



St. Joseph Church
Religious Education Program
Parent Handbook

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Religious Education Program at St. Joseph's Church is to foster spiritual growth and development in all children of the parish, regardless of special needs or circumstances. The goal of the program is to teach the Roman Catholic tradition through prayer, worship, community and service to others.

The formative experience of parish religion classes complements, but does not replace, the family experience of worship at Mass.

A vital part of each student's spiritual life and growth as a Catholic is regular participation in the sacraments of the Church. All students are expected to attend Mass and participate in the liturgy each Sunday as well as Holy Days of Obligation.

*As Christians we are called
by virtue of our Baptism to live
the values of the Gospel
in Discipleship to Jesus.*



Welcome to St. Joseph Church

We are a small country parish with a big country heart. St. Joseph's is a parish of prayer, friendship, service, joy, forgiveness and compassion for one another.

We as a parish are centered in the celebration of the Eucharist, in which we welcome Jesus and anticipate His promised kingdom – the Kingdom of God.

This program teaches the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, upholds current documents, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and utilizes Diocesan programs.

St. Joseph Church is committed to offering the best parish-based Religious Education Program available.



Curriculum Text

Only Diocesan approved curriculum is used in our religious education programs. Please review your child's classroom text and follow along with your child throughout the year. Additional resources are available on the publisher's website.

Responsibilities

Administrative Responsibilities

The Pastor of the parish has the ultimate responsibility for all parish religious education. He oversees and guides the Parish Catechetical Leader. Both work closely together to ensure a quality religious education for the children of our parish. The Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) is responsible for supervising the catechetical ministry and sacramental preparations.

Parental Responsibilities

'Parents are the primary educators of the faith' GDC 255

Parents have the primary responsibility to educate their children. Through their words, guidance and example, parents form the child's first experience of faith and continue to be the child's most important faith teachers. Be sure to talk with your child about God and the Church, and spend time as a family in prayer. Be as involved as possible in what your child is learning in religion classes, and reinforce these lessons at home. Please become familiar with your child's textbooks and grade requirements, as well as the need to aid them in their class assignments and make-up work.



Parents should, therefore, view this program as an extension of the religious training received at home – not as a substitute for it.

Student Responsibilities

- The student must show respect for teachers, fellow students and school property. Any student who verbally or physically abuses another student or teacher, or causes damage to school property, will be suspended or expelled from the program after consultation and review.
- Students may not handle, use, or otherwise disturb the contents of the desks or other materials in the classroom. Respect for the personal property of others is required.
- No eating or drinking is permitted during the sessions (this includes chewing gum).
- Students must remember to bring their assigned textbooks (which include a Bible in some classes) to class each week. At the end of each class session, students are to take these books home.
- Students are required to follow the Attendance/Absentee and Homework/Make-Up Work policies outlined on page 9.
- No cell phones or electronics are permitted in the classroom.



Sacramental Programs

First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation encompass two years of formal classroom instruction. In addition to class time, there will be practice sessions, activities and special liturgies scheduled throughout the school year. Parents/guardians will be informed of these dates at the sacramental parent's meetings.

First Reconciliation / First Eucharist

First Reconciliation: The children receive this prior to First Eucharist.

First Eucharist: Children receive this sacrament sometime in May. A Jesus Day Retreat is part of this preparation process and will take place before this sacrament.

Confirmation

Confirmation: Candidates will receive this sacrament sometime in the spring. Participation in a Day of Retreat and other activities, separate from formal classroom instruction will be a necessary part of this formation process. Your child must attend Mass regularly.

Sponsors: These individuals must be 16 years of age or older and fully initiated and active members of the Catholic Church. If he or she is not a member of St. Joseph Parish, a sponsor certificate is required from his/her Parish. A parent may not serve as a sponsor. This responsibility to serve as a sponsor is a serious commitment. It should not be



taken lightly. A sponsor serves as a mentor and companion working with the candidate in their spiritual journey in preparation for Confirmation.

Program Policies

Attendance/Absences

PROGRAM

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Traditional grades 1-7	2
Confirmation Prep. 8 th	2*
Confirmation 9 th	2**
Summer Program	0
Family Program	0

* Class only – no absences for activities

**Attendance at the retreat is required.

Sports and other extracurricular activities are not acceptable excuses for absence from religious education. In the event of an absence, a written note from a parent must be sent with their child upon return to class. Only a written note is acceptable, please do not call. All make-up assignments must be completed.

Homework/Make-Up Work

Homework assignments are designed to reinforce work presented in class and may include written work, study assignments, projects, etc. Students will be given additional time during both the winter and spring breaks to complete any remaining make-up work. Failure to complete assignments and/or make up work may prevent your child from advancing to the next level of the program.



Arrival/Dismissal

In the interest of the safety of the children, we ask that all parents refrain from entering the school building when dropping off or picking up their children. Please contact the PCL to arrange for any special circumstances.

Early Dismissal

The student must provide a note from the parent prior to the start of class. The student will be dismissed by the teacher and will proceed to the PCL room.

