



The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena Children's Religious Education Handbook

Parish Clergy and Staff

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Parish Schedule Religious

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Confession

TUESDAYS: 7:00pm - 8:30pm

SATURDAYS: 3:00pm - 3:45pm

or anytime upon request.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

TUESDAYS: 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Daily Mass:

MONDAY - FRIDAY: 7:30am

FIRST SATURDAY: 8:00am

CIVIC HOLIDAYS: 9:00am

Sunday Mass: *10:30am

** Festive Mass with Choir*

SATURDAY VIGIL:

4:00pm, 7:15pm

SUNDAY MASS: 7:30am, 9:00am

*10:30am, 12:00noon

Holy Days of Obligation: VIGIL MASS:

5:30pm;

HOLY DAY: 7:30am, *9:00am,

Festive Mass with Choir: 7:00pm

**when St. Catherine of Siena School is in session*

Sacrament of Baptism:

SUNDAY: 1:30pm, *by appointment. Pre-Baptismal instruction is required for first-time parents. Please call our office at (203) 377-3133, ext. 10.*

Parish Office Hours:

MONDAY, TUESDAY, & THURSDAY: 9:00am - 4:30pm

WEDNESDAY: 9:00am - 6:00pm

FRIDAY: 9:00am - 1:00pm

office@stcatherinetrumbull.com

Parish Website: www.stcathtrumbull.com

Religious Education Contact

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Table of Contents

<i>Mission Statement for Children’s Religious Education:</i>	3
Preamble and Purpose of Catechesis	3
<i>Eligibility to Participate</i>	3
<i>Process of Enrollment</i>	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Existing Parishioners	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer students	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Children with Special Needs	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Changes	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuition and Fees	4
<i>Class Location, Schedules, Class and Mass Attendance</i>	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Location	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Class Sessions	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Class Schedules	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Closings/Cancellations	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Class Attendance and Absences	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Mass Attendance and Mass Cards	6
<i>Policies and Procedures for Safety, Conduct and Discipline</i>	7
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Environments	7
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Arrival and Dismissal	7
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Access	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Classrooms, Hallways and Restrooms	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Food and Drink	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Devices and Cell Phones	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited Items	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety Procedures	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct and Discipline	10
<input type="checkbox"/> Grievance/Complaint	10
<i>Medical Issues</i>	10
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Contact Information	10
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Release Forms	10
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Emergencies	10
<input type="checkbox"/> Medications	11
<input type="checkbox"/> Students with Severe Allergies	11
<i>Curriculum Content</i>	11
<input type="checkbox"/> Overview	11
<input type="checkbox"/> St. Catherine of Siena Home School Program	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Sacraments	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Baptism	12
<input type="checkbox"/> First Reconciliation and First Eucharist	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation	13
<i>Christian Initiation of Children</i>	13
<i>Acknowledgement and Consent</i>	13
<i>Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement and Consent Form</i>	14

Mission Statement for Children's Religious Education:

To faithfully hand down the Deposit of Faith to younger parishioners of Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in order to foster growth in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and in life-long discipleship rooted in reception of the Sacraments, fidelity to the Catholic Church, and active participation in the Christian community.

Preamble and Purpose of Catechesis

(Taken from the Catechetical Handbook of the Diocese of Bridgeport)

"Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings." (CT, 23)

This transformation primarily takes place within the family because the Christian family is often the first experience of Christian community. Parents are the most influential first educators who catechize primarily by their witness and participation in prayer and the Eucharist.

It is the responsibility of the parish to strengthen the faith of parents or guardians and to assist them in their roles as the primary educators of their children. "...there exists an intermediate situation where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel." (GDC, 58c) Sacramental preparation of the children is a window of opportunity to catechize the parents or guardians, drawing them into ongoing conversion of mind and heart to Jesus Christ.

