

PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM (PREP) Parent Handbook



Office of Faith Formation Staff

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Fairfield, OH 45014

(513) 858-4213

REP

Religious Education Program

Grades 1-8 (Parish Family)

Mondays 6:30pm – 7:45 p.m.

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P: 513-858-4213

UPDATED June 2023

Welcome to the Parish Religious Education Program

Dear Parents:

Welcome to the new year of religious education! We are very excited to be able to proclaim Christ and celebrate Christ's sacraments with your children.

This handbook is designed to help familiarize you with the programs, practices, and policies of the Parish Family Religious Education Program. We hope you will keep it handy as a quick reference throughout the year. Our mission is to aid parents in their *primary responsibility* to educate their children in the Catholic faith. We ask for your prayers, participation, and your continued support throughout the year.

Please feel free to call us at any time with questions or concerns you may have about the program, **513-858-4213**.

Director of Evangelization

Jose Martinez

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Philosophy

The Parish Region REP program promotes spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ through ongoing faith formation and religious instruction of our students who attend public schools or are home schooled. This program fosters growth in maturity and knowledge of the Catholic faith through use of a comprehensive curriculum, which incorporates Sacred Scripture, Catholic Doctrine, prayer, celebration, service, and witness.

Admission Policies

Admission Policy and Standards

There is no discrimination in admission eligibility on the basis of race, sex, national origin, or disability. Students will be enrolled according to their current school grade. In case a student missed some previous grade level classes or needs to catch up on their sacrament, we will customize a separate plan of study to be followed outside of the classroom, through which the parents (in some cases along with the catechist) can get their child back on track and ready. This plan depends on many factors such as the number of previous years the student attended religious education classes.

Non-custodial parent rights

The religious education director, the community coordinator and the pastor need to be informed by the custodial parent about the non-custodial parent rights. Verbal requests are not sufficient; a copy of the proper legal documents must be presented to the D.R.E. to be kept on file. Procedures will then be arranged.

Home-Based Religious Education

- New families to the Home School Program are required to meet with the Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE) prior to registration. Previously registered families may register immediately.
- Following meeting with the CRE, parents may register and purchase teacher's manual and student's text for needed grades by contacting the Office of Faith Formation.
- Parents and students must agree to complete the student text and meet all of the requirements for this program. Supplemental materials and resources are available from the Office of Faith Formation. The Coordinator of Religious Education is also available for additional support.
- If the student exhibits satisfactory comprehension of the material covered and meets all of the requirements listed above, the student will be advanced to the next grade. Also, when the child is ready to receive a sacrament for the first time, the pastor of the parish to which the child belongs is to decide whether he or she is properly prepared.

Note: The parish to which the child belongs is either the parish in which he or she resides or is another parish in which he or she is registered.

- In accordance with Booster policy, students must be enrolled in the Day School or REP Program on Monday nights in order to participate in the CYO sports program.
- Parents and their children are welcome and encouraged to participate in parish liturgies and/or other events prepared specifically for children and their families.

Children in Catholic Youth Athletics

Children (Catholic or non-Catholic) who are not registered with a Catholic parish or attending a Catholic school may participate in Catholic Youth Athletics only by special application and permission by the Parish pastor.

Catholic participants: Catholic participants will be enrolled in and regularly attend the parish's or school's religious education in the current school year. Three or more unexcused absences from Religious Education sessions will normally result in suspension from the team. Legitimate

excused absences such as due to illness will be assessed on a case-by-case basis at local level.

Non-Catholic participants: In the case of non-Catholic children enrolled in Catholic schools, they are eligible to play provided they attend the school's religious education classes in the current school year

Non-Catholic participants in Catholic parishes: In the case of non-Catholic children whose parents have enrolled in RCIA or are otherwise in the process of becoming Catholic, they are eligible to play provided they are enrolled in and regularly attend the parish's religious education in the current school year. Missing three or more religious education sessions will normally result in suspension from the team.

Financial procedures

Registration Fees

Registration fees are due at the time of registration. The fees apply to all children enrolled in the REP.

** Regular Fees are as follows:*

1 Child \$40

2 Children \$60

3 Children \$70

Each additional \$5

**Catechists have a special rate of 20\$ per student for the first 2 students and \$5 for each additional.*

**Catechist Aides get a discount of \$15 per student for REP.*

**REP nights office and/or logistics helpers (including liturgy preparation helper) receive tuition discount get a discount of \$15 total for REP Monday nights.*

**If you are interested in volunteering to fill one of these positions mentioned above during REP, please contact Joelle Martinez:
joellemartinez@sacredheart-fairfield.org*

** For any personal circumstance requiring a waiver consideration, discounts are available. Please contact Joelle Martinez: joellem@sacredheart-fairfield.org to discuss waivers or/and adjustments. **No child will be prevented from attending a program due to financial hardship.***

**Registration fees can be paid online: <https://www.sacredheart-fairfield.org/rep>*

***MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: Sacred Heart Church** and note that it is for REP tuition at bottom of check. Please remit payment to Sacred Heart Office of Faith Formation, or drop in Sunday collection basket in an envelope marked **ATTENTION: Joelle Martinez**, Office of Faith Formation.

