



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PARENT HANDBOOK

Kindergarten, Grades 1-8,
RCIC, Sacramental Prep,
Confirmation Candidates Grades 8-12

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The Office of Catechetics collaborates with other diocesan offices in order to ensure that children, young people and adults have the opportunity to deepen their faith and grow in a more profound understanding of all that God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – has said and done for the sake of our salvation.

Catechesis, also called religious education, is an essential element of the mission of the Church. The aim of catechesis is “to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 4).

From the beginning, the followers of Jesus Christ have responded to the Lord’s command to “go...and make disciples” by proclaiming the Gospel message throughout the world. “Catechesis is the word used to describe this essential ministry of the Church through which the teachings of Christ have been passed on to believers throughout the ages.” (National Directory for Catechesis, 6).

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt. 28:19-20).

from http://arlingtondiocese.org/religioused/religious_ed.php

Letter from the Pastor

Dear Parents,

Thank you for enrolling your children in our program of Religious Education. The formation of our children is the most important work of the parish. Often you might hear that our children are the future of our Church; I want to say to you today that our children are the present, and their knowledge of their Faith is the one thing that will make them aware of Christ's presence in their lives.

Please consider taking advantage of our expanding adult education programs to help you in your primary task of educating your children in our beliefs. Our program exists to help you in this work; you can only give what you already have, but we can always learn more. Part of the sacred duty of being a parent is teaching daughters and sons to know, love and serve God. To set them on the right path to live eternal life forever after this world by our example.

Far too many people leave the decision of religion for the children to make. What sense is there in that? Are not the voices of the world too loud, too attractive and deceptive? As adults, we have often learned the hard way and find ourselves in situations that are hard to carry. Do our children have to make the same mistakes? Or is formation in Christ a powerful grace, a set of values which allow us to make the right decisions in difficult times? To choose love rather than hatred, to be confident when confronted by evil, this armor of Christ which strengthens and protects us as a community?

I was recently told by a teen that he just didn't get the whole "religion thing." He didn't feel that he was being served well by it: "I'm just not getting anything." I explained that religion's purpose wasn't for us to *get* something. "Well, then, what good is it?" he asked.

This question lies at the heart of the purpose of why we are here as a Church. The Church gathers around the throne of God in eternity simply to give thanks and praise. To *give*. To God who has *already* given us everything. What if I were to tell you that God has *already* given everything to us, even his own Son – and that there is no longer any need to "get" more? That our life in the Church is actually a growing in our understanding of who we already are, called by Christ, in Christ... that our religious education is a growing in our baptismal identity to know God and to know our place with him? The sacred Mysteries have already taken place, now we contemplate and grow from them. We can't get more if we already have everything (Cf. Jn 17:8-10, 22-26).

The only thing which could possibly constitute a deficiency is *our* lack of faith, our lack of knowledge, our lack of faithfulness. There can be no deficiency in God, nor in the gifts he offers. We pray, we study to perfect our ability to understand this "religion thing."

"The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many," he said (Mk 11:45). And at the Last Supper, after washing his disciples' feet, he put down the towel and said, *"Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you must also do"* (Jn 13:12-15).

Let us recommit this coming year to growth and simplicity, to charity and forgiveness. As we gather as one family to educate our young, help us to help one another in this enterprise to reveal God in a way that is fitting and pleasing to his glory.

God bless you.

Fr. Dan Rooney

Message from the Religious Education Office

Dear Parents,

The constant challenge facing parents is to make their Catholic faith relevant and contemporary. Parents must willingly adapt the Gospel while remaining true to the teachings of Jesus Christ. The challenges of adapting the message of the Gospel has been met by the likes of St. Paul and his apostleship to the Gentiles as well as Archbishop Fulton Sheen and his television evangelization of America in the 1950's. Parents want to pass on their Catholic faith to their children. The challenge is how to best use the available opportunities and resources. The secular world has effectively learned to use television, movies, internet, telephones, fashion, education and other means to influence the beliefs, values and perceptions of children and adults. These same mediums can also be effectively used for evangelization.

A Catholic culture should permeate your family. It should be the center from which each family member effectively and morally solves problems, maximizes opportunities and integrates all experiences into a dynamic and spiritual spiral of Christian growth.

We urge you to use the book, *Catholic Prayer for Catholic Families*. Read and discuss it regularly, pray the Parent's Prayer and follow the guidelines. Remember that "to help your child develop a life-long practice of prayer, it is important to set an example through your own prayer life." (*Catholic Prayer for Catholic Families*, 5)

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Catechists, Assistant Catechists, Prayer-Aides Office Assistants,

Substitute Catechists

Activity Center Catechist Office: 540-373-6491 Ext. 218

St. Mary Religious Education Program Policies and Procedures

Kindergarten

God Loves Us

Using colorful art and photos in weekly lessons children are presented with the four pillars of the church: Creed, Sacraments Commandments and Prayer.

