

Religious Education Guidelines

Welcome to St. Mary's religious education program.

The information within this guide is designed to help parents and guardians to be informed participants in their child's faith formation process. We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children in the ways of faith. Our job is to use the tools and resources that we have available to us and help that education process along. In order to do that effectively, caregivers need to be aware of what we expect from participants in our program and the steps we have taken to ensure that children receive the most comprehensive, pleasant and safe education experience possible. The Code of Canon Law for the Catholic Church states that children age 7 and above have reached the age of reason and therefore must participate in a formal Religious Education Program, either in a school setting or one provided by the parish. **However, this does not replace the parent's role as primary catechist for their children in the faith.** Religious Education Programs are designed to supplement the faith formation at home and at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Religious Education is not a replacement for regular Mass attendance. Attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is required of all Catholics.



Religious Education compliments the Mass experience for children and it truly is difficult to teach children who do not have an idea of what Mass is.

Please take the time to read and become familiar with all the information included in this handbook. We look forward to partnering with you in helping your child develop and maintain a loving relationship with Christ.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Religious Education will meet on Wednesday evenings beginning with refreshment and fellowship at 6:15pm in the parish hall. Classes will begin promptly at 6:30pm and end at 7:30pm. This year's schedule of classes is attached to be back of this handbook.

Weather Related Closings - IF THERE IS INCLEMENT WEATHER, please call the parish hall phone, 870-236-3890 after 5:30pm to verify, if no answer then no class. Catechists will make every attempt to contact their students; however, parents should listen for school and event closing announcements on the local television station KAIT 8 or on 1490AM KDRS and 107.1 FM Jack. Also for those with Smartphones, please check the St. Mary's APP.

TEACHERS OF THE WORD: THE CATECHISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

We are blessed to have the involvement of so many dedicated men and women who volunteer to be catechists (teachers) and classroom aides and substitutes. Their service to our program is deeply appreciated, and we encourage parents to meet their child's catechist at the start of the school year. Our goal is to have a catechist, classroom aide and a substitute for each class whenever it is possible.

All volunteers involved in children's ministry in the Church are required to attend a 3 hour VIRTUS awareness training session which deals with the steps we can all take to prevent sexual abuse of children. All volunteers who participate are also required to have a federal background check done. These child protective measures are monitored by the DRE and by the Diocese of Little Rock.

Ongoing training will be provided for our volunteers to promote their personal faith formation as well as increase their skills as teachers of the faith. Our catechists and aides are offered non-financial support for catechist certification.

Sharon Goodson (870)565-3545

GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES

1. Students should take care of bathroom needs prior to the start of classes.
2. Students are responsible for bringing the following to class each week:
 - A. A pencil and a spiral notebook
 - B. Class Textbook (if it is sent home)
3. Students and parents are responsible for familiarizing themselves with our Behavior and Attendance Guidelines.
4. Most of our students will be sharing classroom space with St. Mary's Catholic School students during the day. Students and teachers are asked to make sure that all classrooms are put in order, just as they found them, before leaving class. Desks should be aligned properly. Floors should be clear of any debris. Most of all please be respectful of the property of the student, the school and the parish.
5. Students classrooms will be located according to this list:



In the Pre-School building

PreK/K Class, 1 Class,

In St. Mary's School building

2 Class, 3/4 class and 5/6 class

In St. Mary's Parish Hall building

7/8 class (until new building ready)

In St. Mary's Church Basement

9-12 class (until new building ready)

First Communion and Confirmation Classes will form after Christmas break.

6. Students can be dropped off at St. Mary's Parish Hall for refreshments and fellowship by 6:00pm. Students will be sent to their classrooms at 6:25pm and will go immediately to begin their classes. Parents are encouraged to attend 6:00pm Mass with their children and can bring their children to the Parish Hall immediately afterward.
7. For safety reasons, students will only be released to parents or other legal guardians unless written authorization is provided to the catechist. If you want your child dismissed to an older sibling or a carpooling parent, please provide us with written permission stating your request. Classes end at 7:30pm and students should be picked up **promptly** and by no later than 7:40pm. **Students will be picked up at the building where their class is being held!**

