

St. Louis

Religious Education

Handbook

Revised 2013

St. Louis Religious Education Parent Handbook

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St. Louis Religious Education Program

Fostering Faith as a Lifelong Journey

Welcome to the St. Louis Religious Education community. With your help, the children of our parish will establish and strengthen their Catholic identities and determine their gifts of service. We look forward to a fun, spirit-filled, productive year.

Your interest in your children's faith life is to be commended. The source of all faith is established and reinforced in the home. You will find that we will combine our classroom efforts with home activities and opportunities for you to grow in faith with your children.

Our program is built on the sacraments and encourages living out the faith. We use all facets of our lives to discover and realize God's presence. Your children will be asked to connect church lessons to family, community, and themselves. Your children will benefit from a variety of teaching methods including art, music, reading, writing, and drama. We encourage you to read the Bible at home as we will in the classrooms. Lastly, we promote our Catholic identity. We believe the rich traditions of the Church are a vibrant facet of our lives and our understanding of God's presence in our lives.

We encourage you to keep in touch, ask any questions, and play an integral role in the Religious Education Program. Working together, we best facilitate the desire for the children to strengthen their relationship with God.

Class Times and Locations

September to May

Preschool (3 and 4 year old)
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Place: St. Louis School Building

Kindergarten through High School
Time: 10:40 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.
Place: St. Louis School Building

Registration/Required Materials

To register your child, complete a registration form and pay the Religious Education fee. You may also use registration opportunities provided at Orientation.

Students must have the following updated and completed forms in their files: Religious Education Registration Form and Medical Emergency Form. Those preparing for a sacrament must have a Certificate of Baptism.

Youth who wish to participate in any youth ministry program or event must have the following on file: multi-use permission form, medical form, and code of conduct form. These forms are in addition to the Religious Education Medical Emergency Form.

Program Fees

Program fees may be paid in full or in installments. Contact the St. Louis Parish Office to learn more about paying in installments.

No one will be turned away because of inability to pay. If you are facing financial difficulties, please see Fr. Mark, parish office, or program directors for financial aid assistance. All payment arrangements are kept in strict confidence.

Tuition

Preschool -- \$25.00

Grades K-12

1 child -- \$75.00

2 children -- \$125.00

3 children -- \$155.00

4 or more children \$175.00

Home schooling -- \$25.00

Confirmation Retreat -- \$60.00

Activity Fee (one payment per family)-- \$15

Attendance

Regular class attendance is vital. Realizing the need to strike a balance between faith formation and family and school, all students are allowed 3 absences. Any student missing more than 3 classes will be required to meet with either the Director of Child Formation or the Director of Youth Formation to determine an appropriate course of action. During sacramental years, students are only allowed 2 absences. No consecutive absences are allowed. When absent from class for anything other than a family emergency, funeral, or illness, it is required that all students in the 6th-11th grade attend a group service or liturgical experience, district event, special program, or youth event to account for the fellowship missed in class. In Kindergarten through 5th grade all students who miss class for any reason other than family emergency, funeral or illness must complete an at home lesson and a family service project. Sporting events, family vacation, and the like do NOT count as excused absences. All students are also required to make-up class content for absences of this nature.

Reporting Absences

A 48 hour notice for absence is appreciated. Please e-mail or call to report an absence. For unexpected absences, parents should call (262) 835-4533 before 10:00 a.m. on class days. For Kindergarten-grade 5, notify the Director of Child Formation. For grades 6-11, notify the Director of Youth Formation.

Student Drop Off/Pick Up

Drop Off

Children are to be dropped off **no earlier than 10:30 a.m.** Children should go directly to their classroom area unless otherwise instructed. **They should wait outside of the room until their teacher arrives.** If a child arrives late for class more than twice, a meeting with a program director is required to determine an appropriate course of action.

Pick Up

Parents or older siblings should pick up their children/younger sibling at 12:10 p.m. in the classrooms. For students in pre-school through 5th grade, parents or older siblings are required to pick up the student from the classroom. Failure to do so will result in a meeting with the Director of Child Formation. If a child needs to leave Religious Education early, a handwritten note with a parent/guardian signature is required. These notes should be directed to the attention of either the Director of Child or Youth Formation. If a child leaves class early more than twice, a meeting with the program director is required to determine an appropriate course of action.

