

St. Francis of Assisi Office of Faith Formation
Parent Handbook
2015/16
Fr. Robert McKeon, Pastor

Welcome to the Religious Education Program of St. Francis of Assisi. Please check our website frequently for communications and information important to parents of children in our program. www.stfrancis-assisi.org

The Mission of the Church. The Mission of St. Francis Religious Education Program:

The Church is the vehicle Christ instituted by which and through which His saving work on earth continues. Our mission is to assist parents in their role as primary catechist and to support Catholic families who live the faith in daily life, who gather with the worshipping community and participate in the sacramental life of the Church, and carry the Gospel into the world to help build the Kingdom of God.

Attendance at the Liturgy on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the source and summit of our faith. It is in the Mass that we are nourished by the Word of God and by the life of Jesus in Holy Communion. It is here we are more closely united to Christ and to our brothers and sisters. This celebration forges our identity and strengthens us in our lives as Catholic Christians. We cannot live a faithful life as Catholics, as followers of Christ through His Church, and dispense with the Eucharistic Liturgy.

“The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.” (CCC # 2180)

“The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.” (CCC # 2181)

(CCC stands for Catechism of the Catholic Church which may be found in its entirety at <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>)

Attendance at the Sunday Liturgy is the first and foremost requirement for students in our Religious Education program.

Admission and Placement of Students

Registration usually begins in mid-April for the coming religious education year. The family may come into the office to register in person.

The registration period is published in the parish bulletin and notices are sent home with the children. Families with children entering the program from another parish are asked to provide religious education records from the previous parish.

Tuition and Fees:

One child: \$175.
Two children: \$220
Three or more children: \$295
First Penance and Eucharist fee: \$75
Confirmation fee: \$100

Class placement

The following are Archdiocesan policies:

Since parish religious education programs support the family in forming the child for a faithful life, the students are required to attend the program from Grade 1 through Grade 8.

Any child older than first grade who enters the program without previous religious education must study the curriculum of the grades missed and then will be placed in the appropriate grade level.

If a child drops out of the religious education program and returns at a later time, the curriculum of the grades missed must be completed before being placed in the appropriate grade level.

Attendance and Absences

It is important that students attend class each week and arrive on time. Study cannot be conducted without the student's text book. Students are asked to bring their books each week. If a book is forgotten, the child will call home to ask a parent to bring the book to class.

Children gather in the Church for prayer each week. This prayer time is a very important part of their weekly lesson.

Children who are absent are asked to study the assigned chapter at home. Upon return to class, students should show the completed chapter, activities and quizzes, to the catechist. A syllabus is sent home in August which is a curriculum guide for families.

Students who are absent three to five times may be asked to do remedial work and may require a consultation with catechist, parent and student to determine successful completion of the year's study.

More than 5 absences, without a doctor's note, will require the year's study to be repeated. This is Regional policy.

Homework and Testing

It is important that the catechist received some assurance as to the comprehension and mastery of the curriculum. Tests and quizzes are some of the assessment tools used. Please inform the Director or Catechist if there are special concerns regarding your child and testing.

Homework is given to help reinforce and review the material over the course of the week. However, it should not be burdensome or require an unreasonable amount of time.

Confirmation students are assigned several projects to prepare for the sacrament but the student is given ample time to complete these projects.

Progress reports are sent home twice during the religious education year.

Cancellations

In the event of inclement weather, or emergency:

1. please listen to radio WHUD (100.7 FM)
2. call the religious education office. (845) 638-4215
3. check www.cancellations.com.
4. check the St. Francis website: www.stfrancis-assisi.org

Generally, when the Clarkstown Central School District is closed there are no Religious Education classes.

Dress Code

The children enter into sacred space when they enter the Church and are in an environment that serves to foster respect for the human person. It is important that the children learn the living of our faith must be reflected in our words, actions and dress.

We ask that our girls dress appropriately for Church and for class. We ask that they not wear short shorts, spaghetti straps, bare midriff, halter tops nor very short skirts or very tight, clinging or low cut tops.

Boys are asked to be in appropriate slacks or shorts. We ask that there be no suggestive images, themes or words on T-shirts...anything that is contrary to the Catholic Christian message.

If a student comes to Church and class in inappropriate dress, he/she will be asked to call home and remain in the office until picked up.

Crisis Management

In keeping with the Archdiocesan mandate for safe environment, the following policies are in effect;

During the time classes are in session, all entrance doors must be kept locked. This includes the doors to the church as well as the door to Rader Hall and the door to the new building. There is a **door bell** outside of the new building for a parent to ring in case they must enter the building during class time. The classroom doors are kept locked.

Accident or illness:

“No medication of any kind including both prescription and over the counter, should be administered to, or taken by, the student during the time the student is with us in the program session. However if an exception must be made the parent must provide a written request and directives.”

(Handbook for Parish Catechetical Directors and Coordinators, Archdiocese of New York.)

If a student is feeling ill, he/she will wait in the office until picked up by a parent or designated adult.