PLEASE USE CAUTION WHEN DRIVING IN THE PARKING LOT

8. Students arriving late should come to the parish hall and report to the DRE or to a RE program volunteer so they can help them get into the building where their class is located. For safety reasons the doors to the other buildings will be kept locked.
9. Parents wishing to pick up their child early from class should come to the parish hall and report to the DRE, **BEFORE** going to the classroom for the child. We will call the classroom and ask to have the child brought to the pick-up area of their class building for dismissal. This can be Pre-arranged by calling the DRE's Cell phone. (See contact information on the last page of the handbook).
10. Students should dress appropriately for class. A child should be wearing appropriate shirts/shorts/slacks/dresses/footwear. Current dress trends allow for stomachs, chests, thighs, underclothing and such to be showing. This is not appropriate and will not be allowed. In addition, **no sagging is allowed**. If a child is not in appropriate dress, the child's parents will be call to bring other clothing and the child will wait for them in the parish hall.
11. It must be pointed out that no weapons of any kind, cigarettes, drugs or other illegal items will be tolerated on St. Mary's Campus at any time by the students.
12. **CONFRONTATION BETWEEN STUDENTS OR WITH PARENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE ON ST. MARY'S CAMPUS!** DRE and Pastor will be immediately notified!

Thank you for your cooperation in adhering to these guidelines, which help our program to run smoothly and ensure that all students have equal access to a BLEST experience in this program.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES



It is the policy of the Religious Education Department to enforce a Code of Conduct which ensures a pleasant learning experience for all children and a productive teaching experience for all catechists.

***All catechists are to be treated with respect.** It is the responsibility of each student to be attentive in class and to avoid disruptive behavior. Failure to demonstrate appropriate behavior will result in the following:

***In one class period:**

First Offense-A verbal warning will be given to the student;

Second Offense-A “time out” lasting at least 10 minutes will be given.

The student may be asked to separate himself/herself in the classroom or may be sent to the Parish Hall. Unless otherwise instructed, the student will return to his/her class within a 10-15 minute time frame.

Third Offense-The student will be removed from class, the Parents/Guardian will notified, and the student will be sent home. The student will not receive credit for attendance that evening. If disruptive behavior continues, the RE Coordinator will confer with the Parents/Guardian and may recommend a

student/parent conference with the Pastor or Deacon to determine whether the student should continue his/her religious education for the remainder of the school year. If a student is discharged from the program due to behavior issues, the student must repeat the grade. No refund of tuition will be granted.

The Coordinator may also find it necessary to contact a parent/guardian at any time if a student exhibits defiant or uncooperative behavior. In addition, a catechist may contact parents/guardians of their students if they feel a conversation regarding the student’s behavior is warranted. The DRE will always be made aware of disruptive behavior requiring contact with a parent **BEFORE** the parent is contacted.

***Disruptive/uncooperative behavior includes the following:** Persistent talking during class time when the catechist has requested quiet; discourteous attitude toward catechists or other students; destruction of materials or property; unwillingness to cooperate with catechist’s instructions; disregard for classroom rules.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Our program is designed to run roughly over the course of the school year and we expect children will make every effort to be present for class in order to get the most out of their religious education learning experience. For that reason, during the Sacramental Preparation years we will accept up to 4 excused absences without requiring a make-up class. Class will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m., so we will count a student tardy if they **repeatedly** arrive after 6:40pm. Parents please contact the teacher if a child will be absent. If the child is absent, we will send his lesson for the missed class with him the next period. It will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to help him with that week’s lesson!

Once a student exceeds four (4) absences during a sacramental year, a notice will be sent home to the parent/guardian to inform them of their child’s excessive absenteeism. Make-up classes will be scheduled randomly during the year on a Sunday morning at 8 a.m. Each child will be required to copy age appropriate information from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Students in PreK and K will not have attendance requirements.

For students in non-sacramental years (3/4, 5/6 and 9/12) students are expected to attend regularly and more than 4 absences in a year will be a concern where make-up time may be needed.



EXPECTED PARENT INVOLVEMENT

It is our Baptismal promise as parents to THE FIRST AND BEST teachers of the faith for your children! The PRE is here to ASSIST you in this VERY IMPORTANT MINISTRY!

