

*ST. JOSEPH'S  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
PROGRAM*



PARENTS/GUARDIANS HANDBOOK

### ***A PARENT'S/GUARDIAN'S PRAYER***

Lord, I give you thanks and praise for the beautiful family with which you have blessed me. May I be present for my child as Jesus creates in him/her the desire to listen to His words and understand His message. May I instill in my child a willing and obedient heart eager to say "YES" and submit to His ways. May my devotion to the Lord encourage him/her to also develop a deep and lasting relationship with the Lord. May we pray together to nurture his/her faith and guide him/her on their journey with the Lord. May the Holy Spirit's guidance help me to teach him/her mercy, kindness, truth, service to others, and praise and honor to the Lord always. I ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen



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# *WELCOME TO THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM*

## *A Letter from the director...*

*Today's Religious Education sessions are probably quite different than those you experienced as a child. Please take a few minutes to read this booklet which will provide a brief summary about the St. Joseph's Religious Education Program (REP).*

*The mission of the church is to bring God's children into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ in which life at all ages is transformed by actively and consciously living according to the Gospel values. St. Joseph's REP supports this mission as well as the family in its role as the principal educator. Christian Doctrine is taught through the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Sacraments of the Catholic Church as well as Church teachings.*

*While learning about our faith continues to be important, the emphasis is now more appropriately focused on faith formation. Accordingly, students are exposed to various teaching methods and resources in addition to the catechism, while focusing on our call to serve others. The program provides the two components required to accomplish this mission as well as support for the family.*

**Education:** *Teaching information in an educational setting. A method of **Lectionary based catechesis** (Grades 2-8) is primarily utilized which contains current Church teaching presented in lessons that are based on the Sunday Mass readings. Weekly booklets along with supplemental books and materials, geared to each age group, contain the readings accompanied by stories and activities designed to help the children relate the Gospel values to "real every day life". Grade 1 uses a different series that provides a textbook which is normally kept on site.*

*Depending on the students' ages, different activities in each lesson include the following:*

- \* **The Bible**
- \* **The life of Christ through the Gospels**
- \* **Catholic Teaching and Doctrine**
- \* **Weekend Worship**
- \* **Real-Life Moral Choices**
- \* **Social Justice and Service**
- \* **Connecting personal stories with the Gospels**
- \* **Sharing personal life experiences and stories**
- \* **Family Life Curriculum**

*The children are also involved in service activities which help them to understand the meaning of living out our faith. The various forms of prayer are also an essential part of every session. Today's Religious Education sessions include methods that employ cognitive/head, affective/heart, and experiential/sense modalities. This approach takes into account the whole person in understanding their faith to provide significant insight and opportunities to integrate their faith into their everyday lives.*

*The teachings of Christ and our Church are presented truthfully and authentically. **Parents/Guardians are asked to reinforce these teachings at home to encourage their children's desire to experience God's love, goodness, grace, and truth and to have their family participate in Sunday worship.***

***Formation:*** *Providing opportunities allowing our children to become formed in their faith and actively live and share their faith through service and example. It seeks to connect their faith into our Sunday worship using the Bible as well as activities. **The program seeks to develop Christian values and spiritual growth which enables them to act as Christian disciples.***

*Our program provides opportunities for students in all grades to engage in various prayer experiences, as well as hands-on service activities. As students enter the 7th grade and begin to prepare for Confirmation, service and faith sharing become an even a more integral part of the program.*

*Diocesan guidelines are adhered to and every effort is made to continuously evaluate and revise the program as needed. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to review lessons and class materials with their child/children, as well as attend weekly mass. This practice conveys the message that religious education is an important part of both the children's and their parent's/guardian's lives.*

*Yours in Christ,*

*Jim Jungels*

Director of Religious Education

## CLASS SCHEDULE AND PLACEMENT

### Religious Education Schedule

Sunday	Tuesday	Thursday	*Summer School
↓	↓	↓	↓
<b>10:45am ~ 12:15pm</b> Grades 1 - 6	<b>5:00pm ~ 6:15pm</b> Grades 1 - 6	<b>4:00pm ~ 5:15pm</b> Grades 1 - 4	<b>9:00am ~ 12:00pm</b> Grades 3 - 6
	↓	↓	
	<b>7:15pm ~ 8:45pm</b> Grades 7&8	<b>6:00pm ~ 7:15pm</b> Grades 1 - 8	

**\*Summer School involves parent participation and requires the child to attend each day of the Summer School Program, 4 Sunday sessions throughout the year, and a completion of a family service project.**

## **CLASS SESSIONS**

Religious Education classes are provided for children in Grades 1 through 8 and held in the Parish Hall and Church buildings. Classes will normally be 75 minutes in length and meet weekly. Classes begin at the end of September and conclude in May. Teachers will provide work for students who are absent. Students will be expected to turn in the completed lesson the next week to receive credit.

