

Religious Education Program Parent and Student Handbook

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Religious Education Policies

General Policies Applicable to All Programs

Attendance

Parents and caregivers are asked to bring their child to each session on time and pick them up on time in the designated areas.

Attendance is critical for the religious education process to be meaningful. We ask that children in grades 1 and 2 do not miss more than 3 sessions throughout the year. Children in Grades 7 & 8 should not miss more than 1 as there are fewer sessions. However we will work with families, whenever possible, when they communicate with us concerning an ongoing medical condition or other serious circumstance so that the church can provide adequate religious formation.

Please refer to the section on [Summer Intensive Attendance](#) for specific summer session attendance requirements.

Parents and caregivers should not schedule medical and other appointments or activities during Religious Education hours as our time with the children is precious. When it is absolutely necessary that a child leave a session early, the parent should call in advance and tell the Religious Education office specifically who is picking up the child. The child would then have to be signed out by that individual who must show proper identification.

Parents should call the Religious Education office when a child cannot come to class. It is the responsibility of the family to find out what the child has missed.

Arrival

Park your car in a designated space and escort your child/ren into the building. Please walk them in or have a designated adult walk your child through the doors leading to the theater. Please do not drop them off in the parking lot or at the curb. Once children are brought into the theater, you must be certain an authorized adult is in the theater.

Dismissal

When picking up your child/ren, park in the church parking lot and come into the theater to pick up your child/ren promptly. Enter on the south side of the theater, sign your child out and then exit on the north side of the theater.

If someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up your child/ren, permission must be given in writing on the permission slips provided. Children will be released to persons over 18 only with the proper ID.

If someone is not on your authorized list of people who may pick your child up, please see the **Leader** that day.

Class Cancellation

If Colts Neck Schools are closed due to weather, religious education classes held at the Parish of St. Mary will be cancelled. In addition, we will send an email to each family whose e-mail address is on file as well as post the cancellation on the website.

If Colts Neck Schools are open but close early or cancel afternoon activities due to inclement weather, the Parish of Saint Mary will be closed. In this case, we will send an email, post the closure on the website and attempt to call all catechists involved. Catechists will be asked to call their faith-sharers if possible.

If the Parish of Saint Mary needs to close due to loss of heat or other emergency, we will send an email, post the closure on the website and attempt to call all catechists involved. Catechists will be asked to call their faith-sharers if possible.

Class Completion

At the Parent Orientation for Religious Education, families will be given a sheet of events and Intergenerationals that must be attended by students during the school year in order for your child/ren to be promoted to the next school grade in our religious education program.

Second Graders, in preparation for the reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, will have additional sessions to attend. More information and offerings will be made known to families as they come up.

Communication

Our chief means of communicating is through emails. If you do not receive regular email correspondence from the Parish of Saint Mary (such as a monthly e-Newsletter or weekly e-Bulletin), please contact the parish office. The parish office will check that the system used to create emails has your correct email address and update it, if necessary.

Parents must make the religious education office aware of any changes in phone numbers and emails so that we can maintain contact.

We also communicate through the bulletin, website (the bulletin can be found on the website) and announcements at Mass. We rarely use regular mail. Please remember to check your

email, the website and the bulletin on a regular basis. This will help us keep you apprised of additional family activities, re-registration dates and other religious education information.

If you have opted out of receiving emails from the Parish of Saint Mary, you may miss key information and reminders. Please contact the main office of the parish to find out how to begin receiving emails again if you are not currently receiving them.

Discipline

Children must be respectful to all adults and children as we need to be certain that all children are benefiting from the class. Disruptive, disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. If your child/ren is involved in such a situation, he/she will be given a warning with an emailed notice sent home so that the parents are aware of any disciplinary problems. If the child/ren does not respond to the warning, the parent/guardian will be called and may result in dismissal from the program without refund.

Dress Code

The dress code is casual. However, no beach wear, belly shirts, short-shorts or baseball caps are permitted.

Food

Gum is not permitted.

Mobile Phones and Other Distractions

Please do not send your child to class with cell phones, headsets, skateboards, electronic devices or toys as these are distractions. With respect to cell phones, we do not want pictures being taken as the use of cameras is a privacy concern and we do not want texting going on during class.

Should a child come to class with a cell phone, it will be placed in the center of the table where the catechist may see them. We cannot be responsible if cell phones are lost or stolen.

The children may use our phones for emergencies. Parents/guardians may also contact the Religious Education office at any time at 732-780-2666.

