

***SACRED HEART P.R.E.P.***

**PARISH RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION PROGRAM**



**PARENT / GUARDIAN HANDBOOK**

**2019 – 2020**

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## *INTRODUCTION*

The Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) at Sacred Heart Parish supports parents/guardians, the first teachers of the children in the ways of faith. Parents/Guardians and our parish catechists together teach children about our Catholic faith by helping them to learn the catechesis necessary for their faith formation as they grow in their relationship with God and the parish family.

Parents/Guardians contribute to their child's Catholic faith formation by being living witnesses of the faith themselves. This includes not only teaching about God and our faith traditions, but also bringing their child with them regularly to Sunday Mass. Thus, what is learned in the PREP classroom is reinforced at home.

This handbook contains certain policies and procedures for Sacred Heart PREP. Policies and procedures may be changed as needed and applied as circumstances dictate. In the event of such a change, parents/guardians will be given prompt notification and provided with an addendum, if necessary. Please contact the Coordinator of Religious Education if there are questions.

Students and parents/guardians must accept and abide by the policies and procedures contained in this handbook in order for the student to attend the Program.

Students are to continue their formal religious education uninterrupted through Confirmation. Due to a policy change on the archdiocesan level, students in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grades are candidates for Confirmation. This change of policy affects Sacred Heart parish, where a bishop will come every other year for Confirmation, beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. It is hoped and prudent that students continue their formal religious education after being confirmed. With God's grace and continued

relationship with Him, teens can be supported and guided to mature in the understanding and the practice of their faith.

**Children baptized in a church other than a Catholic church** may be enrolled in PREP if it is their desire, and the desire of their parents/guardians, to enter the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church requires anyone over the age of 7 who is baptized in another Christian faith to make a Profession of Faith and receive Confirmation and First Eucharist at the same Mass. Two years of class attendance is required.

**Non-baptized children** who are 7 years of age or older may be placed in the RCIA Program for Children, but will still require two years of class attendance before receiving the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, First Eucharist).

***REGISTRATION AND FEES***

Registration for the next year is highly encouraged to take place at the end of the previous year. A family not registered with Sacred Heart parish that wishes to have their child(ren) participate in our PREP must present a letter of permission from their proper pastor. **Parents enrolling a child into Sacred Heart PREP for the first time must present an official copy of the child’s Certificate of Baptism at the time of registration.**

PREP fees for 2019-2020 are as follows: \$100 for one child, \$175 for two or more children. For registrations received after June 30, 2020, the fees are: \$150 for one child, \$250 for two or more children. Payment is required at registration; please contact the Program Coordinator if there is any problem.

A separate fee is charged for children who plan to receive a Sacrament during the year.

In the event a child is dismissed from the program due to excessive absences, lateness, problem behavior, or for any other reason, no refund of registration or material fees will be made to the family.

***ENROLLMENT AND PLACEMENT***

The faith formation provided in PREP involves incremental learning; that is, each Level builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program consistently from year to year.

A participant who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year will be required to make up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program. For example, a student who leaves the program for a period of one year after completing Level 3 and re-enrolls in the program when he or she is in grade 5 will be placed into Level 4.

A student who returns to PREP after voluntarily leaving the program for two or more consecutive years will be placed in a Level that is at least one below his or her current day school grade year. For example, if a student who leaves PREP after completing Level 3 and is re-enrolled when he or she is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the parent/guardian is required to provide home-based catechesis for Level 4 and, upon completion of Level 4, the child is accepted into Level 5.

The Program Coordinator will work with the parents/guardian to support the above requirements and assure the child's reception of sacraments.

Older children who are just beginning their formal religious education will be evaluated before placement is made.

### ***NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS***

Sacred Heart PREP will not become involved in adjudicating the rights of parents in relation to the custody of their children. Therefore, if a parent is separated, divorced, or unmarried, it is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the Program Coordinator with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. These documents will be requested at the time of registration. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents and/or guardians to provide that document to the Program Coordinator immediately. This is also true in the event that such an agreement is

issued after the time of enrollment. In the absence of such documentation, it will and must be assumed that parents share legal custody.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial Parent with access to the records and other program-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial Parent to provide the Program Coordinator with an official copy of the latest court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial Parent to provide the Program Coordinator with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

In situations with shared legal custody, the cooperation is expected from both parents, especially in regard to sacramental preparation and celebrations.

