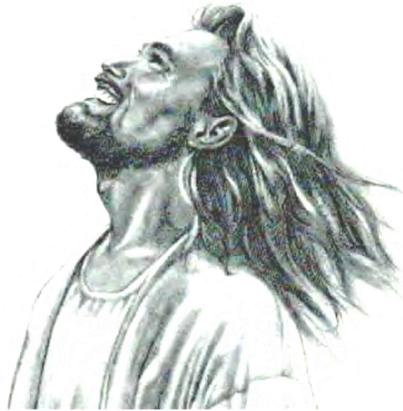


St. Andrew Catholic Church

Religious Education Program Handbook

2018-2019



STAFF

Jerry Harrington, Director of Faith Formation
(jharrington@standrewrcc.org)

Jodi Castiglione, Faith Formation Assistant
(jcastiglione@standrewrcc.org)

Anne Spears, Faith Formation Assistant
(aspears@standrewrcc.org)

RE Office Phone
(239) 574-2411

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Family,

Thank you for your interest in Religious Education at St. Andrew Catholic Church. The fact that you're reading this letter means that you have a commitment to the faith formation of your child; for that I thank you and honor you. This handbook presents all the information you need for your family to be successful in our program.

Before all the details, though, I wanted to take a moment to present to you an idea I find incredibly important and, for some, often overlooked. Religious Education is NOT just another extracurricular. Religious Education is a ministry of the Church; all of us who work in it consider ourselves extended members of your family of faith dedicated to providing your family more chances to encounter God. Despite its name, Religious Education is NOT primarily about imparting information, but about providing experiences. Our most important job is inviting families to deepen their discipleship, to be better followers of Jesus in the way you live your life.

Because we view ourselves this way (not an academic enterprise but a ministry of making disciples) we ask you to relate to us this way. Know that if you're struggling because there's illness or job loss or child care stress or anything that might disrupt the normal attendance of your family in this program, we want to know about it. First, so we can join you in praying about it. Second, so we can see if there's any way we can help you. And finally, so we don't 'hold it against you' when it comes time to send out letters about attendance records and sacramental preparation. We understand that things happen and families have hard times. We want to be here for you, as members of your extended family of faith.

So, if something happens (bad or good – let us celebrate with you as well!), let us know about it. Communication is so important to us. We want to be in relationship with you. We want to know you. We want to pray for you and with you. Please help us by being in touch. We put our contact information on the cover for this reason. We look forward to hearing from you.

In gratitude,

Jerry Harrington (aka "Mr. H.")
Director of Faith Formation

PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Why do we have a Religious Education Program?



TO HELP

The most important faith teachers in a child's life is their parent, grandparent, guardian, and family. A few hours a month cannot replace what your children learn from you. We take seriously the idea that our job is to help you be better faith shapers of your children.



TO CONNECT

Religious Education connects you to your parish community and your children to other children being raised as Catholics. It's important that we remember we are not alone in following Jesus, in doing what's right instead of what's convenient, in being Church.



TO PREPARE

Religious Education partners with families to see children prepared to receive Sacraments.



TO EXPAND

Religious Education expands your family's experiences of God, encounters with Jesus, and awareness of the Holy Spirit. To do that, we tell stories, discuss our lives, teach things, play games, and pray for and with each other. We do far more than teach; we catechize.



TO REMIND

Religious Education reminds families that the most important thing we do as Catholics is attend Sunday worship together as a community and so will always repeat:

MASS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN CLASS!

If you do not attend Mass as a family, sending your child to Religious Education does NOT make sense.

Day and Time and Calendar

Tuesday OR Wednesday (3x per month) - 5:30-7:00pm
September—Early May

Family Sessions

On the first week of every month, we gather as a community as families in the Church to experience a Family Session, in which families are invited to learn, pray, and do activities together as a family. Thus, if possible, please don't drop kids off for these sessions but send someone to be with them. If this poses a challenge, please contact us (see the Introduction above for more about communicating with us).

For these sessions, families come into the Church through the South entrance (the one facing the school building) all together and sit where instructed. At the end of the session, families exit the south doors and sign out; one adult can sign out the family, listing all the kids who were present.

Classroom Sessions

Twice each month, the children will gather in Program Groups (see below) in classrooms to pray, read, learn, play, discuss, and (hopefully!) encounter God with the help of Catechists and Assistant Catechists.

Classroom Sessions (cont.)

Drop Off - Parking Lot Prayer:

Please make every effort to arrive before 5:30pm and bring your child(ren) to the area of the parking lot outside the school building set aside by orange traffic cones where Program Groups will line up and Mr. H. will lead the community in an opening prayer.