Refund Policies

No refunds will be issued after the student started attending.

Attendance Procedures

Attendance/Absences Procedures

Regular attendance is expected. Students with excessive absences may be asked to repeat the year if it is evident to both Catechist and Coordinator that the student has not grasped the material covered in the year. Each child's yearly class attendance is kept in a permanent database.



Weekly Sunday Mass attendance at either parish is required for students.

“The Eucharist is the source and the summit of the Christian’s life” (CCC). Nothing can replace the sanctifying grace and the gifts poured out on the faithful when partaking in the holy sacrifice. Moreover, Sunday mass is an obligation for Catholics. Therefore, parents are encouraged to give the testimony of faith to their children by their determination and requirement to attend Sunday mass as a family.

For students who are involved with GCCYS sports, please see the section below on “GCCYS Policy.”

Parents/Guardians are asked to notify the Office of Faith Formation at 858-4213 before 6:30p.m. if their child will be absent from class that evening. When leaving a message, please include the child’s name, grade, and catechist’s name.

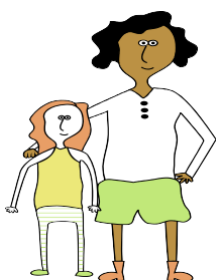
A child who is absent for a session must make up for the missed work at home and return the activities done in-class to the catechist the next session. The make-up work will be assigned by the catechist the next session. Any child who is absent for more than two sessions in a row without making up the missed work will be asked to come in with their parents and meet with the CRE to work out a solution.

Records

Records of attendance, pick-up, drop-off and general performance and progress will be kept in the RE office in the REP database. Parents can access these records any time by contacting the office. The pastor, the director of evangelization, the catechists and the faith formation office staff can access the records as well. Information in the child’s records is for REP use only and will not be released to any group outside REP unless parent/guardian permission is granted in writing.

Arrival and Dismissal

Children may arrive in their classroom no sooner 6:20 p.m. and no later than 6:30 p.m. **Please accompany each of your children to their classroom(s).** The catechist will direct the parents to note their arrival time and sign their names on an arrival record sheet. If a student arrives before 6:20 p.m. the parent/guardian must stay with the child until the catechist is ready to accept students into the classroom. Late arrivals must enter building through church offices.



All children must be accompanied to and from class by a parent/guardian. No child will be allowed to leave the building unattended. This is in compliance with the Child Protection Decree.

For their safety, students may only be dismissed from their classroom if their parent or designated guardian is present to pick them up.

The parent/guardian must come inside the classroom and sign the exit record sheet.

Children not picked up after class will be taken to the Office of Faith Formation. Your child can be picked up there after you sign the exit record sheet.

No child may be dismissed from the REP program during class hours without a prior written request to the catechist or coordinator from a parent/guardian. When a parent/guardian comes to pick up a child early from class he should first sign-out in the Office of Faith Formation. The secretary will call the classroom to request the student be sent to the Office of Faith Formation to meet the parent.

Students will be released to the adults whose names are listed on the registration form. If someone else is picking up the child, the office must be notified in advance and the pickup person must have their password pickup.

Homework

The assignment of homework is at the discretion of the catechist. All of the curricula used have activities related to each lesson targeting the learning of the faith at home. Parents are encouraged to remain the leaders and teachers for their kids' formation.

While not minimizing the importance of Archdiocesan, school and parish-centered catechesis, we must re-emphasize a cardinal teaching: parents are the “the primary and principal educators” of their child’s Christian faith. The family, not the parish or school, is in fact the “domestic church.” Faith-sharing by parents therefore precedes, accompanies, and enriches all other

forms of catechesis (Graded course of study, archdiocese of Cincinnati, OED).

Parents are expected to pray with their children, attend mass every Sunday and receive the sacraments (Eucharist and Reconciliation) as a family. Parents are encouraged to engage in those lessons sections that are meant for them to teach the faith at home in each curriculum. The office of faith formation will have a vision for home evangelization communicated in the beginning of the year to the parents. Finally, parents are welcome to attend at least one session with their child sometime during the year.