The following are some specific ways which may help parents/guardians remain the primary and principal religious educators of their children:



Attend Mass weekly as a family. This is the most important thing you can do to form a strong and lasting relationship between your child and God. Parents are most effective when they set good examples. If faith is important to you, your child will embrace his/her faith as well.

Ask your child what he/she is being taught in Religious Education and don't take "nothing" or "not much" as an answer. Our teachers follow a teaching guide, and specific teaching goals are set for every grade level.

Meet your child's catechist either before or after class. Parents should know who is teaching their child, and teachers appreciate your interest. Prayerfully consider being a parent volunteer in the Religious Education Program or in Church ministry. Your service is always appreciated.

Please pray with your children at home! If you do this already, increase! If you don't, then start! Your children need to experience praying with YOU! At a minimum, do meal prayer. If possible, especially with younger children, do bedtime prayers. In past years, families prayed the Rosary together on a regular basis. Even once during the week will reinforce with your children that their faith is not just on Sundays or special occasions. My kids loved to have Bible Story time! We did not do it enough!

Spend time in Adoration while your child is in class. Prayer is powerful! Please pray for the Lord to enter your child's heart in a very special way during the class and also for the teachers to share the faith effectively!

Parents will be asked to provide refreshments as groups on a rotating basis. Our Refreshment Coordinator will be contacting you when it is your time to provide refreshments. I will be at the Hall by about 6 p.m. for anyone to drop off contributed refreshments or arrangements for delivery can be made with the Coordinator.

TUITION AND FEES

Tuition is the responsibility of the parents/guardian of our students and is payable when registration takes place, usually in August for the following year. Our Tuition is very modest \$15 per child or \$30 per family. These funds are used to purchase the teaching materials for your child. There may also be a fee for materials for Sacramental preparation and book replacement. These funds help our Parish to provide high quality religious education materials for our students.

Donations to the program are always accepted and appreciated. Thank you!

As always, special consideration will be made for any family suffering financial hardships. A lack of funds should never prevent a child from attending our Religious Education Program.



MISCELLANEOUS

Ministry Opportunities-The Parish is always in need of Altar Servers. Training for this can be arranged through the DRE. If interested, older children can sign up for the following Mass positions: Altar Servers; Ushers; Choir Members. With approval of the Pastor they can also be Readers of the Word or Eucharistic Ministers. Please contact either the DRE or Pastor if your child is interested in a Liturgical Ministry.

Respectfully Submitted By: Sharon Goodson (Director of Religious Education)

Approved By: Father Stephen Mallanga (Pastor)

Please feel free to contact me regarding any questions or concerns you may have at any time!!!

To contact Sharon Goodson:

Cell: (870) 565-3545; Email Address: s.goodson@sbcglobal.net

Sharon Goodson (870)565-3545

Religious Education Calendar 2016-2017

St. Mary's Parish Faith Formation

August 31, 2016	6:00 – 7:30pm	Mass, Registration, Parent Meeting
September 7, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
September 14, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
September 21, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
September 28, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
October 5, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
October 12, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
October 19, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
October 26, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class, Parade of Saints
November 2, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
November 9, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
November 16, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
November 23, 2016		No Class Thanksgiving Break
November 30, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
December 7, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
December 14, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class, Christmas Program
December 21, 2016	6:15 – 7:30pm	NO Class, Christmas Break
December 28, 2016		NO Class, Christmas Break
January 4, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
January 11, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
January 18, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
January 25, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
February 1, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
February 8, 2017	6:15 – 7:00pm	Class
February 15, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
February 22, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
March 1, 2017	6:00 – 7:30pm	Class Special Ash Wednesday Class after Mass
March 8, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
March 15, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
March 22, 2017		NO Class, Spring Break
March 29, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
April 5, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
April 12, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
April 20, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
April 26, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
May 3, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
May 10, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class
May 17, 2017	6:15 – 7:30pm	Class End of Year Picnic

Note: If there is inclement weather please call the parish hall phone 870-236-3890 to verify after 5:30pm. If no answer, then no class. See guidelines for other information on this.

8/22/2016

Signature Please:

Sharon Goodson (870)565-3545