## **CLASS PLACEMENT**

All placements for classes are made by the Religious Education Office. Registration materials are processed, and children are assigned to requested sessions in the order in which the completed paperwork is received. Every effort is made to limit the size of the classes to ensure a greater interaction and opportunity for faith sharing between teachers and children. Placement of students may be changed during the year to optimize class size or student interactions. Weekly attendance will be marked accordingly.

Please make your children's religious education a priority. To satisfy requests in the event of a teacher shortage, materials and guidance will be provided so that lessons may be completed by the students with their parents/guardians at home. All completed work must be forwarded to the Religious Education Office.

***Attendance at periodic meetings with other Home School students is required along with a family service project and participation in their group's Family Mass.***

**Please note: Home School is not an option for students in grades 1, 2, 7, and 8 due to the nature of the sacramental preparation programs.**

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

The following sections provide brief descriptions of the various aspects of our program. The elements were designed to complement each other, and accomplish our goal of providing children with an experience that is both ***educational and formational***.

Please call the Director or the Religious Education Assistant with any questions regarding the purpose or specifics of any part of our program.

### **Regular Attendance at Weekly Classes:**

Regular attendance is essential for meaningful learning and faith sharing to take place. The Diocese determines the number of classes required to be considered a full class year.

Many of our sessions will begin with a group activity such as a song, prayer or discussion and finish with individual class lessons.

- \* **Absences** - Parent/Guardian is required to notify the Religious Education Office and the teacher of any absence. Please call 874-3141 ext. 227 **prior to** scheduled class time.

**Students are expected to make up any work which is missed.** Students with **MORE THAN 3 ABSENCES** who do not make up missed work on a timely basis, will be required, at the discretion of the Director, to **repeat the grade.**

- \* **Late Arrivals** - Parent/guardian must complete a ***Late Arrival Form*** (available on the front desk) and present it to the child's teacher in the classroom.
- \* **Early Dismissals** - Parent/guardian must complete an ***Early Dismissal Form*** (available on the front desk) and present it to the child's teacher **before the child may be released** from class prior to the regularly scheduled dismissal time.

### **Participation at Weekend Mass:**

Participation in a weekend Mass on a regular basis is the **MOST CRUCIAL** part of our program. Eucharist is at the center of our lives as Catholic Christians, and the Church obliges us to actively participate each weekend and on Holy Days of Obligation.

The inclusion of the weekend Mass readings is an integral part of our curriculum. It is a good reinforcement to help to familiarize your child with the readings and can help them to be more attentive during Mass. Through participation in the weekly Liturgy, children learn about their faith and how to be a Catholic Christian. It is also an important part of your child's formation in being a part of the larger Church community.

Children who have celebrated their First Eucharist need to be nourished continuously by receiving the Body or Blood of Christ. Sharing this wonderful and loving contact with the Lord provides them with strength in Spirit. Attending Mass also provides spiritual guidance as they prepare for Confirmation and their journey through adulthood. Weekly classes are based on the coming Sunday's readings to help children more fully understand the Mass and its various elements.

### **FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM**

#### **Benziger Family Life Program:**

The Benziger *Family Life* Program, mandated by the Diocese of Metuchen, is currently integrated in our regular Religious Education curriculum for Grades 1 through 8.

The *Family Life* curriculum provides a comprehensive moral catechesis and addresses complex issues of contemporary family life within the context of the Catholic faith. In every grade level, *Family Life* implements child safety education, promotes virtuous living, and enriches the family's sense of Catholic Identity.

All questions and concerns may be address in the Religious Education Office or call the DRE at 874-3141 ext 224

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

### **First Reconciliation:**

- \* Normally celebrated during Lent of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade year.

### **First Eucharist:**

- \* Normally celebrated in spring of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade year at one of the regularly scheduled Sunday Liturgies after Easter.
- \* The Diocese of Metuchen requires **two years** of enrollment in Religious Education classes prior to the celebration of these sacraments.

### **Confirmation :**

- \* Normally celebrated during the spring of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.