Communication

Any complaints or requests regarding the curriculum or the child's progress should be first addressed to the catechist. If a parent needs to talk or work with the CRE, he/she is encouraged to do so as well after talking to the catechist.

Parents concerns and questions about the program in general can be directed to the CRE. Concerns about staff (paid or volunteer), an administrative action, or policy should be communicated to the CRE. The Pastor's decision is final regarding staffing, administration, and policy.

Sacrament Preparation



Students intending to receive Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation must be enrolled and participate in religious education classes at St. Ann school, Sacred Heart school, the Parish Family Religious Education Program, or Parish Home School Religious Education Program.

Students must be enrolled from the beginning of the school year and must complete all diocesan and parish requirements to receive that Sacrament. Candidates and their families must be attending Sunday Mass regularly and are encouraged to be involved in parish life. Candidates for the sacraments must be baptized and fulfill all requirements of the Code of Canon Law.

Students transferring from another parish and entering the Parish Family Religious Education Program for the first time during a sacramental preparation year will be required to show evidence of participation in a religious education program in their former parish. Should they fail to show

appropriate evidence of knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith, prospective candidates will be expected to participate in special classes or tailored tutoring as determined by the CRE.

Any candidate for a sacrament who did not enroll and participate in religious education classes the year prior to receiving a Sacrament will be required to make up the missed class work and if necessary, to postpone reception of the sacrament until preparation is completed, as determined by the CRE.

The purpose of this policy is to stress the important relationship between living our faith, Church affiliation and the Sacraments, and to affirm our responsibility to receive the Sacraments of the Church with the proper disposition.

Grade 2 First Reconciliation and First communion preparation

There will be NO sacrament preparation for Grade 2 done by the parents during 2023-2024. There will be NO workbook to take home.

All preparation for 1st reconciliation and 1st communion will be happening in class by using the sacrament preparation-gearred program SIGNS OF GRACE.

Parents are required to attend a parent formation program consisting of 4 meetings for 1st reconciliation and 4 meetings for 1st communion. In each series, the 1st meeting is mandatory and the last one (parents + students) is mandatory. Parents can opt out of 1 out of the 2 left, i.e., they can choose to skip either meeting 2 or meeting 3 in each series, if they need to. The goal of this parent formation element is to help the parents be the main evangelizers for their kids. Each series will contain 4 videos that discuss the theological aspect of the sacrament as well as how to live it as parents and adults. For more information on this parent formation for Grade 2, please refer to the sacrament calendar found on the website <https://www.sacredheart-fairfield.org/rep>

Confirmation Preparation

For the confirmation preparation process during 2023-2024, please refer to the sacrament schedule <https://www.sacredheart-fairfield.org/rep> for return of the student/sponsor workbook.

Discipline

There is a close connection between discipline and personal growth. We expect the best from your children and expect them to act in the spirit of the Gospel in every environment they find themselves in. Children should behave respectfully and courteously in words and in actions towards adults and peers. Children should respect parish property and the property of others.

One of the catechist's first concerns is to maintain an atmosphere in which the children feel comfortable and accepted so they can share their faith and enjoy an optimal learning environment. Children should participate positively and be on task.

We also stress the catechist's leadership role in collecting and containing some expected youth behaviors.

However, in case of a recurrent disruptive behavior, parent conferencing will be necessary to think collaboratively about a solution.

In the very very rare case of suspension, the CRE will work with the parent to find the best solution for the student to finish his/her religious education program at home.

No child may be disciplined corporally or corrected with abusive language.” Policy C.4 in the Decree on Child Protection.

Dress Code

For safety reasons, no cleats or roller shoes (e.g., Heelys) are permitted. If your child participates in a sport that requires cleats and is coming to class directly from that event, please make sure he/she has a pair of appropriate footwear to change into for class.

Modesty is the rule for dress while in class and attending REP functions.

Electronics

Electronics are not allowed in the religion classroom except for cell phones which must be on vibrate. Students will not be allowed to use any phone during the lesson. Kids are not allowed to take pictures or selfies of themselves or their peers at any time during their presence in the building.

Drugs/Alcohol/Pets

Drugs, alcohol and pets are not allowed in the building at any time during RE classes.

Search and seizure policy

A student's person and/or personal effects (e.g., purse, backpack, book bag, etc.) may be searched whenever the CRE, a catechist or any other staff member has reasonable suspicion to believe that the student is in possession of illegal or unauthorized materials such as weapons, drugs, stolen property etc.