Conversion, which is a life-long school of faith, following the major stages of life from childhood, young adulthood and parenthood leads to a maturity of mind and heart. This internal growth inspires discipleship, which expresses this love of God and community. The goal of sacramental preparation, therefore, is to draw members into active participation in the life of the church community and clarify the roles and ministries within the sacred action so that all may experience full, active, and conscious participation in the celebration of the Mass. (NDC, Eucharist, #3, pg 126)

"The Christian community is the origin, locus and goal of catechesis. Proclamation of the Gospel always begins with the Christian community and invites man to conversion and the following of Christ." (GDC, 254)

"If catechesis is done well, Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith, to hand it on to their children, to make it known to others, and to serve the human community in every way." (CT, 24)

Eligibility to Participate

Families, or the grandparents of children, must be registered and active parishioners of St. Catherine of Siena Parish to enroll children in the St. Catherine of Siena Religious Education Program. We cannot enroll students whose families are registered members of other parishes or who elect not register.

Process of Enrollment

- **Existing Parishioners**

Registration for the upcoming year of Religious Education classes occurs every spring, with forms due no later than July 1. This deadline helps assure that we have available class space and catechists for each child. If you are unable to register by July 1st, you will be charged a late fee of \$25 per family. The late fee will increase to \$50 per family if registrations are received after August 1st. Late fees for returning families are never waived.

New registrants, registration forms on our Parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com.

Families who have previously enrolled for Religious Education will receive a registration form containing all information that the Parish has for each child. Please carefully and completely *review and update* the form.

Parents may indicate their first and second choice of sessions. The first choice is honored whenever possible. We take requests for specific sessions on a “first come–first served” basis. Some class sessions do fill quickly.

- **Transfer students**

Transfer students whose families are recently registered as members of St. Catherine of Siena Parish are welcome into our program, whether the students transferred from neighboring parishes or recently moved (with a change of address). Families are responsible for all assessed tuition and fees.

Transfer students should submit the online registration form as soon as possible during the spring registration process. Additionally, transfer students as part of their registration, should include proof of their previous participation in Religious Education Program(s) and a copy of their sacramental records. To allow room for returning students and new children of existing parishioners, classroom placements for transfer students will begin on a “first come–first served” basis starting July 1. New registrations for students transferring from neighboring parishes will be charged a late fee of \$25 per family if received after July 15. The late fee will increase to \$50 per family if registrations are received after August 15. Late fees are never waived for transfer students from neighboring parishes. At the discretion of the Director of Religious Education, late fees for transfer students with a change of address may be waived.

At the discretion of the Director of Religious Education, transfer students will be placed into the appropriate grade level based upon their prior participation in Religious Education Programs from their previous parish. Those eighth-grade transfer students who relocated with a change of address may maintain their class status at the discretion of the Director of Religious Education. **However, we will not place any transfer students from neighboring parishes who have not had a change of address directly into eighth grade Religious Education Program.** Instead, eighth-grade transfer students from neighboring parishes will be registered in seventh grade and will be expected to complete all Sacramental preparation including Confirmation with that seventh-grade class. The Handbook section on Confirmation (page 12) describes the new Parish policy about the timeline for conferring this Sacrament.

- **Children with Special Needs**

Parents who have a child with special needs are asked to speak with the Director of Religious Education to set an appropriate, agreed plan for catechetical instruction of their child.

- **Classroom Changes**

Due to the large number of children in our program and our desire to accommodate as many family preferences as possible, the process for assigning sessions and classrooms is intricate and lengthy, taking into account many requests and special circumstances. To assure a timely start to the year, we will not accept requests for schedule changes during the week before classes start. Students are asked to attend originally scheduled sessions for the first 2 weeks of class. If changes are absolutely necessary, please email your request to the Director of Religious Education after the start of classes. We will honor session changes as class availability permits. For those who carpool, we will try to accommodate requests for the same session; however, children may not be placed in the same class.

- **Tuition and Fees**

Tuition and fees for Religious Education are set by the parish and posted when registration opens in the spring. Parents are assessed a fee for each child at the time of registration to cover tuition, Sacramental preparation, books and materials. Full payment of the fee online or by mail is preferred at registration time. A written plan for full payment of tuition and fees must be put in place prior to the start of classes.

Through the generous donations of our parishioners, Hardship Assistance is available for families in need. To apply for assistance, families must have timely registered their children and must have completed a Financial Assistance application by July 1. A new application is required each year the family requires assistance. The application is available by contacting the Director of Religious Education.