Students must complete **two consecutive** years of classes.

**Prior to** Confirmation, continuous religious education through attendance in class at all grade levels is expected.

In addition to class work, these programs encourage and emphasize the role of the family in this process. Family Masses, workshops and other activities are incorporated into all of our sacramental preparation programs. Details are made available at parent meetings during the year. All families are expected to participate in weekly Masses to further prepare their children for celebrating their upcoming sacraments.

**Active and enthusiastic involvement by parents/guardians is encouraged to reinforce the promises made at your child's baptism.** It is a wonderful way to share your faith with your child.

As principal educators of your child, you are encouraged to contact the Religious Education Office with any questions or concerns regarding the readiness of your child to celebrate these Sacraments.

## FORMAL PRAYERS

The Diocese of Metuchen guidelines indicate that children should memorize the following prayers. Learning formal prayers is a very important part of the education component of our faith. The list below provides the prayers to be learned. **The most effective method for children to learn the prayers is to say them with their families at home and at Mass.** Prayers will also be practiced and reinforced by the teacher.

Grade	Prayers to Learn
<b>Kindergarten</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Sign of the Cross</li> <li>* Prayer before Meals</li> </ul>
<b>First Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Sign of the Cross</li> <li>* Prayer before Meals</li> <li>* Glory Be</li> </ul>
<b>Second &amp; Third Grades</b>	All of the prayers listed above, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Hail Mary</li> <li>* Prayer of Sorrow</li> <li>* Simple responses at Mass</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	All of the prayers listed above, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The Apostle's Creed</li> <li>* The Ten Commandments</li> <li>* The Beatitudes</li> <li>* The Rosary</li> </ul>
<b>Fifth and Sixth Grades</b>	All of the prayers listed above, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The responses at Mass</li> </ul>
<b>Seventh &amp; Eighth Grades</b>	All of the prayers listed above, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The Confiteor</li> <li>* The Nicene Creed</li> <li>* The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit</li> </ul>

## **FAMILY LITURGIES**

*(Schedule is provided with the class calendar)*

**Liturgy** is a significant element of our total program and serves as the basis of our curriculum. Accordingly, **ALL** students are strongly encouraged to attend and participate regularly.

Children in the Religious Education Program help in the preparation of the Family Liturgies. They also serve as lectors or greeters, sing in the choir, dress the altar, and bring up the gifts. All students may volunteer for any of the duties included in the Mass.

Parents/guardians and their children are encouraged to participate in these meaningful Family Liturgies and to serve as leaders in the Family Mass that their group is assigned.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

A number of opportunities exist through regular classes, youth ministry, and service requirements for students to participate in activities at other locations.

A completed standardized **Diocesan Permission Form** signed and returned by the parent/guardian to the Religious Education Office prior to the field trip date is required in order for the student to be permitted to participate in any parish-sponsored, off premises' activity. A designated number of **adult chaperones** for each trip is also required.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

St. Joseph's Religious Education Program believes it is essential to keep parents/guardians updated with regard to their child's performance.

This information will be communicated by the teacher through on-going progress reports both formal and informal and/or personal contact. Developing a connection with your child's teacher is the most effective line of communication. The Religious Education Program will encourage that development. Positive reinforcement goes a long way in boosting a child's self esteem and motivation.

## **STEWARDSHIP & SERVICE ACTIVITIES**

***"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." I Peter 4:10***

A significant element of our mission is to help children learn the importance of sharing their time, talents, and material resources with others; especially the less fortunate. Several opportunities are available at age-appropriate levels and are listed in the bulletin and available on the Parish website. For questions, please contact the Director of Social Concerns.

## **YOUTH MINISTRY**

Youth Ministry is a separate program outside of Religious Education. It is a ministry that fosters the spiritual growth of teens (7th through 12th grade) as well as building their own identity within our parish. If you are interested in participating in Youth Ministry, please contact the Director of Youth Ministry for more information.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS**

**Ensuring the safety of all of our children and their health is of the utmost importance.** All students should be made aware of and follow the rules and procedures listed below:

- \* Fire drills will be conducted for each session.
- \* Running is not permitted in the building.
- \* Students may not play in the toddler area or touch the toys.
- \* Students must sit at their designated table before and after class.

### ***Parents of children requiring an EpiPen:***

**For those children who have severe allergies requiring an EpiPen, parents are required to stay on the premises during class time to administer epinephrine for those children that require it.** Please be aware of this as you choose the class you would like your child to attend.

