

St. Mark's Church
Religious Education Program



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Mission Statement

Our Parish Religious Education Program exists to support the parents of our children in their role as main educators in the faith of their family. The central purpose of our Religious Education Program is faith formation. Faith formation is an ongoing development of the whole person into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ and discipleship. In the Religious Education program the children learn about our faith through a series of different learning methods that includes: sacraments, morality, and prayer. Each class is an understanding of the gospel message of Jesus Christ; its application to their lives as Catholic Christians, and the teachings and traditions of our Church.

Our Religious Education Program offers a classroom education for all children beginning in Kindergarten (age 4) through Grade 8. We ask our whole parish community to pass on our Catholic tradition, by inviting adults to become Catechists. After prayer and study, our Catechists teach our children, educating for the mind, as well as the heart and the soul. Our classes are staffed with committed volunteers. The sessions are held on Sunday morning, Monday afternoon, Monday evening, and Tuesday afternoon.

Through family prayer, attendance at Sunday Liturgy, experiences of sacramental celebrations, and examples of everyday Christian living, families lay the foundation for their children's spiritual life. We strive to assist parents in this endeavor by providing a variety of learning experiences for their children, such as: formal classroom instruction, retreats, liturgical celebrations, prayer experiences; and Sacramental Preparation Sessions for parents. We hope to provide an environment in which all children can develop spiritually and morally.

Diana Zuna

Coordinator of Religious Education

Welcome to St. Mark's Religious Education Program

Our hope is that each child will have changing experiences of God's love at home and in class. This handbook will help familiarize you with our program. Please realize that the program is meant only to supplement your vocation as a parent. Children learn by example. We hope that all our Catholic parents reinforce the responsibilities of our faith by making sure that their children attend Sunday Mass regularly as a family.

Also, the family is encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance often and to pray each day together. As you minister to your children, be especially mindful of the following expectations, which are in keeping with the basic doctrines of the Catholic tradition.

Please plan to:

- Attend Mass weekly.
- Share your gifts of time, talent, and treasure.
- Keep connected as a church community.
- Make prayer and our faith an important part of your daily life.

By modeling these behaviors, you are setting the best possible example for your child. With the help of the parish staff, our Pastor Msgr. Flynn, catechists, volunteers, and you, the parent, we pledge to do our best to ensure a fruitful year of Religious Education for your child.

Parents Responsibilities

- Will be responsible for the faithful weekly attendance of their children at Religious Education classes;
- Will set a good example by attending Mass regularly with their children and by practicing Christian morals at home;
- Will notify the teacher or the Religious Education Coordinator in the case of a necessary absence;
- Will encourage and guide their children through home assignments;
- Will contact their child's teacher with any questions regarding class time, homework, behavior questions or possible misunderstandings;
- Will instill a positive attitude toward religious education as well as respect for the teachers and their children's peers; will pick up their children promptly at the close of classes and activities;
- Will attend parent meetings as scheduled during the year; if unable to attend, the parent will call the Coordinator in advance.

Parents of Home School Students

Students are only permitted to Home School in our program for one year. That year cannot be a sacrament year in which the child is receiving a sacrament. We encourage both the child and family to be part of our faith community. Only under special circumstances, we will make an exception. Please see our CRE for more information.

Parents of homes school student should:

- Provide classes which will lead the children to a deeper understanding of the Catholic Faith, help them apply faith to daily life, and instill in them a sense of prayer and worship;
- Will ensure that their children have completed the program's objectives and assignments;
- Will schedule meetings with the teacher to review their children's progress;
- Will attend parent meetings as scheduled during the year; if unable to attend, will call the Coordinator in advance;
- Will show support and interest in our parish and its various activities in order to encourage the faith life of their children;
- Will complete selected lessons in the book and handle in at the end of the year ;
- Will take a test at the end of the year.

