

St. Mary's Parish
Religious Education Program
Parent Handbook

Director of Religious Education

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Dear Parents,

Your role as Catholic parents is surely one of the most sacred, challenging and wonderful vocations that the Lord entrusts to His people. You brought your child to be baptized thus providing the opportunity to begin life as a disciple of Jesus in the Church. As your child grows, you continue to nurture that spiritual life. You enable your child to live joyously in the Love of God made tangible by your own goodness and love. In the intimacy of family relationships, you teach the Catholic faith to your child every day by what you say and do – a profound and irreplaceable witness.

We in the Parish Religious Education Program, have also been given a sacred role by the Lord – that of Catechist for your child. We welcome the opportunity to assist you in teaching your child to walk in the ways of faith. We pledge all the resources of our program to helping your child come to know and better understand the person of Jesus Christ who so loves him/her. We pledge to do all we can to help you instill Catholic beliefs and values so that your child may live in the joy of being Jesus' disciple.

Our experience has shown us that this is most effectively accomplished when the family and the parish work together. The parents place Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of their family life --through Sunday Mass, family prayer, and daily life as disciples of Jesus. The Religious Education Program teaches the Catholic life which the child is living at home and experiencing in the Parish. The Parish supports and nurtures the parents and provides a "home-place" for the families who choose the Catholic way of life in a world that is increasingly lost without God and in need of the Truth that is Jesus. May God bless us in the work of Catholic Education which we carry on together in His name.

Purpose and Overview of Parish Religious Education Program

The purpose of the Parish Religious Education Program is to assist parents in the sacred responsibility entrusted to them at their child's Baptism: to form and educate their children to become disciples of Jesus in the Catholic faith. An integral part of a true Catholic home life is the child's attendance at Mass every Sunday and on the Holy Days of Obligation. The Religious Education Program helps the child to understand, ever more deeply, the meaning of the Mass which the family regularly attends.

The six fundamental tasks of catechesis which are entrusted to the Religious Education Program by the Catholic Church are:

- to promote the knowledge of the faith,
- to give moral formation,
- to provide liturgical education,
- to teach to pray,
- to educate for community life,
- to initiate into the missionary dimension.

The role of the Director of Religious Education and the Catechists is to provide intellectual enlightenment about the Catholic life which the child is already living at home and in the parish community, and to foster the child's faith development by accomplishing the fundamental tasks of catechesis in an age-appropriate way.

For every person, religious education nourishes our minds and spirits throughout our lives as we mature from childhood to adulthood into that image of Christ which God created us to become. First grade is not too soon to instill in our children the understanding that Confirmation is not the end of Religious Education. Rather it is the sacrament which brings about our spiritual maturation and opens us to life-long learning about the way of Life of Jesus' disciples in the Catholic Church.

Registration and Placement

The Parish Religious Education program offers religious education to all Catholic children who do not receive it in their school and whose families are enrolled in the parish as parishioners. When space allows, the Director may also try to accommodate in the program children whose families are registered in another parish, with the permission of the Pastor.

There is no discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, disability conditions or family background.

Registration Procedure

Every parent must register their child for the Religious Education program every year. The registration procedure is as follows:

- Register the child for Religious Education Program within time period specified by the parish.
- Complete Child Information Record and medical forms as needed and submit them to Director of Religious Education
- If the child is new to the parish, present the Baptismal Certificate; the Director will make a copy to be kept with the child's Information Record and return original to the parent.
- Speak with the Director about any special needs the child has which could affect the child's learning and well-being in the Religious Education sessions.
- Arrange with the Director of Religious Education the payment of the registration fee according to the parish registration fee chart and schedule and the needs of the family.
- No child will be refused participation in the Religious Education program because of inability to pay the registration fee. Parents for whom the fee would cause a severe financial burden should contact the Director to discuss a reduction or a waiver. If a family cannot pay the fee in full at registration, a payment plan may be drawn up by the Director and the parent to be submitted to the Pastor.

Arrival, Lateness and Absences

We use a bus to transport students from Tomahawk school to the Corpus Christi Center/ Youth Rooms. The bus company uses the last bus in the line to transport students. Shortly before Religious Education begins, an email will be sent out to inform parents of the bus number.

Arrival

The Religious Education Sessions take place at the following time: 3:30PM

Supervision of the children will be provided beginning at 3:25. No child should be on the parish premises before this time unless accompanied by an authorized adult.

On arriving for Religious Education, the parent brings the child directly to the CCC (6th-8th grade) or the Youth Rooms (K- 5th grade).

