



ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA
A ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH *of* PRAYER AND FRIENDSHIP

Religious Education Program

Handbook

2019 - 2020

"Sir, we would see Jesus." John 14

"Father...this is eternal life, that they may know you,
the one true God and Jesus Christ Whom you have sent." John 17:3

"God, our Savior desires all men to be saved
and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:3-4

"There is no other name under heaven given among men
by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

CONTACTS

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PARISH SECRETARY
MARY MITARITEN
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Parish Center: 142 Perryville Rd., Hampton, NJ 08827

Church Office hours: Monday through Friday: 9:30 am to 2:30 pm

The purpose of the Parent Handbook is to put forth the aims and guidelines of the Religious Education Program for the coming year. The following material deals with the content, goals, and expectations of the program as well as the areas of responsibility of the Parents/Guardians, Catechists and Students.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of St. Catherine of Siena's Religious Education Program is to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all.

To be involved in catechesis and evangelization involves a total commitment to Christ. Therefore, we choose to allow ourselves to be molded by Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father.

It is from within that commitment that we will strive to bring the knowledge, love and mercy of Jesus Christ to the children, young adults, families and members of St. Catherine's Parish. To serve this purpose we will:

- Teach and uphold all that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church maintains.
- Strive to promote a deep love for Jesus Christ in the Eucharist by encouraging weekly participation in Sunday Liturgy, Holy Days of Obligation, and other Eucharistic devotions.
- Encourage the children to live the Catholic faith as it is witnessed to them by their parents, catechists and members of the faith community.
- Encourage the children to live in the virtues of faith, hope, and love in a spirit of obedience.

Congratulations! You have selected a Roman Catholic Religious Formation/Education Program for your family in the parish of St. Catherine of Siena. This program helps your family to grow in faith, teaches the traditions and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, supported by Church documents, including *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and utilizes diocesan programs to form and train catechists.

Sunday Mass attendance is the most important part of our curriculum. As Catholic parents, it is your obligation to model your faith and bring your children to weekly Sunday Mass. Worshipping together and sharing in Eucharist as a family is what makes us Catholic. We expect families to take this responsibility very seriously.

Please sign the agreement contained in this handbook, stating that you have read the contents and agree to our policies. Please return the agreement by the October gathering. It will be kept on file in the parish religious education office. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Rev. Chester Zalubski

Fr. Chester Zalubski

Elizabeth Knipe, DRE

Elizabeth Knipe

GENERAL POLICIES:

1. Children are expected to attend all sessions of their Religious Education Program as well as any additional classes associated with sacramental programs. Please review Attendance Section for further details.
2. Sessions begin promptly at 6:00pm.
3. All grades have a certain amount of homework/family homeschooling, which may include research, memorization or worksheets each week. Homework will be geared to grade level. Homework is a reinforcement of the family program, not a punishment.
4. Children need to be involved in other events, which are part of the devotional life of the Church. We highly recommend that parents have their children participate in other devotions, which will be held for the children during the year. Eucharistic Adoration, Recitation of the Rosary, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday Procession, May Procession, Lenten Devotions and Retreats, Family Mass, are some examples.
5. In keeping with the purpose of the Religious Education Program, children are expected to honor and respect their catechists, ancillary staff and peers. Any negligence in this area will be handled as outlined in the Disciplinary Section of this handbook.
6. In keeping with the agreements with Union Township School Board, the following are not permitted:
 - There is to be no food (including gum) in the classrooms or hallways.
 - Please do not wear cleats, or sneakers with wheels.
 - The use of the gym is prohibited. Please remain in designated areas.
7. **The catechists may not administer medication. If your child is taking medication, which would affect the child's participation, please notify the Religious Education Office.**
8. It is the responsibility of the parents to notify the Director of Religious Education in writing of the custodial status and any restrictions concerning the non-custodial parent.

"Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God." Catechism of the Catholic Church #2226

"The Parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privilege place for the catechesis of children and their parents." Catechism of the Catholic Church #2226

"All the baptized, because they are called by God to maturity of faith, need and have a right to adequate catechesis. It is thus a primary responsibility of the Church to respond to this in a fitting and satisfactory manner." General Directory for Catechesis #167

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM UP-CLOSE

TYPE OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Family Program

Generally located at Union Township Middle School on Monday or Wednesday Evenings from 6:00 – 8:00 PM for nine sessions (see accompanying schedule). This includes a home-schooling component. These sessions are available for Kindergarten through 7th grade. There is also a required parent session held in the cafeteria at the same time while students are in class. We prefer both parents attend this session but understand the busyness of families with younger/older siblings not in the program.

8th Grade Confirmation Candidates

Sessions are held twice a month at the Parish Center & UTES. There is no parent session required for 8th graders. These students are being treated as young adults in the faith. The Wednesday evening session coincides with the Wednesday evening family session. In addition, the class meets one Sunday a month from 6:30 to 8pm to work on and learn about Stewardship and Social Justice.

FEES

No child shall be refused religious education due to finances. Therefore, if there is a financial hardship, parents/guardians should contact the DRE.

- **Fees per family is \$150 per year**
- **There is a one-time \$40 fee in 7th grade for Sacramental preparation for Confirmation.**
This includes all retreats, robes, Chastity event, etc. for the two years of Catechesis.

SACRAMENTS

Sacramental Preparation Classes

Students preparing for the Sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist or Confirmation are involved in a required two-year preparation program separate from the regular education classes. Specific Parent Meetings will be held during the year to communicate the information necessary to the program.

For the immediate preparation for the Sacraments, additional meeting times will be scheduled. (Specific calendars will be given out at related Parent Meetings).

Eucharistic Liturgy

Students, as are all Catholics, are required to attend weekly the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, as well as the Holy Days of Obligation.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

“After having reached the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.” **Catechism of the Catholic Church #1457.**

“Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us to form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the spiritual life.” **Catechism of the Catholic Church #1458.**

It is therefore understood that for the development of a child’s conscience, the opportunity to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) should be offered to him/her by the parents at least monthly. It is imperative to the growing faith life of the child to see their parents make use of this wonderful Sacrament as well.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at all Religious Education classes is expected. In the event of an absence:

- Please call the Religious Education Office 908-735-5086 or email stcscre@gmail.com ahead of time to discuss the situation. Arrangements will have to be made to pick up any information and required assignments for both child and parent. Please do not contact the child's catechist only.
- The diocese permits 3 hours of lost instructional time. Since we meet only once a month for two hours, every effort must be made to attend all sessions.

Participation in sports programs/school events should never conflict with attendance at Religious Education and is not considered an excused absence. Attendance at these events cannot be weighed against formal Religious Education.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

The family program requires parent enrichment. While the children are in class with their teacher, the parents will meet from 6 to 8pm in the cafeteria for that enrichment. There is a no cell phone/electronic device policy in place. This includes parents during the enrichment program. Please be respectful of the speaker and/or activity!

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

The Director of Religious Education in consultation with the Pastor will make a decision for an emergency closing. If Union Twp. School closes early or is closed for the day, we cannot use the building so RE class will be cancelled. An email will be sent out as soon as possible.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

- **Families are expected to arrive on time.** Sessions begin promptly at 6pm.
- Please be mindful of proper use and parking in the lot at UTMS & UTES. Do not park in restricted areas or on grass.
- **NO adults are permitted anywhere in the school building except the cafeteria from 6-8pm.**
- Children needing to leave early are required to have a note from their parent/guardian given to the DRE. No child will be dismissed from the classroom without prior approval from the director and their teacher has been notified. Child will be brought to you. Parents are NOT permitted to pick child up from classroom.
- Children will not be allowed to leave the building without a parent/guardian or an adult listed on the Emergency Form. Therefore, if someone else is picking up your child, a permission note is required and must be given to the catechist.

