RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM K-6
PARENTS & STUDENTS HANDBOOK

2020-2021

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WELCOME LETTER

Dear Parents/Guardian,

Welcome to the 2020-21 Religious Education program. The Religious Education staff at St. Paul wants to welcome you. We hope that you are having a wonderful summer and that everyone in your family has remained healthy. We are looking forward to the reopening of religious education at St. Paul and wanted to reach out to you with the specifics.

The health, well-being and safety of our parish families is our top priority as we plan for the 2020-21 year in Faith Formation. Under the current circumstances, with the safety guidelines in place to prevent the spread of COVID19, a traditional ‘classroom-style’ program in 2020-21 will not be feasible.

Our Faith Formation Team has been meeting over the past several months to develop the best alternative that protects our families, provides the maximum flexibility during these difficult times and continues to provide a quality faith formation program for our students and families. Adapting to our current circumstances, we are excited to bring you details about the family-based, at home program for 2020-21 that will be in place for the entirety of the 2020-2021 year (September 2020 - April 2021).

Resources and videos will be provided each week through Flipgrid Online platform that supplement the topics in your child's religious education textbook; E-learning activities will be submitted each week and with their completion, your child will meet the attendance and formation requirements for this year. Sacramental preparation is planned through online retreats and in person events, if the conditions allow us to do it. We also understand that you are busy; therefore, we will strive to maintain an appropriate amount of religious education each week so that our students meet the requirements, but also can remain focused and excited about their faith journey! Yes, it will look and feel a bit different, but we're looking forward to continuing our faith journey with all our students.

In this handbook, you will find important pieces of information. Please make sure you take the time to cover this information before the Livestream Parent Orientation Meeting is on September 24th at 6:00pm.

Online classes begin on Sunday, September 27th. We ask for your patience and thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance. If you have any questions, prior to then, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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PARISH VISION STATEMENT

“Our Parish purpose is to use our diversity and compassion to inspire, teach, and nurture all to grow in their respect for God and one another as we follow Christ who willingly laid down his life for us.”

PROGRAM GENERAL INFORMATION

The Religious Education Program seeks to reach children who attend public school from Kindergarten grade through grade twelve. We realize the ministry works in partnership with the parents who are the primary catechists. Creating a teamwork effort, we will proclaim Christ's message, help develop a Christian community, lead the students in Prayer and Worship, and motivate them to do Christian service.

Parents are encouraged to continue to bring their children to Religious Education classes even after their sacraments have been completed. The Sacrament of Initiation/ Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation are only the beginning to our faith formation. Regular annual attendance will help and encourage your children to be active in practicing their faith and sacraments.

Vision Statement

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Mt. 28:19-20)."

Mission Statement

The Religious Education program at St. Paul aims to accompany and support the parents as the first catechists in the process of their children's faith formation. The Program strives to provide opportunities for families to deepen the intimacy with God. Parents and children will establish a relationship with Jesus and his Church through a deep prayer life, knowledge of Holy Scriptures, the teachings of the Church, and the sacramental life; Thus, achieving conversion processes that lead them to become true missionary disciples in the word.

Goals

- To support parents in their role as primary educators of their children.
- To teach Jesus Christ, our Savior, and Model of the Christian life.
- To provide family opportunities for diverse prayer forms.
- To develop a strong sense of belonging to the parish family, as evidenced by participation in Sunday Mass and other parish celebrations.
- To prepare families for their children's first reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, thereby fostering moments of adult faith formation.
WHAT IS NEW FOR 2020-21?

After careful consideration in all the aspects and circumstances we are facing with the pandemic the Religious Education office has decided that the program K-6 will be online during the 2020-21 faith formation year for ALL children who register in the program due to the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. This year’s program will include the following key elements:

❖ **Flipgrid (Online Platform)**: Each child who is registered will receive a specific QR code card located in their registration packet. This code must be entered on the Flipgrid website by clicking “Enter a Join Code” to access their specific flipgrid. They can also “scan” the QR code by holding a cell phone camera next to the code card. (see picture →)

*NO additional sign-up is required.* All of the weekly online materials will be accessed from this platform. Content will be tailored for their grade level and centered on a specific theme, which will also be linked with the Sunday Mass readings. We will provide to the parents a summary of each session so they can have conversations at home with their children..

