas the Right Way
Ken Yasinski chats with Fr. Christino about how and why to celebrate Christmas as a liturgical season.

Scripture and Catechism

Read and reflect on James 2:14-26.
Spend some time reading and reflecting on the Prodigal Son and His Brother. Consider how you might be similarly treating your heavenly Father. Optionally, listen to Father Mike Schmitz Bible in a Year Podcast to learn more about this scripture reading.

The Bible in a Year
with Fr. Mike Schmitz
Day 326: Life in the Spirit

Consider Reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church
The Catechism of the Catholic Church is an outstanding explanation of all the teachings of the Catholic Church. You can read about this sessions topic online for free, or you can pick up a copy of the Catechism from the St Patrick's bookstore.

Read paragraphs 683-8

Day 97 "Introduction to the Holy Spirit" w/Fr. Mike

Additional Reading Options

The Holy Spirit — God's Divine Life and Power within Us | Catholic Life
An examination of the power of the Holy Spirit within us and how we can deepen our relationship with this Person and thus become better servants of the Lord.

Epiphany and the Magic Road Trip | Catholic Answers Magazine
An excerpt:
We should not dismiss them as "superstitious." God meets people where they are. If the receiver isn't ready for FM, God will send his message on AM.

And what the magi did is also something the Church encourages of its faithful. God reveals himself in the sacred books of the Bible, so we should come to know Scripture. But God also reveals himself in the book of nature, in a world whose order, beauty, contingency, and purposefulness all point beyond itself. They point to One who ordered it, gave it that beauty and purpose, and both created and sustains its being. The Church teaches that man can come to a certain knowledge of God even from the created world.

“Spirit of truth,
you are the reward of the saints,
the comforter of souls,
light in the darkness,
riches to the poor,
treasure to lovers,
food for the hungry,
comfort to those who are wandering;
to sum up, you are the one in whom all treasures are contained.”
~St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, virgin (1566-1607 A.D.)

Notes...

We are Here to Help!

We want your feedback!

These resources are designed for your family, and we want to continue to improve them to better meet your needs.
Share with us your favorite activities, standout options that work well, as well as the resources that might have missed the mark.

Send us photos from your family working on these activities at home! We want to see your family's faith in action!

Contact Us

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