LATENESS

Lateness interferes greatly with the progress of learning and is disruptive to catechists and others. It is important to arrive on time for each gathering. Repeated lateness will count as an absence.

PROMOTION/RETENTION

Promotion or retention is based on the overall performance of the student. The possibility of retention will be indicated when necessary. A final decision to retain a student is made by the Director of Religious Education with the consultation of the Pastor. Excused absence itself is not a just cause for retention, if the work that has been assigned is made up.

CHRISTIAN CODE OF BEHAVIOR:

Jesus has asked us to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. As we try to live as disciples of Jesus, we strive to show respect and courtesy to each other at all times. The encouragement of parents/guardians is expected in helping their child(ren) live God's law of love.

DISCIPLINE

If a situation develops in which the student either does not listen, is disruptive in class or is in any way disrespectful, the following is the progression for discipline:

- Catechists will speak with the child privately and will inform parents and the Director of Religious Education of the incident.
- If there is a repetition or a comparable incident, the catechist will inform the parents and the Director, who will then in turn meet with the student.
- Finally, if there is a third incident, the Director will meet with the parents to discuss possible solutions for the child's behavior.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

If a catechist/DRE suspects a child has been abused, New Jersey law requires that the State Division of Youth and Family Services be notified.

CELL PHONE POLICY

Children are not permitted to use cell phones and other electronic devices during parish religious education programs and parish activities/events, etc. Catechists have the right to collect cell phones and devices from children as they gather together if these rules are not adhered to. Devices will be returned at the end of each session.

FOOD ALLERGIES

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform the DRE in writing of the child(ren)'s allergies on the registration form. Because there are so many allergies that endanger children today, it is a policy of the Office for Catechesis that all food and drink be prohibited during religious education classes. Gum is not permitted in Union Twp. Middle School or UTES at any time as per school policy.

DIOCESAN POLICIES

The Diocese of Metuchen, the local Police Departments, 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. The Religious Education Office at St. Catherine of Siena, in cooperation with the Vicariate for Education in the Diocese of Metuchen, strictly adheres to all of the policies set forth in the agreement. Any student found to be in possession of drugs will be detained until police are notified.

DRE/catechist will not send a child home with a driver who is visibly impaired.

The number of Classes for Religious Education is determined by Diocesan Recommendation.

What is the role of the parish in supporting families to accept their role in religious education?

The parish seeks to educate and nurture the faith of adults, including parents and catechists, enabling them to foster faith in their children.

Catechesis is the responsibility of the Church in which individuals, families and communities have essential roles. The Bishops of the United States have said it well:

The Church, the Body of Christ, is always the context for catechesis. The meaning and vitality of catechesis grow especially in the parish- the praying, believing and serving community of faith. The parish gives spiritual, moral and material support to regular, continuing catechesis. (NCD no. 60 d)

It is important to situate the responsibility for catechesis in the parish. While acknowledging the essential role of the family:

When formally participating in the catechesis of their children, parents must be mindful of the preeminent right of the Church to specify the content of authentic catechesis. They always have an obligation to catechize according to the teaching authority of the church. (NCD no. 212)



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**Religious Education Program Handbook
Family Program**

2019-2020

Goals:

- To help parents live the life of grace afforded them in the Sacrament of Matrimony
- To strengthen the spiritual life of each family member
- To help form family relationships based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- To prepare the children to know their faith and to live that life of faith
- To aid the family in extending itself to the Body of Christ - the community of faith

Each family agrees:

- To attend Mass each week and to observe the laws of the Church
- To attend the monthly sessions as a family unit. Both parents and children are committed to attend
- To weekly cover the assigned material in each child's textbook
- To have children in the sacramental program attend the extra class each month

I have read the "St. Catherine of Siena Parish Religious Education Program Handbook 2019- 2020", understand and agree, and will abide by the program as written.

Family name

Name of person signing - please print

Signature

Date

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN TO ELIZABETH KNIPE