Notification Procedure for Absence

When a child is to be absent from a program session, the parent must give the Director notification before the Religious Education Program begins. This should be done preferably in writing but a phone call or text is acceptable.

If the parent has been unable to send a written communication before the absence, it must be given to the Religious Education Office no later than the following week.

If the child is absent and the Director has not received previous notification, the Director will alert the parent by a telephone call as soon as attendance is taken. If the parent cannot be reached by phone, an email and/or text message will be sent. If the parent does not respond immediately, the Director will call the person designated as parent substitute on the Child Information Record submitted at Registration.

Dismissal of an Individual before the End of the Day's Session

If your child needs to be dismissed early, the request for this early dismissal should be given to the Director in writing, a phone call or text message by the parent prior to the scheduled session.

The parent must come inside to pick up the child. Please inform the child's teacher you are picking up your child.

Dismissal

At the end of the Religious Education session every child is released to the care of their parent or parent substitute. The parent substitute must be the person designated in writing at registration on the Child Information Record. If someone other than the parent or parent substitute is to pick up the child on a given day, this change should be given in writing to the Director prior to the session in question.

- A child will not be released to anyone under age 18.
- The staff of the Religious Education Program are not allowed to drive or walk children home.
- The Director should be informed in writing by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent as these pertain to the child's participation in the program as well as to the child's release from the program.

The method of dismissal is as follows: K-5th grade will exit through the church doors closest to the playground. We ask that the children remain on the sidewalk until a parent has indicated they are ready for their child. We do this for the safety of the children because they are in the Church parking lot. 6th-8th grades are dismissed from the CCC doors located closest to the playground.

No child may remain on the parish premises after the Religious Education Program ends because supervision is not provided. The parent must instruct the child to report to the Director in the unforeseen event of not being picked up on time.

Early Dismissal of the Program

The Religious Education Program will not have an early dismissal unless it is necessitated by an emergency. Parents will be notified of the emergency closure of the program.

Communication with Parents Emergency Cancellations of Program

Parents will be notified via text message from the Director of Religious Education (314-409-9535) if there is an emergency, like dangerous weather, while we are in session. The Religious Education Program follows the local **school public school system's closures for weather emergencies**. We will not have religious education class if school has been cancelled for the day.

In an emergency situation, the children will be taken to St. Mary's School as the supervised "safe place" where parents can pick them up.

Food

K-5th grade will have snacks provided for them when they arrive for Religious Education class. If your child is a picky eater, please send a snack with them.

6th-8th grade will be provided with a meal when they arrive for Religious Education class (except Ash Wednesday). If your child is a picky eater, please send a snack with them. We will provide for food allergies, i.e. nut free or gluten free.

Behavior Management

Catechists use behavior management (or "discipline") appropriate to an educational environment as a necessary means for the Religious Education Program to accomplish its goals. The purpose of behavior management is to help the children develop self-control, self-respect, respect for others, and reverence for the Word of God which is being explained to them in these sessions.

Several infractions of rules of conduct will result in a call by the Director to the child's parent in which the Director will describe the situation and work out a solution with the parent. If the infractions continue, the Director will organize a conference with the parent, the Catechist, the Director and the Pastor.

The Religious Education Program reserves to the Director, under the authority of the Pastor, the right to remove a child from the group session, either temporarily or permanently:

- if the child's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group;
- if the child's behavior is seriously inhibiting the safety or well-being of others in the group;
- if temporary removal is used as a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior

Unacceptable Behavior

The following types of behavior are not allowed during the Religious Education Program.

Infractions which call for discipline by the Catechist are:

- acting in a disrespectful manner toward the Catechist, other adults or children in the program,
- speaking and interacting with other children inappropriately during the session,
- leaving a session without permission,
- using a cell phone during the session when not authorized by the Catechist,

Persistence in any of these behaviors after several corrective measures have been taken will place this behavior in the category below.

Infractions which call for immediate action by the Director and Pastor are:

- possession of and /or trafficking in alcohol or other drugs,
- leaving the Religious Education premises when child is supposed to be attending the session,
- willful defiance of authority,
- possession of weapons, such as knives, guns, or look-alikes,
- physical assault/fighting, threatening bodily harm
- harassment and intimidation of other children,
- vandalism, arson,
- theft, extortion

- abusive or vulgar language,
- defacing or damaging of parish property
- bullying/cyber-bullying.

Persistence in any of these behaviors after corrective measures have been taken can result in the removal of the child from the Religious Education group sessions, either temporarily or permanently, depending on the recommendation of the Director and the decision of the Pastor.