❖ **Extra Online resources**: The program will reinforce some lessons through additional online resources, such as Formed.org

❖ **Building Community**: We will foster the community through either virtual or in-person gatherings as the circumstances permit.

❖ **Parent Support**: The program will support parents through virtual or in-person gatherings, as well as video, email, and other resources as necessary.

❖ **Small Group Zoom Meetings (Year 2 ONLY)**: Small groups consisting of 12-15 students (who plan to receive the sacrament this year) and led by 2-3 Catechists and/or an adult facilitator will meet weekly via Zoom, for one hour-long session involving community building, a short lesson, small group discussion and prayer. Students should be prepared for the Zoom meeting and will be given specific instructions for how to join these weekly meetings.

Due to the nature and importance of the sacrament, we have scheduled weekly Zoom meetings in place to ensure your child has an understanding of the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion and to help them get the most from this important milestone in her/his life.
TEXTBOOKS

The Textbooks and materials used in the Program are designed to provide a rich, authentic, and complete presentation of our Catholic Faith for the whole family. The Pastor approves the Textbooks in consultation with the Director of Religious Education. All textbooks are approved by the Archdiocese of Kansas and are in compliance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

This year’s program curriculum is from the publisher, Our Sunday Visitor which covers basic faith formation for grades K-6 and Sacrament Preparation for Year II students.

CURRICULUMS

HOME BASE CATECHESIS FOR K-6

Home-based Catechesis allows families to be active in learning and growing in their faith in their homes following the same curriculum used for Religious Education classes at the parish.

Parents and guardians have access to Alive in Christ’s website and Flipgrid. Parents are involved through a variety of resources that help the entire family grow in faith and equip them with the skills necessary to communicate the truths of the faith to their children.

Once a chapter has been taught and discussed, the child will have the opportunity to submit an online assessment through Flipgrid.

The Kindergarten Curriculum (Allelu!)

The program has a Christocentric approach and built upon the same seven catechetical themes as Alive in Christ. It is the only Catholic early childhood curriculum that incorporates the latest research in child development and specifically includes child-initiated activities in every lesson. It is an early childhood program with innovations that make it easy to engage children and build his/her faith! Allelu! delivers a unique, multisensory experience that is manageable for any catechist or parent.

The Curriculum for grades 1-6 (Alive in Christ)

The Program invites children to hear God's invitation to a personal relationship through his Word, helps them discover and learn the Church's teaching in precise theological language, and teaches them how to live as Catholic disciples.
SACRAMENT FORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

Preparing for the sacrament of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion is a two-year process and must be by "the age of 7" in order to receive First Holy Communion. Consequently, students must complete Religious Education grade one before entering the Rel. Ed. Sacrament program offered in grade two. Please provide your child's baptismal certificate if your child was baptized at a parish other than St. Paul Parish.

First Reconciliation

Children of catechetical age are to be appropriately prepared for and celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. St. Paul parish offers faith formation to parents who have children preparing for the celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

All Second Grade Students learn and discuss the Sacrament of Reconciliation in their classroom sessions, which typically involve mock confession.

This year due to the Pandemic the support to the parents and formation for the students will be online. First Reconciliation Retreat will be evaluated as we move forward through the year.

First Holy Communion

Children must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving First Eucharist. Children who have reached the age of reason should be adequately catechized for the celebration and reception of First Eucharist.

The goal of this preparation is to lead the children to an ever-deepening understanding of the Church's teaching about the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. In this way, children can receive Jesus in the Eucharist with Faith and devotion and actively participate in the Eucharistic celebration.

St. Paul offers faith formation to parents who have children preparing for the celebration and reception of Eucharist.