Grades 1-8

Christ Our Life Series

“*Christ Our Life 2009*, utilizes a spiral curriculum that allows for continuous growth of faith in the students in both scope and depth. With focus on Scripture, the content blends core beliefs: Creed, Sacraments, Commandments and Prayer. Each chapter includes opportunities for prayer, a family features to encourage parental involvement, Catholic social teaching, multicultural artwork and hands-on activities.

Each student book is a worktext with 25 core chapters and 5-14 supplementary liturgical lessons. A Moment with Jesus in every chapter focuses on the spiritual life of the children. Prayer is integrated throughout. Multi-cultural art and appealing graphics give the books a contemporary look. Family Feature and Building Family Faith sections offer ideas and activities to connect faith and family and reinforce learning at home. Each chapter includes review and chapter summaries. Student books include punch-outs and pullouts.” Fall 2010 catalog of Communication Center

Series is used by Grades 1-8 students.

RCIC (Rite of Christian Initiation for Children)

Grade school students, who have not received any sacraments, are introduced to Jesus, the basics of the Catholic Faith and prepared for the sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation).

Sacramental Preparation

Students are presented with a summary of the Catholic Faith and Catholic Doctrine. It is a catch up for baptized but un-catechized students. Students are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and if necessary, Confirmation.

Confirmation Preparation

Students are presented with a summary of the Catholic Faith and Catholic Doctrine in an age appropriate way. They are prepared to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

Daily Class Schedule

MONDAY	4:45 - 6:00 pm Grades K-8
MONDAY	6:30 - 7:45 pm Grades 1-2
	RCIC, Sacramental Prep, Confirmation Prep, Yr I, Grades 9-12
TUESDAY	4:45 - 6:00 pm Grades K-8
TUESDAY	6:30 - 7:45 pm Grades K-8
	Confirmation Prep, Yr II, Grades 9-12
TUESDAY	6:00 - 7:15 pm Grades K-8 (HOLY CROSS ACADEMY)
WEDNESDAY	4:45 - 6:00 pm Grades K-8
WEDNESDAY	6:30 - 7:45 pm Grades K-8
THURSDAY	4:45 - 6:00 pm Grades 1-8

Fees

Fee A. By July 31, Fee B. August Fee C. September,

\$45 per student

\$50 per student

\$60 per student

\$100 for 3 or more students

\$125 for 3 or more students

\$175 for 3 or more students

Fees are due at time of registration unless other arrangements are made through the Religious Education Office. We do not accept debit or credit cards.

The registration fee for home taught children \$20 per child.

There is a \$20.00 fee for Year I Confirmation candidates for Confirmation workbooks.

There is a \$50 fee for Year II Confirmation candidates. It covers the retreat, facilitator fee, food and Confirmation robe.

There is a \$20.00 fee for Year II Reconciliation and First Communion candidates. This fee covers Penance and First Communion workbooks.

Refund

Refunds for registration, textbooks, Grade 2 workbooks and Confirmation fees will be granted on a case by case basis.

Inclement Weather

We follow the inclement weather directives of Holy Cross Academy.

Listen to B101.5, visit www.fredericksburg.com or call the Religious Education Office at 540-373-6491.

You might also receive an automated telephone call from the Religion Education office.

Parental Involvement

As stated in the documents of Vatican II, "...As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must, therefore, be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education" (Cf. VAT. II Declaration on Christian Education, n. 3: (1965).

We will do all that is necessary to support the parents as primary teachers of the faith to their children.

Home Teaching

If you opt to teach your child at home, please come to the Religious Education Office for further details.

Special Needs Children

We will work with you, your child and their Catechist to meet your child's special needs or sacramental preparation for Grades K-12.

Volunteers

Our program can not be run without your help. We need catechists, assistant catechists, prayer aides, substitute catechists and office volunteers. We will be glad to work with your schedule so that you can help.

For those new to the program, the catechists are responsible for teaching the class and the assistants help the catechist with lessons, attendance, projects, etc. Substitute catechists fill in for the catechists and may specify the grade they would like to substitute for. The office volunteers answer the phone, take messages, collect attendance sheets, etc.

All volunteers must complete mandatory diocesan paperwork including a background check and attend a Virtus Seminar.

Catechists will be required to attend a training session at the beginning of the year. Three additional training sessions are offered during the year.

Saturday Vigil/Sunday Mass

It is an obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. It is a vital part of the religious formation of all, regardless of age. It is essential that Catholic children participate in the liturgical life of the parish through weekly attendance at Mass.