Sacramental Preparation

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a two year program involving first and second grades. The process begins with an Enrollment ceremony with the Children and Parents and the Reconciliation celebration takes place in the winter. The Reconciliation preparation is done in the faith sessions and by the family at home with material provided by the Religious Education office. We also encourage you to participate as a family in Reconciliation services held in the parish throughout the year.

First Eucharist

First Eucharist is also a two year program involving first and second grades. This program provides for the involvement of priest, parents, catechist, and children, faith sharing at home, and special Family Sacrament Experiences. The First Eucharist/Reconciliation family program is in addition to the regular classroom sessions. We expect you to attend weekly Mass with your child in preparation for their reception of First Eucharist.

Confirmation

The Confirmation process is a two-year program involving seventh and eighth grades. Confirmation candidates, their families and sponsors study their faith by participating in both small and large group experiences. They participate in special Liturgies, Christian service/social justice opportunities, a review of basic information and prayers of the Catholic religion and Confirmation Retreat Day.

Religious Education Guidelines

Attendance

Attendance is taken each week and parents may be contacted if a child misses two consecutive classes. If your child must be absent, please contact your child's catechist. Be sure your child arrives on time and strive for weekly attendance.

If your child is absent from class, the lesson must be completed at home the following week. A parent will be provided with a calendar with dates and lessons plans, also a parent must sign the child's book, indicating that he/she supervised the lesson.

Please don't register your children for classes, if you have other obligations including sports or other activities. We take attendance weekly, and after more than 4 unexcused absences during the school year, the student will need to attend a make-up session that week or the following for the absence. Excessive absences may result in repeating a grade. This is extremely important during sacramental preparation. During sacrament years, it is vital to have regular attendance (See Sacramental Handbook). Excessive absenteeism may result in your child being unable to receive the sacrament.

*Students who has perfect attendance, he/she will be rewarded at the end of the year.

Tardiness

Please bring your child to class on time. Children who arrive late not only miss out on important information and class time, but they also disrupt the class. If the child is more than 15 minutes late, he or she must make up the missed part of the lesson for homework and have it signed by a parent.

Drop off/Pick up

Parents are asked to accompany their children to class each week in grades K to 5th grade. Students are asked to remain in the cafeteria area until their catechist arrives for class. Students are not to be left in the classroom until the catechist has arrived unless a parent stays with them. When class is dismissed, parents of students in grades K – 5, must return to the classroom to pick up their children. Children in those grades are not allowed to "meet" their parents in church, parking lots, etc. Any student not picked up by the time classes ends, will be taken to the Director's desk (located downstairs by the white cabinets) to wait for their parents.

Dismissal

For the safety of our children, we have these Dismissal Procedures in place:

- Sunday Morning: Please come down to the classroom to pick up your child. There is too much traffic and confusion at this time to allow any other dismissal procedure.
- Monday & Tuesday: Grades K to 5: A parent or another designated adult or sibling must come to the classroom to pick up the children and walk out with them.
- Grades 6, 7 and 8: The students may walk out the front or side of the church with the class and remain with them on the sidewalk until you come for them. Please be prompt!
- Bicycle riders should park their bikes in the bike rack in the Rectory backyard by the garage. They should not be left in the driveway or on the lawn at the front or sides of the Church.
- Please remind your child not to begin walking home if you are late and not to accept a ride with anyone else without your written permission in advance.

PLEASE NOTE: STUDENTS WILL EXIT THE BUILDING FROM THE FRONT OR SIDE OF THE CHURCH, THROUGH THE SOUTHWEST CORNER DOORS ON CRESCENT PARKWAY. WE HAVE ADDED EXTRA FLOODLIGHTS TO LIGHT OUR SIDEWALKS. A POLICE OFFICER WILL BE ON THE THIRD AVENUE CORNER TO DIRECT TRAFFIC AND CROSS THE CHILDREN. EVERYONE MUST CROSS THE STREET AT THIS CROSSWALK! NO ONE IS PERMITTED TO CROSS OVER THE MEDIAN BETWEEN PARKED CARS.