Sacrament Preparation

General Requirements for all Sacramental Candidates and Their Parents:

1. Candidates must have completed at least one full year of faith formation classes before their sacramental year.
2. Families with children in sacrament preparation must be registered members of St. Louis Parish.
3. Families must actively participate in the prayer and worship life of the community. This includes regular participation in Sunday mass by parents and sacramental candidates.
4. Candidates and parents must attend all sacramental preparation sessions. Parent meetings and workshops are listed on the yearly schedule.
5. Candidates must complete all home lessons and demonstrate regular class attendance.
6. All 6th through 10th graders must attend at least two retreats in order to be accepted into the 11th grade Confirmation program. It is strongly encouraged that one of these experiences happen during Jr. High and the other during high school. .
7. All 6th through 10th graders must attend at least two district speakers in order to be accepted into the 11th grade Confirmation program.
8. 9th and 10th graders should begin fulfilling Confirmation service categories
9. Students will need to complete an interview with Fr. Mark prior to making their sacrament (First Eucharist and Confirmation)
10. Make a banner to be hung in the church (First Eucharist).
11. All candidates must have a baptismal form on file at St. Louis.
12. Candidates must attend rehearsal.

** Note: Children must receive First Reconciliation before preparing for or receiving First Eucharist. Students must receive First Reconciliation and First Eucharist before receiving Confirmation.*

Special Requirements for Confirmation

1. Meet the General Requirements for sacrament preparation.
2. Meet the Service Hour requirements: fulfill all 6 service categories, two of which must be completed during the 11th grade year.
3. Perform 5 liturgical hours through St. John Bosco Youth Day, church visits, or other archdiocesan liturgical experience (i.e. ARISE)
4. Write a letter to the Archbishop requesting to be confirmed.
5. Regularly participate in St. Louis youth activities.
6. Participate in Confirmation retreat.
7. Attend the sacrament of Reconciliation
8. Attend confirmation workshops with sponsor or designated representative.
9. Turn in sponsor form and reflection.
10. Turn in Confirmation name form and reflection.
11. Complete candidate journal

Sacramental Participation

An important aspect of being Catholic is regular participation in the Eucharist as well as Reconciliation. The sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered two times a year for students who wish to participate. The sacrament of Reconciliation is also available by appointment with Father Mark. Active participation in the sacrament of Eucharist is highly encouraged for all individuals who have received their First Eucharist.

Curriculum

Curriculum will include scripture, theology, prayer, and various large group programs. Each Catechist may have a homework policy. Please contact the catechist with questions on the given homework.

The Archdiocese requires a minimum of 25 hours of class time for a Religious Education program.

Make-up Lessons

Making up Religious Education is strongly encouraged regardless of whether an absence is deemed excused or unexcused. It is not required that students with an excused absence make-up a lesson. However making up a lesson will help ensure the students understands the full scope of the curriculum and will allow students to participate in discussions and review upon return. Students must make-up a lesson should they be absent for a reason other than a family emergency, funeral, or illness. "Making up" a lesson means completing the content of the lesson as well as attending an event on the comprehensive religious education schedule (6th-11th). For students in Kindergarten through 5th grade, "Making up" a lesson consists of completing the chapter covered in class. Contact the director for make-up material.

**Note: Catechists do NOT handle make-up lessons. These are given by the director.*

Special Needs

Please inform the Director of Child Faith Formation or the Director of Youth Faith Formation if your child has special needs. To the best of our abilities and capabilities, we work with children of all needs.

Home Schooling

If you choose to home school your children, you need to pay the \$25.00 registration fee and obtain a copy of the year's curriculum from one of the program directors. Also, a child must meet twice a year with one of the program director. Meeting dates and time will be mutually agreed upon by both parties. The child must participate in service, retreat, and other faith formation experiences that are scheduled for the Religious Education year. **Home schooling is not allowed during a sacramental year.** It is best to be with the class because of the communal nature of the sacraments and the special requirements which the class completes together.

