

PARENT HANDBOOK

St. Joseph Lena Catholic Church Religious Education Program 2026/2027

Revised 08.19.2026



Classes 1st Grade – 8th Grade

Streidl Hall
Wednesdays 6:30 – 7:45 pm

Pastor: Father Andrew Hernandez
St. Joseph Catholic Church
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MISSION STATEMENT

St. Ann/St. Joseph's Religious Education program serves to build a foundation in faith in Jesus Christ while nourishing the spirit of our youth and being companions on their journey.

St. Joseph Religious Education Catechists by Grade

Grades 1 & 2:	Amy Kempel	Grades 3 & 4: Ryan Vondra
Grades 4-6:	Jason March	Grades 7 & 8: Mark McInnis
Substitutes:	Louise Kloepping, Teresa Brown, Dan Brown, Mandy Kent, Melanie Bremmer	

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES, FEES & REGISTRATION

Classes

Grades 1 through 8 RE classes meet in Streidl Hall Starting September 16th Wednesdays 6:30 – 7:45 pm according to the schedule at the end of this document.

Tuition for 2026/2027

1 Child:	\$60.00	2 Children:	\$80.00	3 or more Children:	\$95.00
Out of Parish Rate:	\$70.00 per Child				
First Communion:	\$30.00	Confirmation:	\$45.00		

Check or cash (make checks payable to "St. Joseph Church-RE")

Registration

All families with children attending catechetical programs must be registered with St. Joseph's Parish in Lena or have been accepted to be enrolled by the pastor and CRE. Please see separate registration form.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION GOAL

This year's Religious Education program aims not only to enrich our children's knowledge of their faith through lessons in the classrooms, but it also aims to put what they learned into practice through active participation in our parish events and liturgical celebrations.

RE Attendance Policy, Family Mass & Altar Servers

In order for us to achieve the above goal this year's policies and requirements are as follows:

RE Attendance - All students are encouraged to attend all RE classes and liturgical celebrations, i.e. Masses and Stations of the Cross and other parish activities. Students are allowed a total of 5 absences throughout the whole school year. When 5 absences have accumulated the student and parents will meet with Father Andrew and the DRE to discuss how the student will make up for the absences through makeup sessions or additional projects.

Family Mass - The CCC: 1324 teaches that the Mass or Eucharistic Celebration is "the source and summit of all Christian life." Our RE program aims to introduce and expose the children to the celebration of the Mass. RE students and parents are highly encouraged to attend Sunday Mass. Students will be required to have their Mass cards, that are provided by the parish, to be signed by the celebrating priest wherever they attend Sunday Mass. If a child does not have their Mass card binder with them, have the priest sign a paper with the date of the Mass, the parish and the priest's signature. The students' Mass card binders will be kept in the back of the church for easy accessibility after Mass.

This school year, the first Sunday of the month will be reserved for Family Masses beginning September 13th. In the Family Masses, RE students and parents will take on active roles of participation in the celebration. Parents and students will sign up or be assigned to be readers or lectors. Older students will help the ushers as greeters before Mass and distribute bulletins after Mass. For Offertory, one family will be asked to bring up the Gifts. All the students and children will be asked to bring their own offering in an envelope to the altar before the Presentation of the Gifts. Please see current family Mass schedule, which will be shared via email and posted to the parish website.

Altar Serving - Part of the RE experience will be altar serving. To introduce to the students the beauty of the Mass and for them to have a meaningful celebration, all RE students will be given the opportunity to be an altar server after being given basic altar server lessons. Altar serving will be a part of the Service Project for Confirmation.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

Parents will be notified by phone call, text or email should cancellations occur due to weather or other unforeseen occurrences. An effort will be made to post changes to Facebook, as well.

PICTURES AND FIELD TRIPS

The registration form includes a question for permission to use photos and/or names in the parish bulletin, posted on the parish bulletin board, The Observer - the diocesan paper, or local publications. Field trip permission forms will be sent prior to any field trips. Students may not attend field trips if a permission slip is not returned.

ILLNESS

Please do not send your child to class if they are ill. Please immediately notify the CRE/DRE if the student will not come to class. If your child becomes ill during class, you will be notified to come and pick them up.

ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents are the primary catechists in their children's lives. We encourage you to support St. Ann's/St. Joseph's RE program in the following ways:

- Attend weekly Sunday Mass with your child
- Support your child's participation in RE
- See that your child is on time for class.
- Take time after class to review lessons.
- Be active in the sacramental preparation of your child.
- Help your child learn the basic prayers of our Catholic Faith.
- Become a part of the RE catechist/teacher team. Please contact the DRE to get more information about the requirements of being an RE teacher/catechist.
- Use the sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS, BULLYING AND DISCIPLINE

The expectation is that every student and teacher will be respectful to each other, the materials given to support the program and building facilities. Any action, word, or behavior which harasses, intimidates, or causes physical, emotional, or psychological harm to another student or students is considered bullying and is strictly prohibited. If there is an occasion of concern in regards to behavior and discipline, the CRE will contact the parents to share this concern.

“Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically (“cyberbullying”), directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of placing the student/students in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s/students’ person or property or causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s/students’ physical or mental health. Please see more below.

Expectations per Grade Level

6th through 8th Grade

1. Restrooms Usage

Please have your child arrive at the Fellowship Hall at least 10 minutes before class. We start at 6:30. Please have your child use the restroom before class. Use of restroom during class is to be avoided. If there is a particular problem, parents must contact CRE or catechist before class begins and special arrangements can be made.

2. Disruptions and Disrespectful behavior

Talking out of turn and general class disruptions take away from the instruction time. Students are expected to respect one another and the catechist.

a. First offense

- i. Student will be given a verbal warning for the first offense per class.

b. Second offense

- i. Student will be sent out of class for ten minutes.

c. Third offense

- i. Student will be sent to CRE for the remainder of class and parents will be notified.

Diocesan definition:

BULLYING Any action, word or behavior which harasses, intimidates or causes physical, emotional or psychological harm to another student or students is strictly prohibited. This prohibited conduct also extends to the use of technology (“Cyber bullying”) as a tool to harass or cause harm. Bullying is prohibited during any school-sponsored education program or activity; while in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities; or through the transmission of information from a computer, a computer network, or other similar electronic equipment. However, this policy is not limited to conduct that occurs on the premises of the Diocese school. "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically (“cyber bullying”), directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following: (1) placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property; (2) causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health; (3) substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or (4) substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school. Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. Examples of “cyber bullying” include but are not limited to the use of e-mail, web sites, text messaging, electronic photos or videos & social media (i.e. Face Book, Twitter, Instagram, My Space etc...) to harass

or intimidate. These lists are meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive. Students who violate this policy will be subject to the discipline policy of the student's school. Procedure: This policy is to be communicated by each Diocesan school principal to the school's students and their parent/guardian annually. Any behavior of a student which, in the School's discretion, puts that student at risk for aggressive behavior, including bullying, shall be reported by the Diocesan school principal to the parent/guardian of the student committing the behavior, and the parent/guardian may be required to investigate early intervention based upon available community-based resources.

Per 5170

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE HANDBOOK OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES & ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDE
Effective August 1, 2010 Revised August 13, 2012 Revised December 1, 2014

Our Identity in Christ

Addressing Gender Identity Youth and family are faced with numerous challenges pertaining to sexuality, gender, and identity. The Diocesan document of guidelines can be found at:

GENDER IDENTITY/HUMAN SEXUALITY POLICY - Living the Truth of Our Creation

<https://www.rockforddiocese.org/pdfs/Living%20the%20Truth%20of%20Our%20Creation%20--%20Guiding%20Principles%20on%20Human%20Sexuality%20for%20the%20Diocese%20of%20Rockford%2008062021.pdf>

Click on the link above if reading this online or find the document attached at the end of the handbook.

Curriculum

The mission of the Diocese of Rockford is to infuse the teachings of Jesus as expressed in our Catholic faith and tradition. Students are encouraged to recognize and grow in their relationship with God. Our Religious Education Program offers students opportunities to encounter Jesus within the Catholic community, provide them with instruction in Catholic doctrine and challenge them to develop a Catholic lifestyle which serves God, the Church and the world around us.