Pick Up—Cafeteria Sign Out:

At 6:55pm the door to the school at the end of the sidewalk bordering the playground will be opened and guardians will be invited into the school cafeteria for no more than 5 minutes of announcements and a very brief closing prayer before being allowed to sign out their children.

Attendance

Attendance demonstrates commitment and priority. Attendance makes the Purposes of Religious Education possible (see that page above). Attendance includes Family Sessions, an essential part of our program.

As a general guideline, we ask that absences be limited to three during the program year (that count includes Family Sessions).

We understand that life sometimes gets challenging and sacrifices must be made. Whenever you know your family will not be in attendance, please contact us. We note every call, email, etc. and take it into account when determining consequences of several absences (such as delaying the reception of a Sacrament). If you didn't, please read the letter that introduces this handbook.

REGISTRATION

Timing

Registration takes place in the month of August. The Faith Formation Office hosts many Registration Events at which families can come to the office and complete the registration process. For details on dates and times see the parish bulletin, beginning at the end of July and throughout August.

Cost

Religious Education Programs do not receive parish subsidies and so much charge fees that cover our costs. Every family will be charged a basic program fee that covers the curriculum materials for that program. Additional fees may be charged for annual events like the Christmas Pageant or supplemental supplies for Sacramental Preparation. For a current fees list and worksheet to determine your family's total cost, see our separate Registration Packet.

Payment Methods

We accept cash, check (made payable to "St. Andrew Church"), and credit card (using the parish's payment processing platform). Credit card payment may be limited to in the Religious Education Office during Registration Events or other office hours.

Registration Process

There are three parts to the registration process.

Process (cont.)

Part 1: Parish Registration

To participate in Religious Education, a family must be registered members of St. Andrew Church. Thus, if a family is not registered in the parish, that process must be done. The Parish Registration Form is available on the parish website at www.standrewrcc.org/forms.

Part 2: Religious Education Registration

As the Registration Paperwork is long, we highly encourage you to download it and complete it before coming to the office. That way, you can do it at your leisure and your time in the office will be minimized. That packet will be available for download at www.standrewrcc.org/RelEdRegistration prior to Registration Events.

Part 3: Payment or Payment Plan

Finally, at a Registration Event, you will meet with a representative to verify that all the paperwork is complete and correct and make payment (or sign a plan for making payments). At that time, you will receive the needed program materials (like a book) and the year's schedule.

Sacrament Preparation

Our Bishop (of the Diocese of Venice in Florida) has determined that all preparation for the reception of Sacraments by youth be a two-year process. Thus, if your child has yet to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion he or she will be placed in a First-Year Program (either Loved or Called, depending on age, see below). Then, in the child's second year with us they will be placed in Blessed, our Sacrament Program.

REGISTRATION (cont.)

Late Registration

If you miss registration in August and want to enter your child into one of our Religious Education Programs, your child(ren) is always welcome. The date of your registration will be noted in their attendance record. Unfortunately, pro-rated fees are not possible as they mostly cover the cost of materials that is the same regardless of start date. And finally, a special note: if registering for a first-year program and your child begins after October 15, your child must repeat that first-year program the next year, unless special arrangements are made with the Director.

PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

Grade Level Program vs. Multiple Programs

Prior to 2018-19, St. Andrew Religious Education was a traditional single program based on the normal academic grade levels. In other words, children were registered into classes based on their grade in school and almost all children had a textbook geared to that grade level from the same publisher and series (most recently Alive in Christ by Our Sunday Visitor).

Beginning in the 2018-19 program year, St. Andrew Religious Education has moved to a different model: providing multiple programs all of which use different materials based on the faith formation needs of the children. This approach results in mixed age Groups instead of grade-based classes. Thus, children in their first year of faith formation beginning their two-year Sacrament preparation program will be grouped together, even if that Group consists of children aged 8-11 (third, fourth, and fifth graders).

Purposes of Multiple Programs

By placing children in the same situation together, each program best serves the needs of that group of children. Furthermore, having a group all in the same place gives catechists the best chance to meet children where they are. Finally, individual programs provide materials most appropriate for each group's needs.

Language

While all our catechesis is performed in English (by Diocesan rule) we recognize the fact that many of our families are bilingual, with parents speaking and reading primarily Spanish while the children speak and read English. To better include Spanish-speaking parents in their children's faith formation process we have chosen bilingual materials for all our programs whenever possible. This change did not increase the cost of our materials. For more specific information, see the Program Descriptions below.

Programs List



LOVED

First-year
Formation
for Grades 1-2



BLESSED

Sacrament
Preparation
for Grades 2-8



CALLED

First-year
Formation
for Grades 3-7



FORMED

Ongoing
Formation
for Grades 3-8

Other Programs for Children

These programs are not described in detail in this handbook because they involve the sacramental preparation of older youth and are administered outside the Religious Education family of programs run on weeknights as above. If you have children in these circumstances, contact the Faith Formation office for more information on these programs.