Safeguarding God's Children

As Catholics we believe that we are all created in the image and likeness of God, therefore the Archdiocese of Milwaukee has created a curriculum in to teach the students, staff and volunteers how to protect themselves and others. During the Spring semester of the Religious Education year students learn about different topics including bullying and sexual abuse. At least one week before the lesson is taught a letter is sent home to inform parents of the individual lessons to be taught. At that point parents may elect to sign a waiver that their child(ren) will not be a part of the lesson. It is then the parent(s) responsibility to teach the lesson at home and return completed work. Parents may go to archmil.org to find out the individual topics by grade taught.

Meeting with Catechists/Director

Catechists are available to parents at the beginning and end of classes in the classroom. The Director of Child Faith Formation and the Director of Youth Faith Formation are available before and after classes and other evenings and weekends. Please contact one of the directors to request a meeting in advance.

Behavior and Discipline

Discipline Policy

All parents, teachers, and students are expected to follow the discipline system. There are positive and negative consequences to all behavior choices. Students will find examples of positive consequences in their classes but should also understand the consequences for negative behavior.

Poor choices/behavior will not be tolerated at St. Louis Parish. We will take appropriate action to keep Sunday school a safe and enjoyable place.

Each classroom may have its own specific rules & expectations that students should follow. These are blanket expectations for all in Sunday School:

1. We show respect toward all people (teachers, students, adults, guests).
2. We raise our hands and wait to be called upon before talking or leaving our seat, unless otherwise directed by a teacher.
3. We follow directions of our teachers and any classroom rules our teachers have.
4. We follow the Electronics Policy and do not disrupt class in any way by using electronic devices.
5. We walk in the hallway.
6. We use inside voices while in the building.

7. We do not tamper with material and/or classroom items that are not the property of Religious Education.

Behavior Violations

Level 1: Teacher speaks with student privately to explain how his/her choices violate classroom or program rules.

Level 2: Teacher places student in hallway or isolated area of classroom for reflection. Student fills out a written reflection assigned by the catechist and (if appropriate) writes an apology letter to whomever he/she hurt. Student meets with Director of Child Faith Formation or Director of Youth Faith Formation to determine if it is possible to re-enter class. Children who are unable to write the reflection form will complete the process verbally with the Director of Child Faith Formation.

a) If student has properly reflected and apologized and learned from the mistake, a director will bring him/her back into class for another chance.

b) If student is not able to reenter class, he/she will progress to a level 3 violation: he/she will remain with a director the remainder of class and parents will be notified. A personal behavior plan will be developed for the student.

Examples of why a student may not reenter class: if he/she hasn't properly reflected, knows and admits behavior won't change next time, disrupts from place of isolation.

Level 3: A parent or guardian will accompany the child to his/her next class. Parents will be notified. A personal behavior plan will be developed for the student.

Personal Behavior Plans are written and may include step-by-step guides for learning to make good choices and weekly behavior reports. Depending on incident(s), these may be completed in the presence of parents. Before reentry into class a parent must sign all plans. A student demonstrating success on a behavior plan may be taken off of it at a later time.

Level 4: Students progressing to Level 3 more than once in a Religious Education semester will not be permitted to continue in the Saint Louis Religious Education Program for the remainder of the year. In order to re-enter the program the next year, the student, parent(s) and the program director(s) will hold a conference.

Severe Clause

If a student violates classroom or program rules in a severely dangerous, disrespectful or disruptive manner, he or she will bypass all levels and go directly to Level 4. A conference will be scheduled with parents. At the conference, all will discuss why the behavior was considered severe, establish a behavior plan, or determine terms of dismissal from the program.

Right of Dismissal

St. Louis Parish reserves the right to dismiss any student from the Religious Education Program on the grounds of serious behavior problems or a serious behavior incident.

Harassment

Harassment is a single incident or pattern of behavior to create a hostile, offensive or intimidating environment. Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical and verbal behavior, which can include but is not limited to: threatening behavior, racial insults derogatory ethnic slurs, unwelcome sexual advances or gestures, physical or mental abuse. Any student that feels harassed should contact the Catechist or any staff person.

To the extent that a complaint of sexual harassment involves sexual contact or the apparent infliction of physical or emotional damage to the student, the appropriate authorities will be notified pursuant to Section 48.981 of the Wisconsin Statutes. No retaliation against a student or adult for reporting harassment will be tolerated (Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Policy and Rules, #513.1, as of 5/6/97).