The Rockford Diocese religion curriculum guide for grades 1 through 8 are grounded in the basic truths of the Catholic faith presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Your child can learn much in the time spent in the catechism classes but we only have a specific timeframe, then the child should turn to their parents to guide them in their faith formation. Parents should be aware of their important role, and should try and spend time each week with their child reviewing the lessons covered in the classroom. This way they can see how their child is growing in his/her faith and sharing the journey with them.

Learning outcomes for each specific class are given to the teachers at the start of each year so that they can prepare their goals in accordance with the Diocesan guidelines.

Current workbooks for grades 1-6 will most likely be "Blessed Are We" from RCL Benzinger and grades 6-7 are "Chosen" from Ascension Press for a two-year confirmation program. Student shall take

workbooks home at the end of the school year. Workbooks remain in the classroom during the school year, unless otherwise noted by catechist.

Prayers to learn by Grade

Grade 1: Hail Mary, Our Father, Grace Before Meals

Grade 2: Act of Contrition

Grade 3: Maintain all from earlier grades

Grade 4: I Confess (Confiteor) Nicene Creed, Holy-Holy-Holy, Lamb of God, Hail Holy Queen

Grade 5: Apostles' Creed, Rosary, Angelus, Memorare

Grade 6: Act of Faith, Act of Hope, Act of Love

Grade 7: Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Morning Offering, Episcopal Blessing Response (for Confirmation) Eternal Rest

Grade 8: Maintain all from earlier grades

Grade 1:

Understands: the Creed - how God reveals Himself to us and the Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Scripture - Jesus' stories of Christmas, Easter, His parables and miracles,

Worship and the Sacraments - why all life is sacred, participates at Mass, knows that Baptism is the first sacrament and identifies the difference between the church seasons of Advent and Lent,

Morality - that making wrong choices is a sin, and know the process of sin and forgiveness,

Prayer - knows and says Sign of the Cross, Angel of God, Glory Be, Grace Before and After Meals, Hail Mary, and Our Father.

Grade 2:

Understands: the Creed - explains how God reveals Himself to us and defines the Trinity,

Scripture - the Bible is the history of our faith, the Last Supper, tell events of the Passion and Resurrection, tell and understand stories of Jesus' parables and miracles and identifies and describes Mary as Mother of God and everyone,

Worship and the Sacraments - recognizes and understands the two main divisions of Mass: Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist, knows the meaning of the word Amen, understands the church season of Advent and Lent, participates at Mass, defines the sacrament of Eucharist and describes the steps of the Sacrament of Reconciliation,

Morality - the process of sin and forgiveness,

Prayer - added Act of Contrition to beginning list of prayers.

Grade 3:

Understands: the Creed - defines the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity,

Scripture - names the divisions of the Bible and shows ability to retell Bible stories,

Worship and the Sacraments - identifies basic Catholic traditions, the liturgical season, and the divisions of the Mass, participates at Mass and knows the seven sacraments,

Morality - knows and understands the meaning of sin, forgiveness, and penance, identifies grace, the Ten Commandments, and demonstrates Christian values through actions,

Prayer - able to recite Sign of the Cross, Angel of God, Glory Be, Grace Before and After Meals, Hail Mary, Our Father, and Act of Contrition.

Grade 4:

Understands the Creed - shows understanding of how God reveals Himself as one God in Three Person and knows the lives of the saints,

Scripture - how to use the Bible and able to retell parables,

Worship and the Sacraments - knows that the Eucharist is central to our Catholic faith, identifies the liturgical seasons and feast days, knows the parts of the Mass actively participates at Mass, the real Presence of Jesus in the in the Eucharist (Adoration) and knows the signs, rights and effects of the seven sacraments,

Morality - defines the meaning of sin, forgiveness, and penance, defines faith, explains the two Great Commandments, identifies the Beatitudes and demonstrates Christian values through actions,

Prayer - recites Sign of the Cross, Angel of God, Glory Be, Grace Before and After Meals, Hail Mary, Our Father, and Act of Contrition.

