

St. Mark's Church

Religious Education Program



Rev. Msgr. Sean P. Flynn, Pastor

Mrs. Diana Zuna Nieves, Coordinator of Religious Education

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Office Hours

- Monday to Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (May to August)
- Monday 1:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. & Tuesday 11:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (September to April)
- Wednesday & Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (All year around)
- Other times by appointment only.

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.

Mrs. Diana Zuna Nieves

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.

Weekly Mass

It is the parents' right and responsibility to transmit their faith on to their children. A serious commitment to faith formation is expected from all parents and children. Therefore, it is expected that all children enrolled in our CCD program and their families attend Mass every week. It is nearly impossible to expect a Religious Education Program to succeed if the central act of worship is ignored.

Attendance at class and Mass is very important. Religion Education Classes are NOT a substitute for Mass.

Mass Times and Confessions

Sunday Masses

Saturday at 4:30 PM / Sacrament of Reconciliation at 3:30 PM to 4:15 PM
Sunday at 8:00 AM, 10:00 AM and 12:00 Noon
Spanish Mass at 5:00 PM / Sacrament of Reconciliation at 4:00 PM to 4:45 PM

Daily Masses

(Holy Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet after Daily Masses)
Monday-Friday at 7:30 AM and 11:00 AM
Tuesday at 6:00 PM (Spanish)
Saturday at 7:30 AM (No 11:00 AM)
Sacrament of Reconciliation on Thursdays after both Masses
Check bulletin for Mass times for Holy Days

Religious Education Class Times

Sunday Morning: Grades 1 to 8 8:45 – 9:55 a.m.
Monday Evening: Grades 6, 7, 8 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.
Monday Afternoon: Grades 1 to 5 4:00 – 5:15 p.m.
Tuesday Afternoon: Grades K to 6 4:00 – 5:15 p.m.

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 attend two parent meetings (Dec & April) with the Coordinator to review their children's progress; if unable to attend, will call the Coordinator in advance;
- Will attend at least two parish activities in order to encourage the faith life of their children: All Saints, St. Nick's, The Way of the Cross, Family Mass and Living Rosary, etc.
- Will complete selected lessons in the book and participate in grade project and family gatherings.
- 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.

Prayers To Be Memorized Per Grade

Memorizing traditional prayers can be very helpful, when we do, we take them to heart, meaning that we not only learn the words but also try to understand and live them.

Grade 1:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals

Grade 2:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals
Act of Contrition

Grade 3:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals
Act of Contrition

Grade 4:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals
Act of Contrition

Grade 5:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals
Act of Contrition
Apostles' Creed
Nicene Creed

Grade 6:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals
Act of Contrition
Apostles' Creed
Nicene Creed

Grade 7:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals
Prayer to the Holy Spirit
Act of Contrition
Apostles' Creed
Nicene Creed

Grade 8:

Sign of the Cross
Lord's Prayer
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Grace before Meals
Prayer to the Holy Spirit
Act of Contrition
Apostles' Creed
Nicene Creed

Religious Education Guidelines

Attendance:

Attendance is taken each time we meet for IN-CLASS 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 monthly 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. Our sessions will be an hour long. We take attendance quarterly, and after more than 3 unexcused absences during the school year, the student will need to attend a make-up session that week or the following for the absence, make up reservation is required in order to attend, please contact me for more information. Excessive absences may result in repeating a grade. This is extremely important during sacramental preparation. Thank you for your cooperation

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.

Cell Phone Policy:

We realize that devices such as cell phones have become a regular part of daily life and is necessary tool in keeping communications open with children, especially when parents are working. They also can disrupt the class and classmates during their time at St Mark's. Therefore, NO use of cell phones during class. All cell phones must be placed in a basket/box provided by St. Mark's when students arrive to class. If student does not placed his/her cell phone in the basket/box, it will result in being confiscated by the catechist and given to the Coordinator.

Students may only use their cell phones with the permission of the catechist to do class related projects during class. Otherwise, they may not have access to them.

If any student has a legitimate need to use a cell phone during class time, he/she should explain the need to the Coordinator in advance. He/She may be granted permission.

Only in case of an emergency, parents may get in contact with their child during class, they can call Coordinator, Diana Zuna Nieves at (908) 783-4221.

PROTOCOLS AND SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR OUR PROGRAM

Drop off: Parents may accompany their children to each IN-CLASS session for grades K to 5th. Please use both side doors (crescent parkways side) to enter the building. Upon arrival, each child MUST have their temperature checked, they must sanitized their hands before entering their classroom. Masks are optional.

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 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5: A parent or another designated adult or sibling must come to the classroom to pick up the children and walk out with them.

Monday Evening: Grades 6, 7, and 8: The teachers will walk out the front of the church with the class and remain with them on the sidewalk until you come for them. Please be prompt!

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.