Class Location, Schedules, Class and Mass Attendance

- **Location:** All classes are taught on the St. Catherine of Siena Parish campus. Classes generally meet in St. Catherine of Siena School. However, on some occasions with prior approval of the Director of Religious Education, some classes also may meet directly in or visit the McClinch Family Center, Church Hall or Church.

- **Class Sessions**

	1 st - 6 th Grade	7 th and 8 th Grade
Sunday	10:15 - 11:15	NA
Tuesday	4:30 - 5:30	6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Wednesday	4:30 - 5:30	6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.

- **Class Schedules:** Classes are scheduled to meet for 27 weeks, beginning the third week of September and running through April. Breaks are scheduled throughout the year, corresponding to the Church Liturgical Year and local school schedules. Students in Sacramental years, grades 3 and 8, will also be scheduled to attend additional workshops.
- **Closings/Cancellations**
 - ✓ **For Sundays:** In case of actual or forecasted inclement weather on Sunday, we will decide as soon as we have sufficient information (as early as Saturday evening and not later than 8am on Sunday) whether to cancel Religious Education classes. Cancellation notices will be posted on the Parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com and notification will be sent to parents via email.
 - ✓ **For Tuesdays and Wednesdays:** If the Trumbull Public School System cancels classes or dismisses classes early due to inclement weather, all Religious Education classes will also be cancelled for that day. If the Trumbull Public School System dismisses classes at the regular time but inclement weather is forecasted, we will decide as soon as we have sufficient information whether to hold Religious Education classes on that day. Cancellation notices will be posted on the Parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com and notification will be sent to parents via email.

If we have not cancelled class but you are concerned about travel conditions, use your best judgment whether to bring your children to class. Absences due to inclement weather will be treated as excused absences. Please contact your child's catechist to receive take-home assignments. In most cases, classes cancelled due to inclement weather will not be rescheduled.

- **Class Attendance and Absences**

By enrolling your children in Religious Education, you have made meaningful instruction in the Catholic Faith a priority for your family. As with other classes or activities, regular attendance at Religious Education is crucial for students to master the curriculum, which builds from class to class, and to develop their Faith through consistent participation in a classroom community. Older students begin to express and explain their beliefs and appreciate other points of view during class discussions. Infrequent or irregular attendance hinders students' progress towards these goals, while disrupting classroom learning as catechists re-teach missed lessons or shuffle work group to account for absent students. It may

be difficult for catechists to provide take-home assignments for lessons taught through group projects, video or audio presentations, discussions, or games.

For all of these reasons, students are required to attend all Religious Education classes and scheduled activities for the full duration of each class period.

Only three unexcused absences are permitted in an academic year. To be considered an “excused absence,” parents must contact their day Captain to receive a take-home assignment. The child must complete the take-home assignment and return the finished work to the catechist at the next scheduled class. Catechists are not required to accept take-home assignments that are handed in late, are presented by the parent rather than the student, or are incomplete or poorly done.

Students who leave class more than 10 minutes early to accommodate conflicting activities (e.g., sports practices or games, dance or music lessons etc.) must also prepare a take-home assignment as described in the prior paragraph or the early departure will be treated as an unexcused absence. Catechists are not expected to provide make up assignments for students who leave early more than three times during the school year. If you find that your child has a standing conflict that cannot be moved, please contact the Director of Religious Education to have your child reassigned to another session.

If a student does not meet the above requirements for attendance, that student will not be allowed to receive any sacraments related to that year of instruction and/or will be required to repeat the academic year before advancing to the next class. Failure to complete a year will also result in an “Incomplete” notation in their records.

- **Mass Attendance and Mass Cards**

When your child received the Sacrament of Baptism, the priest or deacon said to you, as parents:

“You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him or her in the practice of the Catholic Faith. It will be your duty to bring him or her up to keep God's commandments as Christ has taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

And, on that day of joy, you answered, “We do.”

Now, the Church invites you to live out that commitment by teaching and witnessing to the Faith at home, and by making it a priority to be present at Mass each weekend as a family.

We know that the Precepts of the Church require students and their families to attend Mass every weekend and on all Holy Days of Obligation. Far more than a mere obligation, *participation in Mass each week provides the graces needed to live family life joyfully and authentically and lays the foundation for lifelong discipleship.* St Catherine’s Religious Education Program builds on these bedrock foundations. Without a family’s commitment to Christ, as expressed through consistent presence at Mass, there is little that Religious Education can do to foster the seeds of faith in children.