## **CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

### ***Courtesy, Consideration, and Respect***

- \* **Respect** for the teacher, fellow students, and Parish property is required at all times.
- \* **Proper attire** must be worn to all classes and special activities. Hats off in the building please!
- \* Students are expected to **be on time for class**. It is disruptive to the entire class and unfair to the teacher when a student arrives late.
- \* All students are required to **have a folder** in which their class assignments, homework and any information to be given to parents/guardians from teachers or St. Joseph's staff are to be kept. This folder and any text book or class material **MUST** be brought to class every week.  
  
**Parents/guardians - please review the contents** of your child's folder each week. NOTE: *First grade uses a textbook which is often kept in the classroom.*
- \* **No food or drinks** of any kind or chewing gum are permitted in the Parish buildings, before, during or after Religious Education classes.
- \* **No Cell phones** are permitted to be on during class time. The teacher will collect a phone if it is in use.
- \* **No running, ball playing, etc.** is prohibited in the Parish Hall to avoid the possibility of injury.
- \* **Students may not enter the babysitting area;** it has been designated for the little ones.

**Parents/guardians-please inform us of special student needs or concerns**, such as medical, dietary, learning, etc. This information will be kept confidential and is important in helping us to work effectively with your child.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

**The guidelines and rules outlined in this handbook apply to all students attending CCD classes in the Parish Hall and the Church.**

Parents/guardians are asked to take time before classes begin to review the classroom expectations and, if necessary, explain the guidelines and rules in this handbook with their children.

Most of these rules are merely common sense and a reinforcement of lessons already taught. A gentle reminder to treat others the way they want others to treat them goes a long way!

- \* If a child disrupts class, displays inappropriate behavior or language, or is disrespectful to a teacher, the teacher will make every effort to resolve the issue.
- \* If the teacher determines that the student is not responding to his/her efforts to resolve the issue, arrangements may be made with the Director of Religious Education to speak with the student personally. This strategy usually works well and is all that may be needed.
- \* If the student's inappropriate behavior continues or is more serious, the parent/guardian will be notified of the problem by either the teacher or Director of Religious Education to discuss the issue.
- \* If none of these steps is successful, the student will not be permitted to participate in class without the presence of a parent/guardian.

## **DIOCESAN POLICIES**

Policies set forth by the Diocese are closely adhered to and kept current. These policies involve subjects such as curriculum, scheduling, health and safety concerns.

The following are policies which parents/guardians should be aware:

### **Class Requirement:**

The Diocese determines the number of classes required to be considered a full class year. All students must attend between 28 and 32 weekly sessions throughout the year and are expected to make up any work which is missed.

### **Drug Enforcement:**

The Diocese of Metuchen, the local Police Department, and the County Prosecutor's Office have entered into an agreement concerning drug enforcement policies. This agreement covers, but is not limited to, controlled dangerous substances, undercover operations, searches and arrests. St. Joseph's REP, in cooperation with the Vicariate for Education in the Diocese of Metuchen, strictly adheres to all policies set forth in this agreement. Copies of these directives are available at the Office of Religious Education, and the following are intended only as brief summaries of the complete Diocesan Directives.

### **Child Abuse:**

Diocesan policies concerning the reporting of suspected child abuse (see detailed explanation included in the diocesan manual in the RE office) or at the diocesan website <http://www.diometuchen.org/deptsministries/child-and-youth-protection/>

NJ State Statutes require that the Division of Youth & Family Services (DYFS) be notified immediately if a catechist or director suspects a child is being or has been abused.

## **Child Safety Procedures**

Bishop Bootkoski has mandated that all parishes in the Diocese of Metuchen implement the guidelines and procedures outlining child safety which include fingerprinting, filling out a volunteer packet and completing a VIRTUS training program.

VIRTUS is a national organization that identifies the best practices and programs to allow individuals and organizations to better control risk, and improve the lives of all who interact with the church. More information about this program may be obtained through the diocese or at their website:

**[www.VIRTUS.org](http://www.VIRTUS.org)**

### **Based upon the Diocesan guidelines:**

- \* We are morally, ethically and legally obligated to do everything we can to protect children.
- \* All classes will meet at the parish facilities.
- \* All policies and practices will be strictly enforced to provide a safe environment in which our children may learn and our Catechists may teach. All staff members and volunteers are required to undergo a criminal background check and be trained in child abuse prevention, as well as complete a volunteer packet.