Safety and Emergency procedures

Parish facilities use

The main portion of the RE program will happen in the classroom. Students will not be permitted to wonder around in the building and access empty rooms or other undesignated areas without assistance. When a student is allowed to go to the restrooms, the catechist will be monitoring their going and their coming back in time. Volunteers and/or the DRE will be in the hallway at all times. In some cases, and for the purpose of a lesson, students will be accompanied by the catechist to the parish grounds such as the church, the meditation garden etc. These incidents should be purposeful and kept concise every time.

Weather and fire safety procedures

Instructions for fire and tornado safety are posted in each classroom. There will be a fire with the catechists and the students.

Classes will be canceled if weather conditions or predictions are severe and threatening.



The Parish Family Religious Education Program (REP) will follow Sacred Heart School and Fairfield Public Schools pertaining to severe weather closures unless you are otherwise notified on the front page of the Sacred Heart

Church website www.sacredheart-fairfield.org and through Flocknote, a parish communication tool. Please register for Flocknote at: <https://familyofsacredheartstann.flocknote.com>.

PLEASE NOTE: Any **Sacrament meetings or events** located at Sacred Heart Church are not necessarily canceled when REP is canceled. These programs are too difficult to reschedule due to the already crowded calendar of the clergy involved. However, if the weather is severe enough a cancelation would be announced on the front page of the Sacred Heart Church website & through Flocknote.

Illness/Injury

If a student becomes ill or is injured during class, parents/guardian will be contacted immediately if the situation warrants.

It is imperative that a parent, guardian, or other designated adult be reached should an emergency situation arise with your child. Please update this information as needed by contacting the Office of Faith Formation with any changes.

Lock Down

The school building is in “Lock Down” on Mondays, 6:30 p.m.—7:45 p.m., during the REP year. For the safety of the students, entrance to the school building or gym during lock down is restricted to REP students and catechists. Parents who wish to enter the building during lock down must go to the Office of Faith Formation to sign in and be escorted to their child’s class.

Accident procedures

If a child incurs a relatively minor injury while attending the catechetical program, the following steps are taken: The catechist reports the accident immediately to the CRE; if bleeding is involved, the procedure outlined under “Blood borne Pathogens” (found in the “Catechist Handbook”) are followed; the CRE notifies the parent (if the parent cannot be reached, the CRE follows the information on the Student Information Record). The CRE keeps a copy of the accident report on file in the REP database and sends a copy to the Archdiocesan Insurance Division.

In case of serious accident or illness: The catechist immediately reports the accident to 911 and then to the CRE; the CRE notifies the parent; if the parent cannot be reached, the CRE follows the information on the Student Information Record. The CRE completes the accident form, keeps a copy in the file, and sends copies to the Archdiocesan Insurance Division.

Weapons

The possession, use, distribution or sale of narcotics, hallucinogens, alcoholic beverages and/or other dangerous drugs, controlled substances, and/or instruments used to administer drugs are not permitted. Any infraction of this code will result in dismissal from the REP program.

No weapons or explosive devices of any kind shall be carried onto Sacred Heart Church property. Violations of this policy will result in dismissal from the REP program.

Administration of medicine and Snacks during REP



The Catechist will have a list of any allergies, conditions, and medications on the student record. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardian to advise the CRE of any medical conditions or restrictions. **No REP staff or volunteers will administer medication or medical treatment to any student.** Students who have been instructed by their parents or medical personnel to self-administer treatment (i.e. epi-pens, inhalers) may do so with written permission of the parent/guardian on the medical release form. The catechists will follow the allergy list to plan snacks for their students

Child protection

All of the volunteers and staff included in the REP program in any way are required by law to go through the safe parish training for child protection against sexual abuse from the archdiocese of Cincinnati. Quarterly completed trainings ensure the ongoing validity of the training. Program administrators are required by the Ohio Revised

Code and the archdiocesan Decree on Child Protection to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. By law, a child is considered less than 18 or less than 21 in the case of a mental or physical handicap.

Anyone witnessing any behavior they deem as inappropriate, by an employee or volunteer of the religious education programs should immediately notify our Safe Environment Coordinator at mfleck@sacredheart-fairfield.org.

All employees and volunteers of the Pastoral Region religious education programs are required by the Ohio Revised Code and the Archdiocesan Policy on Child Protection to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities without delay.

Policy changes

Parents will be notified in writing when policies are to be added or amended in this handbook.

Parents and students signed agreement

All parents listed on the student's record will be expected to sign and date the statement below electronically. Parents should share the content of the handbook with their children. Students in grade 4 and up are asked to sign and date the statement as well:

I have read, understood, and accepted the terms specified in the handbook and acknowledge that my electronic signature is a legal signature

Parent Signature -----

Date -----

Parent Signature -----

Date -----

Student Signature -----

Date -----