During Mass at St. Catherine’s, our homilies are practical and thought-provoking, our music is joyful and inspiring, and the environment is prayerful and supportive. All of our families are welcome and encouraged to invite their friends to join them at our weekend Masses! Together with these weekend liturgies, our Religious Education Program and catechists, and other opportunities for active participation in parish life help each of us live our Faith fully and authentically.

- ✓ **Mass Cards**

To be invited to receive the Sacraments, students in Sacramental preparation years grades 3, 7 and 8 are required among other items to provide formal proof of their regular, weekly attendance at Mass to the St Catherine of Siena Religious Education Program. Students in grades 3, 7 and 8 will meet this requirement by presenting a completed “Mass ticket” or bulletin containing the student’s name, grade and the date to the St Catherine of Siena clergy after every Mass they attend. Mass Ticket forms will be distributed to students at the beginning of the year and are also available on the Parish website

www.stcathtrumbull.com. If a child attends Mass with his or her family at a parish other than St. Catherine of Siena Parish, the child must obtain a parish bulletin signed by the clergy of the parish they are visiting and present this bulletin to his or her catechist at the beginning of the next class. Please see other Sacramental preparation requirements on pages 12-13 of this Handbook.

Policies and Procedures for Safety, Conduct and Discipline

- **Safe Environments**

St. Catherine of Siena Religious Education is committed to ensuring respect for the human dignity of all students, parents, volunteers and staff members. Religious Education is possible only in an environment that embodies that respect.

Accordingly, St. Catherine of Siena parish participates in the VIRTUS - Protecting God's Children program, which helps churches and religious organizations refine their roles as safe havens for children and empowers them with new tools to help them protect children. The program is comprehensive and multidimensional – incorporating the best-proven standards and practices to prevent child sexual abuse and make the parish safe for all people – especially children.

All adult volunteers (18 years or older) in the Religious Education Program must be VIRTUS certified. They also must have passed a background check, in compliance with the guidelines of the Diocese of Bridgeport's Safe Environments Program and Guidelines.

- **Student Arrival and Dismissal**

The safety and security of all students, parents and designated adults is our first priority. To this end, we are implementing the following mandatory arrival and dismissal procedures. We anticipate your cooperation in following them and ask that you do not request personal exceptions from catechists. We are sorry for any inconvenience, but our paramount goal is to assure that all students and their families come and go in a safe, orderly manner.

- ✓ **If your child is in Grades 1, 2, or 3:**

Parents must park their cars in the main parking lot and walk with their children *to* and *from* the classroom door. At all times, children must be under the supervision of a parent, legal guardian, or the adult designated in writing as set out below.

All students, grades 1-3, must be signed-out of their classrooms by, and released at the classroom door to their parent. A parent/guardian may designate an adult (18 years or older) who can also pick up their child by completing a Pick-Up Authorization Form for Grades 1-3, available on the parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com. Parents may also provide the catechist with a written note signed by the parent stating the name, cell phone number, and their relationship to the child whereby designating another adult (18 years or older) who may pick up their child for a single occurrence. Catechists will only accept these notes directly from *a parent prior* to the class. Catechists may request a photo I.D. to verify the identity of a designated person and will not release the child without such ID. Catechists will not release students, grades 1-3, to the sole custody of a minor sibling or other minor child.

- ✓ **If your child is in Grades 4 through 8:**

Drop-off: parents are to pull into the driveway immediately in front of the St. Catherine of Siena School to drop off their children. Students should exit the car only from the passenger side and not in the traffic lane. Students must not exit the car until the vehicle has reached the sidewalk in front of the school. Alternatively, parents may park their cars in the main parking lot and walk with their children to the drop off point in front of the school.

Pick-up: Parents are to park their car in the main parking lot and walk up to the driveway in front of the school to meet their children and escort them back to the car.

- ✓ **If you have children attending multiple grades during the same session:**

Parents must follow the arrival and dismissal procedures applicable to the youngest child in that session. Children in grades 1-3 may not be accompanied, dropped off, or signed out by older siblings even in the same session.