### ***CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS***

Parents/Guardians are asked to notify the Program Coordinator of anything that will help the catechists make learning easier for your child. Please make it known if your child has difficulty seeing, hearing, delayed reading skills, ADD/hyperactivity, etc. Special needs children are individually assessed and will be accommodated to the best of our ability through classroom site selection, catechist and assistant, as needed. With parental help, Sacred Heart PREP strives to offer the best Catholic learning environment for each child.

### ***COMMUNICATION***

Parents/Guardians are provided with a calendar at the beginning of the program year. ***This calendar is subject to change during the course of the***

**year.** Notifications will be given of changes and additional dates or events, particularly in regards to sacrament preparation.

Parents/Guardians should feel free to contact the Program Coordinator regarding any concerns or issues that may develop during the course of the Year.

Direct communication with your child’s catechist is also a necessary component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to meet with their child’s catechist to discuss any concerns or information that will enhance the learning experience. Please contact the catechist or the Program Coordinator to arrange an appointment outside of class time.

### ***ABSENCES***

Faith formation received in PREP is ongoing in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is imperative that children regularly attend their program sessions.

Absences should be for serious reasons only: illness, death or serious illness in the family, etc. A parent is asked to contact the Catechist or Program Coordinator to report an absence. Make-up work will be assigned by the Catechist and that work must be completed by the next class.

**Archdiocesan policy considers more than four (4) absences in a year to be excessive.** If this were to happen, the Program Coordinator will send notice to the parents that their child may be required to repeat the level in which he or she is enrolled. This may involve a delay in the reception of a Sacrament for the child due to lack of adequate preparation.

Parents are asked to communicate directly with the Program Coordinator if absences are due to the child having an extended illness or an unusual family situation (e.g., custody issue, hospitalization, etc.) Whenever possible, the Program Coordinator will work with the parents/guardians to support the child’s continued faith formation.

If your child has extended absences due to an **extended illness**, he or she

needs a note from his or her physician to return to class.

Parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child up to date.

Absences due to **weekend visitation with a non-custodial parent** will be assessed on an individual basis. Please arrange a meeting with the Program Coordinator if this is your situation.

Absences due to **participation in sports or other extracurricular activities** are not permitted since religious education classes need to be the priority. Since a sequential religious education curriculum is followed, a child who returns to the program after a lengthy absence will be placed in the appropriate level to cover the work missed.

### ***ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES***

For the safety of our students and staff, and to comply with the Safe Environment Policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, parents/guardians are not permitted to enter the Center during arrival time unless on official business with the Program, in which case a visitor's pass must be obtained.

Parents or guardians are asked to park either on Ford Street, Union Avenue, or the rear parking lot when dropping off or picking up their child(ren). The parking lot in the front schoolyard is reserved for catechists and other persons working at PREP.

All children are to use the school entrance and go directly to their assigned classrooms. They are not permitted to enter the classroom until the Catechist or Aide is present for supervision.

***Sessions begin promptly at 8:30 AM.*** A child arriving after the designated starting time will be considered late. It is strongly recommended that your child(ren) arrive ten minutes prior to the scheduled class time. Chronic lateness may interfere with your child(ren)'s learning and promotion.

***Dismissal is 9:45 AM.*** Since Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter has Mass at 10:00 AM and a number of catechists and PREP families attend Mass at Sacred Heart Church at 10:15 AM, parents and guardians are asked to be at school

promptly at 9:45 AM to pick up their children.

Parents/Guardians whose children are in Level 1 and Level 2 need to come to the front doors of the Center to pick up their child. Children in other Levels will be dismissed from the front schoolyard gates on Ford Street.

Dismissal in the Walker Line is only for those children who walk to PREP and whose parents have signed the required waiver.

## ***SUPPLEMENTS TO CLASSROOM EDUCATION***

### **TEXTBOOKS AND HANDOUTS**

Every participant is assigned a text at the beginning of the year. This book remains in the classroom. Candidates for Confirmation may use a different text with supplemental materials sent home periodically rather than weekly. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to review the weekly handout with their child(ren) as a means of strengthening the lessons taught in class.

Children may receive other handouts in the form of prayers to learn or parish communications. Parents/Guardians are asked to be sure to check the PREP folder each week and have the child return the folder to class for the following session.

### **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS**

Catechists may assign take-home assignments in the form of written work, activities, or study. The purpose of any assignment is to help children retain and put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. It is expected that parents/guardians will supervise the completion of these assignments.

### **SERVICE INITIATIVES**

All the baptized are disciples on mission, called to develop a life-long commitment of service to others as Jesus taught us.