Prayer

Please reinforce the Sign of the Cross, Lord's Prayer (Our Father), Hail Mary and Glory Be at home. In addition to these common prayers, your child should learn about and memorize other Catholic teachings:

- All grades: Grace before and after meals.
- Grade 1: Sign of the Cross, Lord's Prayer (Our Father) and Hail Mary
- Grade 2: Glory Be, Guardian Angel Prayer, Act of Contrition, Simple Mass Responses

- Grade 3: Ten Commandments, Stations of the Cross and Morning and Bedtime Prayers
- Grade 4: Apostles Creed, Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, Sacraments
- Grade 5: The Rosary & Acts of Faith, Hope and Love
- Grade 6: Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Nicene Creed

Special Circumstances

Parents must make the religious education coordinator aware of any medical conditions, physical restrictions, or allergies so that each child will be healthy and safe while with us during any programs. This would include changes throughout the year. In certain cases, a parent may be asked to stay with a child.

It would be very helpful if parents would make us aware of learning differences or other circumstances in the family that would help the catechist better serve the need of the child. This information would be kept confidential. In some cases, a parent may be asked to stay with a child.

Visitors

While we would love to be able to welcome visitors, there are legal and safety issues which prevent us from doing so.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND SIBLINGS WHO ARE NOT ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM WITH YOUR CHILD ON ANY DAY.

Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to assist with hall monitoring. If your junior or senior high school child needs service hours, they can volunteer. We need hall monitors for the spiritual center vestibule and spiritual center hall. If you could donate some time, it would be greatly appreciated.

Hall monitors must attend a one-time VIRTUS child sexual abuse awareness class and obtain a criminal background check (CBC) which is updated every 3 ½ years. Volunteers wear a tag indicating that the CBC has been performed and that the person is a safe adult. Please call the Religious Education office for more information.

Specific Summer Intensive Program Policies

Attendance

Children are expected to be in attendance **every day of the ten day program and for the entire four hours each day**. We can allow only one (1) excused absence with a doctor's note. In the case of absence due to illness, makeup work will be assigned. No other absences will be

accepted, and the program will not be considered completed if there is more than one excused absence.

- Children are allowed ONE ABSENCE ONLY due to sickness or injury and the child must return with a doctor's note, even if it is a sore throat, cold, etc. This strict policy is in place because the program is extremely intensive- on some days, 3 chapters are covered! Please do not ask for special circumstances.
- Please do not ask to take your child out of the program early on any given date. Doctor's appointments, etc. should be made at another time. Leaving early will constitute a day out.

Arrival

Park your car in a designated space and escort your child/ren through the doors leading to the Theater. Children should be in the theater by **8:30AM**. Please walk them in or have a designated adult walk your child into the building. Please do not drop them off in the parking lot or at the curb. You must be certain an authorized adult is in the theater.

Dismissal

When picking up your child/ren, park in the church parking lot and come into the theater to pick up your child/ren promptly at **12:30PM**. Enter on the south side of the theater, sign your child out and then exit on the north side of the theater.

If someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up your child/ren, permission must be given in writing on the permission slips provided. Children will be released to persons over 18 only with the proper ID.

If someone is not on your authorized list of people who may pick your child up, please see the Leader that day.

Food

Please send a healthy snack with your child each day. Healthy snacks include fruit, veggies, granola bars, pretzels or cheese-its (no cake or candy). A bottle of water (no sugary drinks) should also be sent. Place the snack and bottle of water in a bag or container with your child's name and grade clearly marked on it. Gum is not permitted.

Homework

Your child will have a short homework assignment each evening. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to help the child/ren to memorize the prayers in the textbook and to complete the one **page review sheet each day (is this still accurate?)**.

General Policies Applicable to Catechists

All catechists, aides and substitutes must attend a one-time VIRTUS child sexual abuse awareness class and obtain a criminal background check (CBC), which is updated every 3 ½ years. Catechists and volunteers wear a tag that indicates that the CBC has been performed and that the person is a safe adult. Please call the Religious Education office for more information.

All catechists should be in the process of full catechist certification. Aides, substitutes, and facilitators do not have to be in this process, but it is highly encouraged. All adult certification is designed to benefit the children as it includes spirituality, classroom management, methodology, as well as enrichment in core areas of the Catholic faith.

Catechists must try to obtain their own substitute if they cannot come to a session. The best substitute would be a session aide. Catechists should not cancel the class without first calling the Religious Education office. If a person desires to be a regular substitute for a class, this would be optimal, however this substitute would need to be vetted.

Catechists should be here on time, if not early, never leave the children unattended (person must be vetted and over 18 years old), and never dismiss the class early. This policy, of course, is meant for the safety of the children.

Catechists should report all injuries that occur during class, no matter how small, to the Religious Education Office.