✓ **General Reminders For children's safety:**

Parents or the designated responsible adults must accompany their children of any age at all times in the main parking lot.

Parents must park *only* in the main parking lot and may stand *only* in the main driveway. Parents may not:

- Park or stand in the small parking lot immediately across from the school. Using this lot impedes traffic flow and creates traffic congestion and safety risks as some drivers attempt to exit the lot while others are pulling through the driveway.
- Stand alongside the curb in the main parking lot waiting for pick-up. This poses a safety risk for children using the sidewalk and for drivers entering or exiting the driveway/main parking lot.

Students may not be picked up at any location off church property.

Out of courtesy and consideration for the catechists, as well as the safety and wellbeing of your children, please make every effort to drop children off and pick them up at the scheduled times:

- If for any reason you must drop your children off late or pick them up early, please park in the main parking lot and accompany your children into or out of the building *regardless of their grade levels*. This is important because, as set out below, the doors of the building are closed and locked once class begins and remain that way until timely dismissal.
- If you will be unavoidably late picking up your child and you know in advance that this will be the case, please inform the day Captain who will make arrangements for one of the catechists or the day Captain to remain with your child. Beginning ten minutes after the expected dismissal time, or from the time of dismissal for families that are late more than twice a semester, St. Catherine's may, in its discretion, charge a fee of \$1 per child per minute until the children have been picked up by a parent or properly designated adult.
- Parents who consistently drop their children off or pick them up at times other than the scheduled session times should consider whether to request a change in the class session. The Director of Religious Education also may suggest moving the children to another session to avoid disruption to the Religious Education Program. (For reference, see the discussion below regarding attendance.)

- **Building Access**

All doors to the school are to be locked at all times, except briefly during arrival or dismissal. Access to the building will be controlled only by catechists and hall monitors. Parents and children are not to open any doors to allow a person to enter the building, unless requested to do so by a catechist or hall monitor.

Parents and children will enter and exit the building only through the main front doors nearest the driveway, and never through any side hallway or individual classroom doors, except in case of an emergency requiring immediate exit from the building.

During arrival or dismissal, hall monitors will open the main front doors nearest the driveway to facilitate entry or exit.

During times other than arrival or dismissal, hall monitors will watch the doors and allow a parent or designated adult in upon arrival. There is a doorbell to ring to let us know you have arrived. Please ring and wait for someone to open the door for you. Hall monitors may request names and picture identification to allow entry.

- **Classrooms, Hallways and Restrooms**

Upon arrival, students shall report to their classrooms and remain in them for the duration of class, unless a catechist escorts the entire class to another location on campus. Students will not loiter in the hallways. Students should use the restroom, as necessary, before entering class to avoid leaving during class. Parents will be notified and will be expected to speak to their child if the child frequently requests to use the bathroom in a manner that disrupts class. Catechists may use their discretion in refusing requests by children to use the bathroom.

- **Food and Drink**

St. Catherine of Siena School is a nut-free environment. Students may not bring food or drink (besides water) at any time into the classrooms or school. Students, who require food for medical reasons, as noted by their parents on the student's **Medical Release Form**, may bring nut-free snacks.

- **Electronic Devices and Cell Phones**

iPads and other electronic devices should not be brought to class. If a catechist or member of the Religious Education Staff determines that a student has such an electronic device and is accessing it during class, the catechist or staff member may remove the device from the student for the duration of the class. The device will be returned after class is complete, only to the parent or designated adult.

During class, cell phones must remain off or set to "silent" mode and put away. No child may text or use the internet for personal browsing. In their discretion, catechists may require students to place cell phones in a bin upon entering the classroom, to be returned to the students at the end of class, or may take a phone away from a particular student for the duration of a class as necessary for class management or another serious reason. Please be certain that all cell phones brought to class are marked, labeled or otherwise readily identified as belonging to your child.