This year due to the Pandemic the support to the parents and formation for the students will be online. First Communion Retreat will be evaluated as we move forward through the year.
Sacrament Preparation for Older Children

Families with a child beyond second Grade who needs to be prepared for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist will need to contact the DRE for an appointment. Please provide your child's baptismal certificate if your child was baptized at a parish other than St. Paul. For a child baptized in another Christian denomination, the RCIA for Children is appropriate. In this case, the DRE will coordinate this process with the Pastor and Pastoral Assistant.

SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM

We will strive to provide children with special needs with the best Religious Education that we can. Every effort will be made to help children with special needs to participate fully in all Religious Education classes.

Parents should inform us of any learning difference, 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 RE classes with some assistance from an aide. The adjustments in requirements and Curriculum will be made under the guidance of the Pastor, the DRE, and the parents.

PROGRAM GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The Church teaches that parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children. Certainly parents have a great capacity for influencing the faith development and religious formation of their children. Therefore, the parents’ essential role is to review weekly lessons, encourage, support, and affirm your child’s involvement in the formation process.

As your child progresses through the program, there are opportunities for you to assume this responsibility. Become familiar with the material being posted. It is important for you to go online through the Flipgrid platform and view the video clips and material that will be posted every week to assist in guiding your child.

Preparing for Parent orientation Meeting

Please read through the Handbook. Items in the handbook will be referenced during the orientation and should be familiar to meeting participants before the session.

Parent Orientation Meeting

Attending an orientation session is a mandatory part of the program. Orientation Session will be Livestream for the student and one (or more) parents. Families can choose to sit together and log in from one screen to participate in the meeting, or to utilize several devices and logons.

The link will be sent out via email prior to the meetings.
COMMUNICATION

Open lines of communication are encouraged between all parties involved. Direct communication between DRE and parent by emailing kmelgar@spcatholic.org or phone calls. Information on religious education and sacramental preparation will be shared with students and parents via a variety of methods including:

- Weekly videos through flipgrid (Videos will be related about the assessment for each week or parish announcements)
- Text Messages through Remind App:
  - **To join the K-6 group** (English):
    - Text this message @fg49bh to this number 81010
- The parish website (www.spcatholic.org), go to Faith Formation under Prek-6
- The parish bulletin, emails, Facebook, Twitter, phone calls and letters from the Director of Religious Education.

If you have any comments, questions or concerns, we ask that you bring them to the attention to the Director of Religious Education at (913) 764-0323 ext. 103.

Custodial Rights of Parent/Guardians

The Director should be informed by the custodial parent/guardian of the rights of the noncustodial parent/guardian as these pertain to the child's participation in the program as well as release from the program. Legal documentation, if available, should be kept in the student’s file. The director or parent/guardian will also communicate this to the catechist.

Change of Address/Phone number or email address

Please notify the Religious Education Office if your home address, e-mail address or phone number(s) change during the year. *This is crucial during this year* specially for those receiving Penance, Communion as we email important information during the year.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

1. **Mass Attendance (All students)**

Attending Mass as a family is extremely important, and religious education classes should not take the place of Mass. The Mass is vital to our Faith; without adequate experience of Mass, your child is at a distinct disadvantage in understanding our Catholic tradition.

Therefore, we *strongly* encourage you to attend Mass with your child weekly. You have **two options** for attending Mass. *You can do it in person or Livestream*, depending on state directives. **St. Paul Livestream Mass on YouTube:**

https://www.youtube.com/c/StPaulCatholicChurchOlatheKS/live
2. **Weekly Gospel Reflection (ONLY for Year II students in Gr. 4-6)**

Due to the effects of COVID-19 each candidate should complete a short online reflection on the Sunday Gospel Reading with his/her parent(s). The Gospel reflection will replace the Mass card. The Google Form to complete these reflections will be located on Flipgrid.