It is understood and appreciated that some policies and practices may be inconvenient, but we cannot emphasize strongly enough how important it is that families and church work together to provide a safe environment in which our catechists can share the Good News of Jesus Christ with our children.

***Complete copies of all policies  
are available at the  
Office of Religious Education***

## **ARRIVAL**

**Students should not arrive more than 10 minutes before class starts.**

- \* Teachers and staff have specific responsibilities for class preparation and cannot be responsible for students' supervision if they arrive early.
- \* If a student must arrive early, he/she must be accompanied by an adult who will stay with them until class begins.

**All students are expected to report to the Parish Hall BEFORE class**

- \* Students should **SIT** at the table designated for their class.
- \* Teachers will lead students to classroom at the scheduled time.
- \* No student should be in the Parish Hall, any classroom or the church unless an adult is present.
- \* Do not block traffic or park in the fire lanes.
- \* Please be aware of children entering and leaving the parking area
- \* **LATE ARRIVAL:** If arriving late, parent/guardian must park in the lot and walk children into the building to sign them in. Someone will be at the table at the entrance in the Parish Hall or seek assistance from one of the volunteers.

## **DISMISSAL**

### **Grades 1 - 8:**

**All teachers, from both parts of the building, will lead students back to their designated table in the Parish Hall.**

- \* Students should **SIT** and wait for their parent/guardian or the designated adult responsible for taking him/her home.
- \* Students must be signed out.
- \* **NO ONE** may enter or exit through church doors.

### **DISMISSAL (continued)**

- \* Parents/guardians must escort students to cars. Students are not permitted to walk unattended into the parking area.
- \* **Only ONE ENTRANCE/EXIT** is used to pick up children from CCD to ensure that everyone entering or exiting is visible. This cannot be accomplished effectively if more than one entrance or exit is used. Drivers do not park your car at the curb; this is a FIRE ZONE.

**Grades 7 & 8—Tuesday Evening only** : Students may go directly outside but must wait at the curb to be picked up.

### **FIRE AND PARKING REGULATIONS**

The Borough of Millstone is mandated by the Franklin Township Fire Code, which requires that the “**Fire Lane**” - **yellow strip along the curb** - be honored and *vacated at all times* so that the building is accessible in case of fire or other emergency.

**ANY VIOLATION** is subject to fines.

**These rules must be followed when dropping off or picking up students.**

### **LATE PICK UP BY PARENT/GUARDIAN**

In the rare instance that the parent/guardian cannot pick up their child at the scheduled time, every effort will be made to reach the parent/guardian or the Emergency contacts. If no one can be reached, we are mandated for safety reasons to notify the State Police who will then take responsibility for the child.

***PLEASE*** call and leave a message on the Religious Education Office ext. 224 voice mail if you are running late or sending someone else to pick up your child. A staff member usually stays at least 30 minutes after class ends. If we know someone is coming for your child, we won't have to contact the police.

**SCHEDULE CHANGES & CLASS CANCELLATION**

**Telephone message will be updated:**

**908 - 874 - 3141- ext. 224 and 227**

The CCD Calendar is distributed and normally followed as planned. However, at times, changes need to be made to the schedule due to school calendar changes or other unanticipated events. Changes to the schedule of classes will be published in the Sunday bulletin and emailed to families.

**EMERGENCY CANCELLATION**

***If the Hillsborough Township Public Schools cancel classes or have an early dismissal, all Religious Education classes, both day and evening, will normally be cancelled.***

***CCD classes will NOT BE CANCELLED if schools have a delayed opening in the morning.***

**If classes are cancelled due to inclement weather or any other emergency situation, these steps will be put into action:**

- \* The telephone message on the above extensions will be updated.  
**Please do not call the Parish Office for this information.**
- \* If a parent/guardian wishes to speak to someone, they may leave a message on one of the above extensions; a return call will be made as soon as possible.
- \* Whenever possible , we will also contact families using their main e-mail address that you have given us.

**NOTE: Time permitting**, teachers will be contacted and advised to email or call their classes.

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:**

St. Joseph Parish Main Phone Number..... (908)874-3141  
 Jim Jungels, Director of Religious Education.....ext. 224  
 Maura Graber, Assistant.....ext. 227  
 Michelle Laffoon, Director of Social Concerns.....ext. 225  
 Chrystal Gibson, Director of Youth Ministry.....ext. 228  
 Carol Valone, Main Office Administrative Assistant.....ext. 221

Handbook Updated 1-9-2012