A catechist may invite participants to engage in service activities as a means of deepening the formation process. Such activity will take place outside the scope of the regular catechetical sessions. In the event a catechist elects such an option, he or she will provide the participants with a detailed list of suggested activities.

### **RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**

In addition to receiving weekly classroom instruction by the catechists, children will learn and participate in different liturgical and devotional prayers on selected evenings throughout the year. These sessions, conducted by the pastor in Sacred Heart Church at 7:00 PM, are included in the instructional hours the archdiocese requires for PREP. Parents/Guardians are highly encouraged to attend these sessions with their children.

### ***PROGRESS REPORTS***

Progress reports that evaluate a student's knowledge of the Catholic faith, prayer, Christian attitudes, and class participation will be distributed at the end of each semester. Parents/Guardians are asked to sign and return the reports that are sent out at the end of the first semester. The report given at the end of the year may be retained by the parent/guardian.

### ***SACRAMENTS***

Preparation for the reception of the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and/or Confirmation is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A child's desire to receive a sacrament is mirrored in his or her, and parents'/guardians', positive attitude toward the preparation process and commitment. Therefore, regular attendance and proper behavior are expected. ***Children exhibiting chronic unexcused absences or lateness may be asked to delay reception of a Sacrament.***

Parents/Guardians, in their role of taking in active part in preparing their child for reception of a sacrament, are to attend one meeting where they will receive pertinent information.

Children who are candidates for receiving a sacrament are expected to participate in a day of retreat and a day for practice, both of which are scheduled in advance.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia requires the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist) to be received in the parish in which the candidate is registered. Parents/Guardians not registered in Sacred Heart Parish need to obtain written permission from their proper Pastor that specifically grants permission for their child to receive a Sacrament of Initiation in Sacred Heart church.

It is also archdiocesan policy for **two consecutive years of preparation** to immediately precede the reception of a sacrament. As an example, before a child receives First Communion in Level 2, Levels 1 and 2 need to be completed. Readiness for the reception of a Sacrament is more important than the age/class level of a child. The pastor is consulted if postponement of a Sacrament is deemed advisable.

### ***DISCIPLINE***

In order to maintain a proper learning environment as well as for PREP to be effective, children must behave appropriately at all times. Parents/Guardians must realize that a catechist may correct a child that is either disruptive in class or in some way is causing a discipline problem. This correction will take the form of Christian correction and guidance. The Program Coordinator will be notified when repeated class disruptions occur; he or she will then contact the parents/guardians and arrange for a conference with them, their child, and the catechist. If the child continues to exhibit disruptive behavior in the classroom following the conference, the parish reserves the right to contact the parents/guardians and ask for the child to be taken home immediately. The child will be responsible for any missed work or assignments due to that early dismissal.

Sacred Heart PREP ***will not tolerate behaviors*** that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to: use of improper or racist language; fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation (bullying); vandalism; demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment.

Threats of violence or harassment made by a child either by oral, written or electronic means (text messages, social media) against any person, may cause the child may be suspended or expelled. Local police may be notified, depending on the offense. A child suspended, but not dismissed, for such acts, may be required to have a psychological clearance before returning to PREP. The child's parents/guardians would assume all costs related to the clearance.

Conduct incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish committed by a member of a child's family, including but not limited to parents/guardians and anyone acting on their behalf, is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

### **DRESS CODE**

Students should be dressed comfortably, but respectfully and modestly, especially since it is expected they will be attending the 10:15 AM Sunday Mass with their parents/guardians and families following PREP. Clothes your child normally wears to school are acceptable. A child wearing clothing that is deemed inappropriate (immodest dress, t-shirts with improper messages or logos) may be asked to leave the classroom and would be responsible for completing any missed work or assignment.

### **PROHIBITED ITEMS**

Children are ***not permitted*** to bring things to class which would provide a distraction to themselves or to other children. These items include, but are not limited to: gum, food, beverages, toys, electronic games, beepers, I-pods, I-pads, or other electronic devices. Such items brought to class will be confiscated by the catechist and retained until the end of class when they are returned to the parent or guardian.

Contraband is never permitted on the premises. Items considered to be contraband include, **but are not limited to:** weapons of any kind, legal or illegal drugs, pocketknives, matches or lighters, and alcohol or tobacco products. Children found to be in the possession of such products may be immediately dismissed from PREP and, depending upon the contraband seized, proper legal authorities will be notified.