CONFIRMED

Confirmation Program
for Youth in Grades 9+
who have received Eucharist



WELCOMED

Sacrament Preparation
for Baptized Youth
in Grades 8+



RCIA-Y

(Rite of Christian Initiation adapted for Youth)

Initiation Program for Unbaptized Children
in Grades 8+

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS



LOVED

Placement:

First-year Formation

Ages:

Grades 1-2

Materials:

Knowing Our Catholic Faith (Loyola Press)

Unique Elements:

- Simple activity-based book for maximum engagement
- Music and prayer in every session



CALLED

Placement:

First-year Formation

Ages:

Grades 3-7

Materials:

Our Catholic Faith (Sadlier Press)

Unique Elements:

- 14 chapters for 14 classroom sessions, entire book explored
- “With My Family” feature gives family activities & prayers

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS (cont.)



BLESSED

Placement:

Sacrament Preparation (Second Year)

Ages:

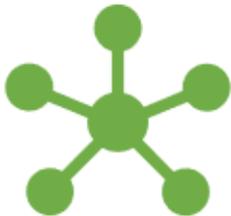
Grades 2-8

Materials:

Blessed (Dynamic Catholic Institute)

Unique Elements:

- Video-based content: over 70 animated videos
- Entire program is available online:
www.dynamiccatholic.com/blessed



FORMED

Placement:

Ongoing Formation

Ages:

Grades 3-8

Materials:

Gospel Weeklies (Pflaum Publishing)

Unique Elements:

- Weekly pamphlets distributed, no book to remember
- Lectionary-based topics: each week's session connects to the previous Sunday's Gospel

VOLUNTEERS

Overview

The ministry of Religious Education could not exist without the dedicated team of volunteers who generously give of their time, talents, and love every week. More important than any expertise, certification, education, or preparation, I want volunteers who love Jesus, pray and attend Mass, enjoy children, and try to live the best they can. In other words, if you attempt to live a good Catholic life, you qualify! The rest, I can teach you. If you would spend some time thinking about and (more importantly) praying about the following roles in our program, we'd appreciate it.

Occasional

When Religious Education has events like the Christmas Pageant or Spring Registration (planned for this next year!), we can use extra hands to help everything work. Folks in this group would be contacted throughout the year when need arises and are asked to respond as often as they are able.

Hall Monitor (twice a month during Classroom Sessions)

Hall monitors, well monitor halls. These individuals keep children going where they're supposed to, take messages between classrooms and staff, and help with drop off & pick up.

Door Keeper (twice a month during Classroom Sessions)

This person stands at the front doors of the school to open the building when the Groups come in from Parking Lot Prayer, receive late arriving children and help them get to their classrooms, and opens the door to the school near the cafeteria for the parents at the end of session.

VOLUNTEERS (cont.)

Catechist Assistant

(twice a month for Classroom Sessions)

This adult helps during Sessions, being extra hands to keep kids on task, watches little ones in need of a restroom trip, stepping in to manage discipline challenges (including bringing such children to the director), and generally helping the catechist in whatever way allows him or her to focus their attention on the ministry given during the session.

Teen Aide

(three times a month for Classroom Sessions and Family Sessions)

This position, for young people in high school, involves being both a Catechist Assistant during Classroom Sessions as well as extra hands and helpers for the director during Family Sessions. This role earns service hours as well as recommendation letters for college or scholarships (assuming you do a good job!).

Catechist

(four times a month for Family and Classroom Sessions as well as Catechist Meetings)

The Catechist is the most dedicated volunteer, taking on responsibility for planning and leading Classroom Sessions as well as growing in their own faith through a Diocesan Certification Program (an online curriculum done at one's own pace throughout the first year or more of volunteering). Catechists can be solely responsible for a Program Group or be partnered with another Catechist to share the responsibility of lesson planning and facilitating. This role is most crucial to the success of our program and should only be undertaken by those with a deep love of Jesus, the Church, and children who can reasonably expect to fulfill the responsibilities of planning and attending. If you are interested but unsure of yourself, contact the director to have a conversation.

Preconditions

In order to work with children in a church in the Diocese of Venice, all adult volunteers must pay for and undergo a criminal background check as well as attend a two-hour Safe Environment Training class. For more information, contact the Religious Education Office.

FINAL WORD

In Joy of the Gospel Pope Francis wrote: “On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over:

‘Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free you.’” (164)

To remind people of that proclamation is the reason we have Religious Education. Spend a few moments reminding yourself of it now and then share it with your children.