Our Mass times are as follows:

Saturday Vigil (for Sunday)

5:00 PM and 7:00 PM

Sunday

7:00 AM, 8:30 AM, 10:30 AM, 12:30 PM

2:00 PM (Spanish), 5:00 PM

10:30 AM at Holy Cross Academy

Prayers

Guidelines for the memorization of devotional and liturgical prayers have been set up by the Diocese. Keep in mind the family is where the rote teaching of these prayers is to take place. We ask that parents take the responsibility of making prayer an integral part of family living. Your child will also be saying prayers in class each week and a prayer-aide will be listening to them and reporting their progress to the catechist. Please help your child learn the required prayers each year. Children are required to learn prayers in English.

Fall/Spring Confession

We have scheduled confessions for Religious Education classes during Advent and Lent. Confession is recommended every three months.

Attendance

PARENTS ARE ASKED TO BRING THEIR KINDERGARTEN THROUGH SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN TO THE CLASSROOM AND PICK THEM UP THERE. WE HAVE A SECURITY SYSTEM IN THE ACTIVITY CENTER AND HOLY CROSS ACADEMY. THE INSIDE DOORS WILL BE LOCKED DURING CLASS TIME. IN ORDER TO ENTER THE BUILDING, YOU WILL NEED TO BE BUZZED IN. CHILDREN IN GRADES K-6 WILL NOT BE ADMITTED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

Any student who is late should report to the Office before going to class.

We ask that you make every effort to have your children in class each week and on time. Our classes are built on each other and carry a central focus throughout the year. RE attendance should take precedence over all extra curricular activities, especially sports. Students who are preparing for a sacrament are required to attend 75% of the scheduled classes to be considered for the reception of the sacraments.

If your child has five consecutive absences, we will notify you to discuss whether your child will remain in the program.

A parent/guardian is requested to call the Religious Education Office (373-6491) or Holy Cross Academy at (286-1600) to report that a student will not be able to attend class. We will call to check on those students who are absent. You may call the Religious Education Office the day after your child attends class to find out what was covered and their homework assignment.

If early dismissal is necessary, notify the catechist when bringing your child to class and let the office volunteer know. Parents are asked not to go to the classroom to pick up their child. The office volunteer will bring your child to you.

Students must be picked up on time. Our program is run by volunteers and they need to leave immediately after class is over. After 8:00 p.m., the Religious Education Office at St. Mary will be locked and students will be escorted to the Church Office to be picked up.

If your child is attending Religious Education class at Holy Cross Academy, be aware of the heavy traffic on Route 17 and pick up your child on time so that our volunteers can leave.

STUDENTS WHO ARE PREPARING FOR A SACRAMENT ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND 75% OF THE SCHEDULED CLASSES TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT.

Books and Supplies

Students will be issued books, which should be brought to class each week. The current price of the book will be charged to replace a lost book. Please have your child bring a pen and/or pencil to class each week. All other supplies will be provided.

Learning Environment

Students will be expected to follow the rules and regulations. Courtesy, cooperation and respect are expected from students towards each other and the catechist. Care must be taken of classroom property including tables, chairs, walls, projects, etc. Cell phones should be used for emergency purposes only. No texting during class time; all cell phones are to be turned off. iPods should not be played in class. St. Mary is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones or iPods.

Student Regulations

- Dress appropriately—no hats or visors.
- Students should act respectfully toward all adults and use their last name to address them.
- No food or drink should be brought into the classroom. Snacks will be provided at catechist's discretion.
- No chewing gum.
- No toys or games.
- Students may not write on chalk or dry-erase boards unless it is for the purpose of the lesson.
- Cell phones should be used for emergency purposes only. No iPods in class.
- St. Mary is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones or iPods.

Disruptive Behavior

- First step: Catechist will speak to the child in class.
- Second step: The catechist will call parents and notify them of the situation and ask that they speak to the child.
- Third step: A parent and child will meet with the Director of Religious Education in order to resolve the situation
- Fourth step: The parent will attend class with their child.

Progress Reports

Directives from the Diocese call for specific teachings, doctrine and prayers at each grade level. We adhere to these guidelines and issue Progress Reports in January and May so that you may determine how your child is doing.

Change of Address and /or Phone Number

Please notify the Religious Education Office if your home address, e-mail address or phone number(s) change during the year. This is especially important for those receiving Penance, Communion and Confirmation as we mail out meeting notices and important information during the year.

**WE MUST BE ABLE TO REACH YOU BY PHONE AT ALL TIMES
WHILE YOUR CHILD IS ON ST. MARY PROPERTY.**