Grade 5:

Understands the Creed - knows God reveals Himself as one God in Three Persons, the lives of the saints, identifies the Catholic Church as founded by Christ, identifies leaders of the Catholic Church and defines eternal life,

Scripture - explains Bible as a collection of sacred books and demonstrates knowledge of the divisions of the Bible,

Worship and the Sacraments - identifies basic Catholic symbols, understands the liturgical seasons and feast days, knows the meanings of all parts of the Mass, actively participates at Mass, understands and identifies the meaning of Mass and all its parts, understands the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (Adoration), defines the signs, rights and effects of each of the seven sacraments, identifies sacrament categories,

initiation, healing and vocation, and understands the Church's teaching authority of moral law,

Morality - knows and understands the meaning of sin, forgiveness, and penance, identifies Grace, identifies and explains the Ten Commandments, knows and demonstrates the Beatitudes, and demonstrates Christian values through actions,

Prayer - recognizes prayer and its forms, knows and says prayers and includes Hail Holy Queen, and shows reverence during prayer time.

Grade 6:

Understands the Creed - describes God's covenant with humanity, tells the story of the creation, fall, and promise, and understands Jesus is Son of David and the Messiah,

Understands the Church, Scripture - Knows the books of the Old Testament,

Worship and the Sacraments - actively participates at Mass, understands the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (Adoration), and understands Mass as fulfillment of the Covenant,

Morality - understands sin as violation of moral law, identifies the two greatest commandments, understands relationship between commandments and covenant, identifies, idolatry, atheism, superstition, defines blasphemy, false oaths, perjury, and demonstrates Christian value through action,

Prayer - recognizes the ways Jesus taught us how to pray and knows Memorare and Regina Coeli - the prayer we say at the end of the rosary after Hail Holy Queen.

Grade 7:

Understands the Creed - describes how God is revealed through Sacred scripture and knows and relates the stories of Jesus' life,

Scripture - understand the gift of the Holy Spirit at Baptism, knows that the Church is founded by Christ, identifies and describes the four marks of the Church, Describes the Church as missionary,

Worship and the Sacraments - actively participates at Mass, identifies and discusses the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (Adoration), identifies the Eucharist as celebration, sacrificial and memorial, and knows Penance as fasting prayer and almsgiving,

Morality identifies and explains the Beatitudes, defines cardinal virtues and theological virtues, explains sanctifying, actual and habitual grace, explains, purgatory and hell, understands the duties of civil authority and citizens, identifies and explain the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and demonstrates Christian values through action,

Prayer - understands prayer is a personal relationship with God, identifies and describes prayer as blessing, petition intercession, thanksgiving and praise and knows the Magnificat and Come, Holy Spirit.

Grade 8:

Understands the Creed - describes how God is revealed through Scripture, describes how humans are co-creators with God, and understands how Jesus fulfills Covenant and conquers death,

Scripture - understands the roles of the Holy Spirit in Church today, understands the role of pope, bishop, priest, deacon, and the laity, and recognizes the Church as the Body of Christ,

Worship and the Sacraments - actively participates at Mass, understands the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (Adoration), identifies Baptism as initiation into new life, recognizes responsibilities and effects of Confirmation, understands the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and understands penance as conversion and forgiveness,

Morality - discuss the relationship between sin and penance, discuss and explains Church's teachings about murder, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and suicide, and explains the corporal and spiritual works of mercy,

Prayer - recognizes different forms of prayer, understands prayer as personal expression: vocal, meditation, contemplation, and understands prayers as communal expressions: Eucharist, Sacred Scripture, and Liturgy of the Hours.

Fire & Tornado Drills

Fire and Tornado (Shelter in place) drills are conducted each year and specific instructions are given to the teachers in advance so they know the proper procedures and where to bring their class in the event of a fire or a tornado.

Safe Environment Program

This program has been established for use in the Rockford Diocese and is required to be taught yearly to all students in grades 1 through 8. All parishes are to provide formation for children in the areas of safety and the integrity of their persons. Information, and the opportunity to opt-out of this program is available before we administer the program to the children.

Dropping and Picking up Children from Class

It is expected that the children will be dropped off for class on time. (For Security reasons all entry doors will be locked 15 minutes after classes have begun.) Please do not drop your child off at the door in the parking lot, but come into the hall with them.

When you pick your child up we ask that you come into the hall for them so they are not alone outside or in the parking lot.