- **Prohibited Items**

While at the St. Catherine of Siena Campus, students may not possess, use or distribute any items, materials or substances (referred to together as "Items") that potentially could cause serious harm to themselves or to others, could cause significant damage to property, or that students are legally prohibited from possessing. This includes fireworks, weapons of any kind, alcohol, tobacco, traditional or e- cigarettes, controlled substances, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia, or medications prescribed to persons other than the student. If a catechist or member of the Religious Education Staff determines that a student possesses any of these Items, the catechist or staff member may, in their discretion:

- Remove the Item from the student for the duration of the class. The Item will be returned after class is complete, only to the parent or designated adult; or
- If the Item poses an imminent risk of harm to anyone, remove the student from the classroom, and call the parent or designated adult or, if they cannot be reached the emergency contact listed on the medical form. The parent or adult who is contacted will be expected immediately to pick up the student and remove him or her from the campus. The student will not be allowed to return to the Religious Education campus or class until the student and parents have met separately with the Director of Religious Education to reach an agreed resolution of the matter.

If warranted to maintain safety or security or to address an imminent risk, a catechist or staff member may immediately call local law enforcement for assistance.

- **Safety Procedures**

The Saint Catherine of Siena Religious Education Program follows all Safety Procedures and Protocols observed by St. Catherine of Siena School. The catechists have been instructed safety procedures in the event of a fire and lockdown, should there be a need to use them in an emergency. Fire drills and lockdown drills will be conducted. Parents will always be notified via email prior to conducting a fire or lock down drill.

- **Conduct and Discipline**

At all times, volunteers, students, parents and families are expected to display Christian attitudes of honesty, mutual respect, responsibility, consideration and love for oneself, clergy, catechists, fellow students, and school and parish property.

If a student's behavior becomes a distraction for other children before, during, or after class, parents will be notified by phone, in writing, or in person. We will work together to reach a mutually agreed solution, up to and including requesting the parent's presence in the classroom as a one-on-one aide for your child. There is a discipline policy in place and every catechist will be following the same procedures. Students disrupting class may be removed from the classroom. Persistent disruptive behavior will result in a child being removed from the Program for the remainder of the year if a solution cannot be found.

In addition, students who engage in the following behavior on the St. Catherine of Siena Campus will be subject to appropriate and immediate disciplinary action, which may include public service, short- or long-term removal from the classroom, removal from the Program for remainder of the year, or restitution:

- **Using Inappropriate Language.** Volunteers and students shall refrain from using vulgar or obscene language, language that taunts, bullies, or teases another person, or language that disparages persons based on gender, race or national origin, religious beliefs, or other personal characteristics.
- **Fighting** or physically assaulting another person.
- **Stealing, damaging or destroying the property** of another person, including students, parents or volunteers of the Religious Education Program, St. Catherine of Siena School, or the parish generally. Found items should be delivered to a catechist, volunteer, or Religious Education staff member.

- **Grievance/Complaint**

If a child experiences difficulty during class, please directly contact the assigned Captain as soon as the difficulty arises, either in person or in writing and we will work with you to achieve a mutually agreed solution. All conflict resolutions should focus on the healing Spirit of Christ. If additional issues arise or concerns are unresolved, contact the Director of Religious Education.

Medical Issues

- **Emergency Contact Information**

The Religious Education registration materials will ask parents to supply the name and phone number of an emergency contact person. This phone number should allow us to contact someone who generally will be available during your child's class times.

- **Medical Release Forms**

For all students enrolled in Religious Education, the parent/guardian must complete and sign a Medical Release Form, which can be found on the Parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com. Completed forms must be submitted prior to the first day of class. This Form includes a permission statement authorizing emergency medical personnel to treat a child in the event of a medical emergency.

- **Medical Emergencies: St Catherine of Siena Religious Education Staff or Volunteer will call 911 to obtain Emergency Medical Services for any student who becomes seriously ill, has a serious injury, or for any other similar medical emergency.**
- If a minor illness or injury prevents a child from completing a class, the catechist or staff member will call the parents or authorized adult first. If that person cannot be reached, the emergency contact person listed on the registration form will be called. The parent or adult who is contacted will be expected immediately to pick up the student and remove him or her from the campus.

- For a serious illness or injury, a catechist will call 911 to request emergency assistance. Parents or the authorized adult will be contacted second and informed of the situation. If that person cannot be reached, the emergency contact person listed on the registration form will be called.
 - Please inform the Director of Religious Education if your child has a medical condition that potentially could result in a medical emergency (e.g., history of seizures or fainting etc.)
 - During cold and flu season, if your child exhibits symptoms of illness, please use your best judgment about whether your child should attend class.
- **Medications:**

St Catherine of Siena Religious Education volunteers and staff members are not allowed to dispense medications of any kind.