Discipline

Religious Education takes place in a Christian environment. Maintaining an environment of respect is, in itself, part of our experience of how God wants us to be toward each other. For this reason each student is expected to maintain appropriate behavior toward the catechist and fellow students, toward the clergy and church and personal property.

Normal discipline problems are handled by the catechist. When reasonable patience and correction has been expended by the catechist, a disruptive student is sent to the religious education office.

Grades 1—7: A first offense is cautionary. A second offense requires contact with the parent to determine course of action.

Grades 8&9: It has become necessary to institute a zero tolerance policy. If a student is sent to the office, the parent will be called to pick him/her up and the student will be marked absent for the day's attendance.

Students may be removed from the group session when:

it is believed the student would benefit from individual or smaller group instruction or when the student's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others.

Temporary removal from a class is a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior. If, in an extreme case, it seems necessary to remove a student from the program, the final decision is made in consultation with the Pastor.

Dismissal from the Building

The safety of our children is a primary concern. For this reason, the following regulations must be followed:

At the end of the session, children are dismissed into the care of parent or guardian. The guardian must be someone designated in writing. If the office is not informed that someone other than parent is permitted to take your child home, the child will wait in the office until contact is made with the parent.

The parent or guardian must enter the building to pick up the child at the classroom door.

Children in classrooms 1 – 5: parents please enter the building by the Rader Hall entrance and pick up the children from Rader Hall.

Children in classrooms 7 – 15: parents please enter the building from the new entrance and pick up the children from the hallway outside of the new classrooms.

A floor plan of our facility is available in the Religious Education office which is located at the front of the new building.

Please park your car in allotted spots. For safety reasons, please do not park cars along the fire lanes in front of the entrance to the building.

No unauthorized visitors are allowed in the area when religious education is taking place. Visitors must report directly to the religious education office located in the front of the new building.

Children must remain for the full class. However, in the event a child must be picked up early, parent or guardian is asked to come to the office to sign the child out. Please do not go directly to the classroom to pick up your child.

We ask that parent places priority on religious education. Please respect the catechist, and other students, and avoid picking up children early from class for extra curricular activities.

Custodial Rights of Parents

The Director should be informed in writing by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent pertaining to the religious education program and whether dismissal into care of the non-custodial parent is permitted.

Please inform us if there is someone not allowed to pick up your child.

Family-Based Study

There may be emergency circumstances which prevent a child from being able to attend regularly weekly classes. In this case, arrangements may be made for the Family-Based program. The program consists of completing several components during the year which include: parent/student orientation, study of grade level text at home, weekly Mass attendance with reflection on the scripture readings, attendance at liturgical celebrations and sessions of catechesis for parent and student in the Religious Education center.

Archdiocesan Guidelines require parents who are teaching children at home be enrolled in catechist formation courses. Information on the availability and registration for these courses will be provided through the office.

The years in which students prepare for Sacraments (grades 2 and 8) are excluded from Family-based study.

Pre-school

St. Francis offers a traditional religious education program for three and four year olds called "I Am Special."

St. Francis offers the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a method of faith formation based on the Montessori method of education. The experience of faith takes place within a special environment called an Atrium.

Please contact the office for more information on these programs.

Special Education

St. Francis offers faith formation and sacramental preparation for children with various special needs. Please contact the office to make an appointment with the Coordinator of Special Religious Education.

Sacraments

Meetings are scheduled to help parent and student prepare most fully and appreciate most significantly the gift about to be received from God. Archdiocesan policy requires at least two meetings for parents in preparation for each sacrament.

Reconciliation:

"Catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede First Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear separation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation normally should be celebrated prior to the reception of First Communion." (National Catechetical Directory. 126)

Eucharist:

Adequate preparation for the reception of the sacraments require at least two years of religious education. For the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist, grades 1 and 2 must be completed.

"For the administration of the most Holy Eucharist to children it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity, and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion." (Canon Law 913)

"It is primarily the duty of parents and of those who take their place, as it is the duty of the parish priest, to ensure that children who have reached the age of reason are properly prepared." (Canon Law 914)

Confirmation:

"As a Sacrament of Initiation, Confirmation is intimately related to Baptism and Eucharist. Confirmation renews and strengthens the Christian's baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and work eagerly for the building up of his body." (National Catechetical Directory 118)

As primary educators of their children, parents, along with sponsors, are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for Confirmation. At Confirmation meetings, necessary information regarding sponsors, the Confirmation name, and all requirements will be provided.

Sponsor: Each child to be confirmed should have an individual sponsor. It is very fitting that the sponsor at Confirmation be the same sponsor one had at Baptism. Requirements for sponsors are the same as those for Baptism. (Canon Law 874, 893).

All sponsors must present a written statement from the pastor of his/her parish affirming that he/she is qualified to be a Confirmation sponsor. This includes sponsors from our parish of St. Francis. The Pastor wishes to meet with any sponsors from our parish. Please call the Rectory for an appointment.

The Sponsor may not be the candidate's mother or father.

Formation programs of catechesis for Confirmation may include but are not limited to: a period of instruction, service, retreat experience, interview, letter of request, saint's report.

Confirmation is received in fall of the 9th grade.