### CELL PHONES

Students are prohibited from using cell phones at any time during PREP sessions. A cell phone found to be in use in any way (voice or texting) will be confiscated by the catechist and will be returned to the parent or guardian at the end of class that day.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### FIRE SAFETY AND DISASTER PREPARATION

PREP catechists have directives in case of fire, shelter in place, and lock down. The safety of your children is very important to us. This is the reason why it is important for a cell phone number from a parent/guardian to be on file.

### HEALTH CONCERNS AND MEDICATIONS

Health concerns should be brought to the attention of the Program Coordinator at the time of registration. Catechists and other PREP personnel do not dispense or administer any medications. If there is a case of great need, arrangements can be made according to the usual professional education standards.

Please inform your child's catechist if your child has an allergy to a particular food or substance.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

All PREP staff and catechists have participated in the Safe Environment Program required by the archdiocese. All PREP staff and catechists are mandated reporters for Child Abuse. Proper authorities will be notified immediately and directly if child abuse is suspected. The Program Coordinator and pastor will also be notified. All procedures put in place by the archdiocese will be followed.

The archdiocese requires PREP to conduct one class each year on Safe Environment issues. The lesson plan is age appropriate. Parents/Guardians who choose not to have their children attend this annual mandated session are required to give notice in writing to the Program Coordinator at least one week prior to the date the lesson is taught.

## ***CHURCH STEWARDSHIP***

Students attending PREP are given a box of church envelopes on the first day of class. The church envelopes serve to teach children the meaning of stewardship and the importance of sharing their goods for the support of the parish. Their use helps keep the pastor aware of those who regularly attending Mass.

## ***SNOW EMERGENCY AND CANCELLATIONS***

An email will be sent to parents and guardians in the event PREP is cancelled due to inclement weather or other situations.

## ***RIGHT TO AMEND***

The Pastor and the Program Coordinator reserve the right to amend this handbook as necessary.

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**Sacred Heart PREP**

Mr. John Horn  
Coordinator of Religious Education  
PREP Center  
502 Ford Street  
Bridgeport 19405  
610-304-0326

Email: [creunitedinthesacredheart@gmail.com](mailto:creunitedinthesacredheart@gmail.com)

Facebook: Sacred Heart PREP

### 2019-2020 Tentative Calendar

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Sunday, September 15 | First Day of Class;<br>Catechetical Sunday at 10:15 AM Mass |
| Sunday, September 22 | Class in Church after 10:15 AM Mass                         |
| Sunday, September 30 | No Class  |
| Sunday, October 6    | Class   |
| Sunday, October 13   | Class   |
| Sunday, October 20   | Class   |
| Sunday, October 27   | Class   |
| Sunday, November 3   | Class   |
| Sunday, November 11  | Class   |
| Sunday, November 17  | Class   |
| Tuesday, November 19 | Evening Prayer and Benediction, 7:00 PM                     |
| Sunday, November 24  | Class   |
| Sunday, December 1   | No Class  |
| Sunday, December 8   | Class   |
| Tuesday, December 10 | Penance Service at 7:00 PM                                  |
| Sunday, December 15  | Class in Church after 10:15 AM Mass                         |
| Sunday, December 22  | No Class, Christmas Holiday                                 |
| Sunday, December 29  | No Class, Christmas Holiday                                 |
| Sunday, January 5    | Class; Progress Reports                                     |

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Sunday, January 12     | Class, Safe Environment Lesson            |
| Sunday, January 19     | No Class, Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday |
| Sunday, January 26     | Class                                     |
| Thursday, January 30   | Rosary at 7:00 PM                         |
| Sunday, February 2     | Class                                     |
| Sunday, February 9     | Class                                     |
| Sunday, February 16    | No Class, President's Day Holiday         |
| Sunday, February 23    | Class                                     |
| Wednesday, February 26 | Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 PM          |
| Saturday, February 29  | First Penance at 2:00 PM                  |
| Sunday, March 1        | Class                                     |
| Friday, March 6        | Stations of the Cross at 7:00 PM          |
| Sunday, March 8        | Class                                     |
| Sunday, March 15       | Class                                     |
| Sunday, March 22       | Class                                     |
| Sunday, March 29       | Class in Church after 10:15 AM Mass       |
| Wednesday, April 1     | Penance Service at 7:00 PM                |
| Sunday, April 5        | No Class                                  |
| Sunday, April 12       | No Class, Easter Sunday                   |
| Sunday, April 19       | Class                                     |
| Sunday, April 28       | Last Day of Class                         |
| Sunday, May 3          | First Communion at 10:15 AM Mass          |

Parent Meetings for First Penance and First Communion  
will be scheduled at date to be determined later.