- **Students with severe allergies:**

If a student has a life-threatening allergic condition requiring the use of an EPI PEN /

AVI-Q, parents must sign and complete an EPI PEN/ AVI-Q PROTOCOL. The parent/guardian of any child who cannot self-administer an epinephrine auto-injector ***must be present*** in the building for the duration of each class attended by the child, for purposes of administering an auto-injector in the event of an anaphylactic reaction.

Parents or guardians may **designate a delegate**, by completing an *Authorization by Parent to Delegate for Avi-Q/EpiPen Administration* form, for the purposes of administering an epinephrine auto-injector in the event of an anaphylactic reaction to their child; provided the delegate **is not** a Saint Catherine of Siena Parish catechist, other volunteer or staff member of the Religious Education Program. The delegate must remain in the building for the duration of each class attended by the child. **All delegates must be in compliance with Diocesan Safe Environment Policies and be VIRTUS trained.**

In the event a parent/guardian/appointed delegate is unable to attend a class, parents must contact the day Captain who will help arrange for their child to complete the session's classwork at home. Students will be required to present their completed work to the catechist the following class, in accordance with the Attendance and Absences Policy of the program (page 5).

If the child is in middle school or high school and is authorized by a physician to self-administer his/her own auto-injector, the parent/guardian must complete the Authorization to Self-Administer form and have it signed by the child's physician.

Curriculum Content

- **Overview**

The St. Catherine of Siena Religious Education Program is Christ-centered and based on the Diocese of Bridgeport's Guidelines for Catechesis. Each grade level will review, in an age-appropriate manner, the following topics:

- Sacred Scripture
- The Creed
- Worship & the Sacraments
- Christian Morality
- Prayer & Spirituality
- Community & Service

Grades 1 through 6 of our Religious Education Program uses the *Gospel Weekly* series by Pflaum Publishers. Seventh grade students use *Decision Point* from Dynamic Catholic. Eighth grade students use *Chosen* by Ascension Press. Sixth graders will also receive their Bible, which they are expected to bring to each class during grades 6-8.

- **St. Catherine of Siena Home School Program**

St. Catherine of Siena Religious Education Program adheres to all suggested guidelines of the Diocese of Bridgeport concerning a Home School Program. Details are outlined in St. Catherine of Siena Religious Education Handout entitled: Guidelines for Family Catechesis (Home Schooling) available on the Parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com and through the Religious Education Office.

- **Sacraments**

The Sacramental preparation program centers on parent-child-community participation, because parents are the primary religious educators of their children and our church community is our faith support system. St. Catherine of Siena provides resources, classes, and immediate preparation and celebration for these special Sacramental events.

Sponsors and godparents for Baptism and Confirmation must fulfill the guidelines established by Canon Law and the Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Sponsors are responsible for acquiring from their local parish, a sponsor form signed by their clergy.

St Catherine of Siena Parish also follows the Diocesan Guidelines and Policies for Catechesis and Preparation for the Sacraments, which contains the following student requirements for Sacramental preparation:

- For First Communion and Confirmation, students must be enrolled and participating in a Religious Education Program for at least two full years before celebrating the sacrament. This means that attending Religious Education in first grade is a pre-requisite for celebrating First Reconciliation and First Communion in third grade. Any child entering second grade who has not attended first grade Religious Education must complete the Grade One curriculum beforehand. Per the Diocesan Guidelines: "Before entering into immediate preparation for First Eucharist, a child is to have completed **one full year** in a catechetical program and be currently enrolled in the second year of the regular ongoing parish or school catechetical program." Similarly, any student wishing to be confirmed in eighth grade (or first-year high school as set out below) who missed one or more previous grades for Religious Education must make up the missed year(s) curriculum. Once completed the student will be placed in the final year of the Confirmation preparation class (either 8th grade or the first-year high school class). Again the Diocesan Guidelines state: "A person is to be enrolled in an ongoing parish or school catechetical program for **at least two years immediately before entering into the Confirmation preparation program.**"
- Regular weekly attendance for Religious Education classes, including the special Sacramental preparation classes, is essential. The Attendance Guidelines on page 5 of this Handbook will be strictly enforced and not waived during Sacramental preparation years.
- All Sacramental preparation assignments must be fully completed and given to the catechist by the due date.
- Weekly attendance at Mass and return of the Mass Cards as described on page 6 of this Handbook is an important part of the Sacramental preparation process.
- Baptismal Certificates and all other Sacramental documentation must be on file at the Religious Education Office before reception of the sacrament.