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. Any child, whose parent is late, will be brought back downstairs to wait. Please try to be on time, but in case of emergency, please call my cell at (908) 783-4221 and I will stay with your child until you arrive. In addition, no one will be dismissed early from class without a note from their parent. The student can then be picked up downstairs in the Parish Hall.

WE ASK THAT ALL PARENTS COOPERATE WITH THESE SAFETY MEASURES AND PARK CARS IN VALID PARKING PLACES.

Being Prepared:

All students are expected to arrive with a good attitude and ready to learn. Students are also expected to fully participate in class, complete all assignments/requirements, and pass their final tests. Students are not permitted to bring toys or any sports equipment to class. They must be left with Coordinator outside of class. This includes skateboards.

Textbooks:

All students are required to have a string bag, tote or back pack for their religious education materials needed for class. A folder will be provided for classroom handouts, study guides and materials. Please make sure that you check your child's folder each week for announcements or correspondence from the teacher. Students are required to bring their Religious Ed bag with folder with study guide each week to class:

- Kindergarten: "God Made the World" text book published by Sadlier.
- Grades: 1st to 6th: "We Believe" text books published by Sadlier.
- Grade 2nd: "We Believe" text book published by Sadlier and First Reconciliation & First Communion- "Blessed" by Dynamic Catholic.
- Grade: 7th "Finding God" by Loyola Press
- Grade 8th: "Chosen" by Ascension Press and "Confirmed by the Spirit", Sadlier

Family Life by 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.

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

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

St. Mark's 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 by email, Facebook page and 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; mid-December and April.

Special Needs

St. Mark's Religious Education Program is open to all children. Parents are asked to indicate their child's special needs on the registration form so that the needs of your child may be met and any additional help or materials needed in the classroom can be obtained. Most children with special needs can be included in regular classes with some assistance from an aide. Any information provided by the parents is held in strict confidence by the staff and your child's catechist.

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.

DISCIPLINE & BEHAVIOR CONTRACT

Our Catechist and I realize that teaching your child is a tremendous responsibility and we will do our best to ensure that each student has a faithful learning experience in this upcoming year. All Catechists are volunteers and are very generous in giving their time to share and teach the Catholic faith to your children and help bring them closer to Jesus Christ. They deserve the utmost respect for all of their efforts. A reminder concerning basic expectations for classroom behavior:

1. Follow all directions and classroom rules from Catechist/Coordinator.
2. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
3. No teasing, bullying, or any inappropriate language in class.

We all hope that when our children are not around us, they have been given the skills to act appropriately, however, sometimes they forget and need a reminder. It is the responsibility of parents, educators, and community to teach our children the importance of being kind and considerate to others. The following behavior will not be acceptable in our program:

- Disrespect to teachers or fellow students.
- Negative attitudes, rude behavior, or language.
- Disrupting the classroom.
- Use of cell phones in class
- Refusal to participate in class or complete assignments.
- Disrespect/destruction of another student's property or school property.
**Parents may be asked to pay for property damage caused by their child.*

REFOCUS

In the event a student engages in inappropriate behavior, any or all of the following may occur:

A. REFOCUS PLAN

1. Refocus Plan will apply once the student has been send out of class
2. Teacher will send the student to the “*Refocus Table*”- round table by the elevator
3. Student will spend time writing and answering three questions to recognized their behavior
4. Once student answered questions, Coordinator will assess answers and share it with Catechist.
5. Only Catechist will decide to have the student come back to class.

B. BEHAVIOR SLIP & PHONE CALL

If student is send to *Refocus* for the third time in a month, parents will be contacted immediately. Parents must pick up student from class. Parents can either: pick up student or leave student with Coordinator until the end of class.

Catechist will complete and send home with student a Behavior Slip. Director must contact parents to discuss behavior. Student will be given an assignment to be completed before rejoining the class the following week. Student will NOT be able to return to class the next time without the signed slip and assignment.

C. REMOVAL

A meeting will be scheduled for student and parents, as well as your Catechist and Coordinator in order to discuss a plan to help find a way for student to received instruction. If student can't remain in class, Coordinator will give parents alternatives.

Parental input and suggestions are always appreciated. Parents are welcome to visit their child's classroom or to help by volunteering. Let's work together to help your child succeed. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call or email me.

Remember that each day is a chance to start fresh. We know that this will help us to enjoy our time together!

FAMILY NAME: _____

Please return, “Signature Page” at our first class.

SIGNATURE PAGE

To ensure that our program is a positive learning environment for all, signed behavior contracts must be received before your child/children returns to class.

- Parent Handbook: I have read and understand the contents of the Parent Handbook.
- Discipline and Behavior Contract: I have read, and agree to comply with the Discipline Behavior contract for our Religious Education program. I have discussed this contract and expectations with my child/children.

Parent Name: _____ Parent Signature: _____

1. Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Student Signature: _____

2. Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Student Signature: _____

3. Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Student Signature: _____

4. Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Student Signature: _____

5. Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Student Signature: _____