*The children should record an individual or family video in which they express the reflection they made about the Sunday Gospel. It must be completed by SUNDAY night of each week.*

3. **Session Attendance / Weekly Lessons (ALL students)**

It is essential that you and your child check the online platform (Flipgrid) *every week* in order to enter into a greater understanding and relationship with God. The Flipgrid platform is vital to the growth of their faith as well as for the preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. *It is expected that all children login into Flipgrid every week to review the session material online and submit their assignments.*

ALL online activities posted on Flipgrid must be completed by SUNDAY night of each week. It is also important the child be present and engaged during any online video sessions in order to be ready to receive sacraments this year. *Children must also adhere to the following etiquette guidelines for any online meetings and/or videos they post:*

1. **Be On Time.** Allow yourself plenty of time to join any online meetings. Plan to arrive at least 10 minutes before start time in case you experience any technical difficulties.
2. **Look at your Camera.** Make sure your computer or phone camera is turned on and look directly at your screen so that everyone can see ALL of your face clearly. If you are not speaking, make sure to click the “mute” button on your microphone.
3. **Be Respectful.** It is essential to keep in mind the feelings and opinions of others, even if they differ from your own. If you would not say it to someone’s face, do not say it online either.
4. **Be careful with humor and sarcasm.** While it is important to express the fun characteristics of your personality, your video posts and online interaction need to primarily demonstrate your commitment to learning the material. Make sure to sign in with your first and last name only.
5. **Listen carefully.** Do not simply join the online meeting and watch passively. Be actively engaged and prepared to ask any questions.

*NOTE: NOTE: If any child has not logged in into Flipgrid or completed the assignments for three consecutive weeks, then a phone call or a Zoom meeting will be scheduled between the parents and the Director of Religious Education to discuss the commitment to the program.*
4. Small Group Zoom Meetings (ONLY for students in Year II)

This meeting will be led by 2-3 Catechists and/or an adult facilitator in order to help make sure students are adequately prepared to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion in the Spring. The meeting will take place on Tuesday evening at 7:00 pm. Students should be prepared beforehand (see “Session Attendance” on pg. 10) and will be given specific instructions for how to join these weekly meetings.

NOTE: Any student that misses more than 3 classes without make up will be ineligible for receiving Sacraments for the year of formation they are currently in. Meeting with the Director of Religious Education must be set up to discuss continuation and commitment to The Religious Education Program.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING

PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN

Each year the Archdiocese of Kansas City, KS asks all parish, Catholic schools, catechetical programs for children and youth in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade to present a class on abuse prevention. The name of the program is Protecting God’s Children.

Protecting God's Children, Touching Safety Program for Children (VIRTUS), is a school-based curriculum. The job of ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education, and training about the nature and scope of the problem.

We must also give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm. The Touching Safety program is a vehicle through which parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers (educators) give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them.

Each year the students receive the information through a specific class. If you don’t have your child to take part of this class you will need to fill an Opt Out form and turn it in to Rel. Ed. Office.

*This year we will provide specific information about how this year the class will be conducted due to the pandemic.
FINANCIAL POLICIES

The program operates primarily on the annual registration fees collected at the beginning of the school year. Fees are used to provide program instruction materials, as textbooks and online resources.

**Religious Education Fees:**
$80 Per Student  
$135 Per two students  
$155 for three or more  
**Sacrament Fees:** $40 Per Student.

These fees apply to all children grades Kindergarten through High School. Since these fees need to be collected to maintain the program, registration fees are due at the time of registration unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director of Religious Education.

Fees are required to pay for your child/ren’s textbooks and other resources. If this presents a hardship, please speak directly with the Director. Confidentiality is assured.

**In Conclusion…**

It is our hope this handbook is helpful to our families as a resource for what the Parish has to offer in compliance with both The Archdiocesan and Parish policies. Our RE staff and all our volunteers are committed to our families as we grow in our love and appreciation of our Faith, our Parish community and one another. Please feel free to call if you have any questions or concerns. I’m looking forward to working and serving you and your family this catechetical year.

**The situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change quickly. All policies, procedures, and information are subject to change based on the advice of our local health department and/or The Archdioceses of Kansas City, KS.**

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