We strive to maintain an environment that encourages optimal human growth and development. Respect and dignity of each person is essential in Catholic education. We will maintain an environment that is free from any form of harassment or intimidation.

Vandalism

Vandalism are acts which result in damage to school or school property, including but not limited to: burglary, theft, malicious mischief, breaking and entering, property damage, and arson.

Both students and parents of the students are responsible for vandalism caused. In cases of vandalism, the Director of Child Faith Formation or Director of Youth Faith Formation, Catechists, and Pastor will all work together to determine appropriate steps.

4 Steps in Cases of Vandalism:

- a. Student(s) responsible are identified.
- b. Student(s), parents and staff meet to determine the causes.
- c. Student(s) is/are disciplined.
- d. Costs will be determined. Parents of students aged 17 and under will pay for repair costs. Students 18 and older will pay themselves.
- e. We will make constructive steps to prevent future acts of vandalism.

(Archdiocese of Milwaukee Policy and Rules, #5131.5, 4/2/90)

** Note: For individual classrooms expectations, please check with catechist.

Classroom Electronics Policy

Electronic devices (cell phones, video games, iPods, etc.) have become a regular part of daily life. They also sometimes disrupt classrooms by making sounds or grabbing the attention of their owners or neighbors.

This policy seeks to create a more positive classroom environment while allowing for the necessary use of technology that is part of our world. Students in grades 6-11 will bring home an Electronics Policy Form for them and their parents to sign.

- a. Students should limit the number of devices they bring with them to Sunday School. Some items (cell phones) might be necessary while others (video games or cell phones used merely to text) are not.
- b. Unless otherwise directed, students are not allowed to have any electronic devices out during class time. If they do have them out, these devices will be taken away until the class is over.
- c. Students who try to hide a device under a table (to conceal using it), will be asked to turn it in and may be asked to sit in an area where there are no tables.
- d. If any student has a legitimate need to use a cell phone during class time, he/she should explain the need to the teacher in advance. He/She may be granted permission

1st violation of Electronics Policy: devices are taken from student and given back at the end of class; student is warned.

2nd violation of Electronics Policy: same consequences as 1st violation, PLUS parents receive written or verbal notice of violations.

3rd violation of Electronics Policy: devices are taken from student and turned into the program director or coordinator. Devices are given back to a parent at a required parent meeting.

Emergency Closings

Any closings of Religious Education classes will be announced on radio and television stations. Classes do not end early because of poor weather, so please do not come early to pick up your children on such days.

Withdrawing Students

Inform the Director of Child Faith Formation (preK-5th) or Director of Youth Faith Formation (6th-11th) if you decide to withdraw any child from the Religious Education Program.

Religious Education Activities

Information regarding upcoming Religious Education activities will be announced in the Sunday bulletin, posted on the bulletin board, posted on the parish Facebook page, parish website and sent home with your children. A variety of activities are scheduled throughout the year. Parents who chaperone activities are expected to act in a Christian manner and be a role model for the children.

Retreats

St. Louis religious education offers a combined 6th, 7th, and 8th grade retreat led by the National Evangelization Team (NET) ministries, a 9th grade diversity retreat, and a 10th grade relationships retreat. It is required that all 6th-10th graders attend 2 retreats before entering the 11th grade Confirmation program. These programs are noted on the comprehensive Religious Education calendar.

Service

It is also required that students begin documenting their service in the 9th grade. By the end of the 11th grade Confirmation preparation students must complete all six required service

categories. Service events are noted on the comprehensive Religious Education calendar. Family members and friends are always welcome to come on service trips. Friends of St. Louis youth will need a medical form, wavier, and code of conduct on file before participating in any Youth Ministry activity. Transportation is provided from the Saint Louis parking lot for out of area group service projects.

District Speakers

District 15 and 16 have pulled together a speakers fund to allow for engaging speakers to discuss relevant issues with our youth. Parents should attend district speaking events with their children. It is required that all 6th-10th graders attend 2 district speakers before entering the 11th grade Confirmation program.

Classroom Visitors

Guests of Religious Education students are only allowed in the Religious Education classroom if granted permission by the Director of Child Faith Formation or Director of Youth Faith Formation. Emergency contact information for the guest must also be left with a program director.