Parking

Please adhere to Parking Procedures in registration packet.

Special Needs

Parents are required to inform the PCL about their children who have health issues, learning disabilities and special needs. Be sure to complete this information on the registration form. In addition, prior to the first day of class, you must notify the PCL of any special arrangements that may be necessary for your child (i.e. elevator use). All information provided will be kept confidential.

Food Allergies

Food allergies are a growing concern for children across the country. Even a miniscule amount of allergenic food is sufficient to cause a life-threatening reaction and inadvertent contact (via nose, eyes, mouth) can put a child in danger.

No food or drink of any kind are permitted during parish religious education programs. This includes foods that are considered “safe”.



Parents and guardians of highly allergic children **MUST** make known the special needs of their child to the PCL and catechist so that all precautions can be taken.

Dress Code

Appropriate attire is required of all Catechist and Religious Education students. The PCL reserves the right to dismiss a catechist or student with inappropriate apparel including, but not limited to, tee shirts or other clothing with slogans deemed contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

School Visitors

Other than students, Religious Education personnel, and the custodians, no persons are permitted in the halls, classrooms or restrooms during class time without the express authorization of the PCL. Students will be admitted to and dismissed from class through the main entrance of the school. For insurance and safety purposes, students are not allowed to bring guests with them to class.

Child Abuse

Child Abuse is of serious concern. Consistent with Diocesan policy and legal codes, parish catechetical staff has a moral and legal duty to comply with the law to ensure the welfare of a child. If a catechist/director suspects a child has been abused, New Jersey Statutes require that the Division of Youth and Family Services be notified immediately by calling toll free 1-877-NJ-ABUSE and that the Director of the Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection also be notified of the suspected abuse by calling (732)562-2413.



Drugs

Drugs are not allowed on school premises. If a student is found to be in possession of illegal drugs, the student will be detained until the police are notified.

A student will not be allowed to be driven home by anyone who is noticeably impaired. The PCL reserves the right to call the child's emergency number.

Crisis Management Plans

Fire Drills

Fire drills are required by law and are an important safety precaution. Fire drills will be conducted twice a year. All parents, students and staff will be informed of the dates prior to the drill. It is essential that when the signal is given *everyone* promptly evacuate the building by the prescribed routes as quietly as possible. *Absolute silence must be observed during fire drills at all times.* Students and teachers are instructed to become familiar with school exits and fire drill procedures.

Lock Downs/Evacuations

The High Bridge Elementary School Lock Down Procedure is currently in place. Local law enforcement is made aware of our presence at the school and our class schedule and times.

Enrollment

Registration

Only registered members of St. Joseph Church are permitted to enroll in our Religious Education Program. Registration



forms will be mailed to each family in the program to renew for the upcoming year. Forms are also available on the parish website. All enrolled families must re-register before the deadline date (to be announced in the spring). New registrants must contact the parish office for a Religious Education registration form as soon as they become enrolled parishioners. The parents of students who are new to our program are asked to provide documents of proof for any sacraments their child has received and any prior religious education their child has participated in.

Fees

Tuition for the program is currently \$95 for one child, and \$115 for families with two or more children. The registration fee includes cost of textbooks, supplies, school rental, custodial services, etc. No child shall be refused registration in the Religious Education Program due to inability to pay. Please contact the PCL if a financial problem exists. This information will be kept confidential.

School Hours

<u>Program</u>	<u>Times</u>	<u>Place</u>
Trad'l grades 1-7	9:00am-10:40am	HB Elem.
8 th grade	9:05am-10:50am	Upper Room
Confirmation	9:05am-10:50am	Parish Hall
Family	9:00am-10:30am	HB Elem
Summer	9:00am-12:30pm	Church



All programs receive a class schedule for the year.

Family Program will meet on the first Sunday of the month with the exception of holidays.

Summer Program is a two-week program which meets Monday Through Friday.

Class Cancellations

The Pastor and PCL will determine if classes will be canceled for inclement weather. In the event of cancellation, an e-mail will be sent out; please be sure your most updated email address is on file. You may also call the parish office at 908-638-6211 ext. 20 or access the parish website for cancellations.

Progress Reports

Progress reports will be issued two times during the school year, once in January and again in May. Parents are required to sign the reports and return to the Religious Education Office. If you have any questions regarding your child's report, please leave a message for the Catechist and/or the PCL at extension 18.

Student Records

All information is kept confidential. Permanent records for each family in the program will be kept on file in the Religious Education Office. Copies of the progress reports of each child are also kept on file until the child completes the program. In the event of a move or transfer, please notify the PCL for the required documents necessary for verification of attendance.



***The object of all catechesis is to put people into
communion and intimate relationship
with Jesus Christ***

National Directory for Catechesis

It is our hope that the children and parents in our program not only learn the tenets of our faith, but grow in relationship with Jesus Christ



Parent Acknowledgement Form

Provided signature form must be returned.

St. Joseph's Church reserves the right to revise this handbook as deemed necessary from time to time. Parents will be notified in the event of a change to the policies.