Classroom Behavior

A reminder concerning basic expectations for classroom behavior:

1. Follow directions and classroom rules.
2. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
3. No teasing, bullying or inappropriate language.

In order to facilitate spiritual growth, all the children deserve the most positive classroom environment possible. If a student chooses to disregard one of the listed expectations, or a classroom rule, he or she will first receive a reminder then the next time a warning from the catechist. If the misbehavior continues, he or she will be sent to the director's desk to talk about and personally reflect on their misbehavior and parents will be involved. If a child is sent out of class for misbehavior or disrespect, he or she will be given an assignment to be completed before rejoining the class the following week. If a child is sent from class a second time or a discipline problem continues to exist, parents will be called for a meeting.

General Information

Communication

The Religious Education Office sends out most communication by email. Parents must be sure to set email spam settings to allow correspondence into their email inbox. Please check your email spam folder to be sure our emails to you are not landing there. Email will come from diana@stmarkseagirt.com or rectory@stmarkseagirt.com

Church Bulletin

We will provide critical information such as events, times and dates in the Parish Bulletin each week. Please keep an eye out for this information as you attend Mass.

Parish Website

We will provide as much information as possible regarding the religious education program on the parish website. We incorporate registration materials and any other critical information on the website. Please check the parish website at www.stmarkseagirt.com for more information and ongoing updates.

Inclement Weather

If classes are cancelled due to inclement weather, announcements will be made on our church website: www.stmarkseagirt.com

Confidential Information

All information relative to a student's classroom performance or of a personal nature is confidential and will be treated as such by the catechists, office staff, and Parish staff.

Custody Issues

Please notify the CRE if only one parent/guardian has the custodial care of a child during class time. We must be aware of who may or may not pick up children during or after class.

Report cards

All report cards will be emailed twice a year; end of December and April.

Special Needs

St. Mark's Religious Education Program is open to all children. Parents should inform us of any learning difficulties, health challenge, language problem, or home situation which may affect their child's ability to learn or participate fully in class. Most children with special needs can be included in regular classes with some assistance from an aide.

Refreshments

Food and drinks should not be brought into the class. Your child is with us for a very limited time. The students should have a lunch or a snack before arriving for class.

There are two exceptions: Catechist may provide snacks during class once or twice a month, they are required to be served in the cafeteria area. Also, any child who might need food or drink for medical/health reasons may bring these to class. If that is the case, please provide a note to that effect prior classes starting.

Food Allergies

Please inform us of any food allergies that your child may have such as peanuts, tree nuts and gluten.

Bathrooms

Please remind your child to use the bathroom facilities at home before coming to class. This also applies to getting drinks during class time. These facilities are available for real emergencies. Since the students are with us for such a short time, we strive to avoid interruptions as much as possible. If your child has any special needs regarding use of the bathroom, please inform your catechist. Some exceptions will be made for younger children.

Textbooks

Kindergarten classes use the “Discovering God’s Child” text books published by Sadlier.

Grades: 1st to 6th uses “We Believe” text books published by Sadlier.

Grades: 7th and 8th uses: “We believe”, “Chosen” by Ascension Press and “Decision Point” Dynamic Catholic.

Family Life RCL Benzinger

This new edition of RCL Benzinger Family Life will be incorporated in grades: 1st to 8th grades and the catechist will be covering 6 lessons during class time. This program is been revised by the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops and is design to assist parishes in providing safe environment training to the children in our program and provide support for the parents and guardians. Also this program is designed to provide children with a wholesome formation in Catholic moral virtues; in an age- appropriate format where the children will learn new skills such as:

- Make good moral choices.
- Appreciate the wonders and goodness of God’s creation.
- Develop a Catholic understanding and reverence of the human body.
- Recognize, respond and report inappropriate behavior; thereby avoiding dangerous situation.
- Live a healthy, happy and holy family life.

Office Hours

- Monday to Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (May to August)
- Monday 1:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. & Tuesday 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (September to April)
Wednesday & Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (September to April)
- Other times by appointment only.