- **Baptism**

The Sacrament of Baptism is scheduled through the Parish Office. Parental pre-Baptism classes are held monthly. You may call the parish office to schedule a date and time for the Baptism and to register for the class.

- **First Reconciliation and First Eucharist**

Preparation for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist begins in second grade. Parents will receive a detailed informational packet outlining the schedule of events, classes and workshops related to the Sacramental preparation and celebrations. First Reconciliation takes place in November of third grade. First Eucharist takes place in May of the third Grade.

- **Confirmation**

Confirmation is usually celebrated around late March to mid-April. The actual date of the Sacrament is determined by the Bishop's office.

For 2018-2019, active Confirmation preparation began in grade seven and is completed before celebration of the Sacrament in grade eight, provided the child has fulfilled the Diocesan Guidelines listed above.

Please note: During the 2018-2019 academic year, eighth grade students will receive Confirmation at end of their eighth-grade year in Spring 2019. However, like much of the Diocese of Bridgeport, St Catherine of Siena Parish will be transitioning to offer Confirmation at the end of a student's freshman year of high school. During this transition, the 2019-2020 eighth grade class will receive Confirmation mid-freshman year, during late Fall 2020. The 2020-2021 eighth-grade class will receive Confirmation late-freshman year during Spring 2022.

The following foundational topics are addressed over the course of this two-year preparation period:

- Saints (understanding the Communion of Saints/Choosing a Patron Saint)
- Faith in Action (Service commitment)
- Holy Spirit (gifts and fruits received during Confirmation)
- Development of Spirituality (retreats)
- Development of Moral Thinking and Decision Making (special speakers/classes)
- Social Justice
- Role of Confirmed Catholics in the Church

All eighth graders preparing for Confirmation are also required to complete 20 hours of community service prior to February of their confirmation year. They can begin accumulating service hours during the fall of their previous academic year (8th grade as of 2019). Only 5 hours of altar serving can be counted towards community service. For the children's choir, any time spent in rehearsals on Wednesdays from 5-6 pm and the 30-minute warmup rehearsal before the monthly 9am Mass when the children sing can be counted.

Parents will receive a detailed informational packet outlining these Sacramental preparation activities and events. These activities and events are also listed in the church bulletin before the date of event and on the Parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com.

Christian Initiation of Children

Children who are not baptized, baptized in a non-Catholic church and those who have no formal Religious Education and wish to learn more about the Catholic Church are invited to learn more about the Catholic Church with their parents. Parents are asked to contact the Director of Religious Education who will work with parents to develop a catechetical plan to welcome these children into the Catholic Church according to the norms and customs of the Catholic Church.

Acknowledgement and Consent

For all students enrolled in Religious Education, the parent/guardian must complete and sign the attached **Acknowledgement and Consent Form**, which confirms that:

- the parent/guardian has received, read, and understands the contents of this Handbook;
- the parent/guardian will discuss the expectations in this Handbook with each of their children who will be attending Religious Education.

The **Acknowledgement and Consent Form** must be returned prior to or on the first day of class. Electronic copies of the Handbook may be found on the Parish website www.stcathtrumbull.com. Please direct any questions you may have about the Handbook or its requirements by phone, e-mail, or in person to the Director of Religious Education.

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement and Consent Form

Child's name	Grade

I/We acknowledge that I/we have received, read and understand The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena Religious Education Handbook, and will discuss its expectations with my/our child(ren) who will be attending Religious Education. I/We consent to use this Handbook and the enforcement of the policies and procedures that it contains during the 2018-2019 Religious Education year.

Acknowledged (Parents or Guardians):

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Name)

_____ (Relationship)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Name)

_____ (Relationship)