

## Welcome to The Family School of Chicago...

...a unique opportunity for Jewish and Catholic intercultural families to directly participate and share in their children's religious education. From Kindergarten through the eighth grade, children at The Family School of Chicago experience the richness of Judaism and Catholicism while exploring the cultural, spiritual, and religious facets of both faith traditions. Families whose religious heritage includes a faith that is not Jewish or Catholic are also welcomed.

### History

The Family School was formed in 1993 by a group of seven families who met through the Jewish-Catholic Couples Dialogue Group.

Over the years, a total of 185 students from 105 families have attended the school, and 54 have graduated from the 8th grade. In 2008, our 15th year, enrollment consisted of 67 families, with 114 students.

Blessed with strong connections to both Jewish and Catholic clergy, The Family School continues to be graciously hosted by Old St. Patrick's church.

### Mission

At the outset of The Family School, the founding families made these statements:

- We acknowledge that both Judaism and Catholicism are meaningful ways to find God. The Family School provides an avenue for the spiritual lives of our children, and serves to enrich the spiritual lives of our families.
- The mission of our school will be to produce a setting where, on a regular basis, we will:
  - Convey to our children the stories, traditions, rituals and values of Judaism and of Catholic Christianity
  - Explore with our children the common moral code, and shared heritage of our two faiths, as well as the differences
  - Instill in our children a sense of belonging to our Jewish-Catholic community

### Curriculum

The Family School curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including holidays, rites of passage, sacraments, and traditions of both faiths. Bible stories from both the Hebrew and Christian Testaments, concepts of God, the importance of service, making ethical choices, and social justice concerns are all explored throughout the school year.

The added strength of the parent-teaching model offers the opportunity for parents to share their understanding of God, and what it means to experience God in our lives, through both faith-traditions. Parents are required to teach two or three classes per year, further enhancing the connection of children, parents and religious education.

### Adult Education

While children are in class, parents not teaching participate in a robust adult education program. The Family School regularly hears from National and Chicagoland leaders on matters of spirituality, theology, and social justice.

The close community setting also provides parents the opportunity to reflect on speaker topics, as well as share their own stories and experiences of the pursuit of balance in an interfaith union and family.

An adult retreat during the school year is geared to a more intimate exploration of Judaism and Catholicism in marriage. This and other special events further embellish the richness of the adult educational experience at The Family School.

## FAQs

- Q:** How does The Family School differ from other Sunday schools, interfaith or otherwise?
- A:** The Family School offers a curriculum grounded in both Judaism and Catholicism, in a setting that is entirely parent-taught, supported by close connections to clergy of both faiths.
- Q:** Where and when does The Family School meet?
- A:** Classes meet approximately two Sunday's per month during the regular school year at Frances Xavier Ward School, 120 S. Des Plaines in Chicago, on the campus of Old St. Patrick's Church.
- Q:** When and how can we join The Family School?
- A:** Enrollment is open to new families through September 1 for the following school year, for children in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Contact Chris Kopka at [crkopka@kopkalaw.com](mailto:crkopka@kopkalaw.com) or call 847-279-3979.

[www.the-family-school.org](http://www.the-family-school.org)

## Quotes From Graduates

"...We must look into the eyes of our fellow men and see God in every one of them. I believe we have accomplished this skill. The Family School taught me in two short years how to coexist with people's differences in peace, and that is why I am here today. Thank you."

- Adam G, Class of 2004

"...I will admit that sometimes getting up to go to Family School wasn't my favorite, but now that I am done with it, I will miss coming to Chicago. I have learned that no matter where I pray, at Old St. Pat's or at Temple Shalom, I can feel accepted and believe that I am praying to the same God."

- Roxanne K, Class of 2004

"When the parents who were teaching our first class asked us about our religious backgrounds, one of us said, 'I'm Jewish and Catholic.' 'Me too,' said each child, one after the next, except for Will, who insisted that he was Catholic and Jewish, not Jewish and Catholic. People often wonder how children with two religions have any sense of belonging. All of us standing before you today feel that we do belong: to our families, to our religions, to the Family School and to ourselves."

- Elena C, Class of 2006

"Family School has done more than just educate me religiously, though. I've been able to meet people who are in the same position as I am. It's been great knowing people who are both religions also. I've been able to talk with people in my class about whether they will eventually choose one religion or another and it has helped me figure out what I will eventually do."

- Sarah I, Class of 2004

"The Family School is a community. It is a group of people in union. We come together to take in something special. Think back to when you first found out about the school: perhaps you were afraid of what the future would hold: 'Will my child be confused?' 'How do I teach this stuff?' Well, we are here to say to you that learning solves fear. We have learned over these 10 years that it is okay to be different."

- Jack K, Class of 2002

"Family School has taught me the lessons and teachings of both Christianity and Judaism, but it has also taught me to be open, not only to my religions, but to the beliefs of others as well. Family School has been so supportive and has let me know that whatever I choose to believe, I will always be accepted and welcome. Of all the things I have taken from Family School, this, I believe, is the most important."

- Hannah G, Class of 2006



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