

***SAINT JOHN FISHER PARISH
PARENT/GUARDIAN
HANDBOOK
FOR RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION PROGRAM
(PREP)***



PHILOSOPHY OF SCHOOL

The *purpose* of our Religious Education School is to provide our youth with a love of God and God's people and go forth as disciples, as we encounter, follow and imitate Jesus' way of life. This is done through the well-prepared lessons afforded each week by our dedicated faculty. In addition to classes, our students attend prayer in the chapel weekly, have special devotions and prayer celebrations throughout the liturgical year. (All Saints' Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Rosary, Stations of the Cross and Presentation to Our Blessed Mother in May.)

Our *goal* is to teach our students the importance of following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ throughout their daily lives. Jesus, our Eucharist, is the source and summit from which all power flows. The children will be encouraged to attend Sunday Mass weekly with their family.

STAFF

Mrs. Kathleen A. Aaronson, Director of Children's Faith Formation

Mrs. Patricia A. Donnelly, Administrative Assistant for PREP

CLASS SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning – Sunday School – 9:30am to 10:30am

Tuesday Afternoon – Grades 1 to 5 – 4:30pm to 6:00pm

Tuesday Evening – Grades 1 to 5 – 6:15pm to 7:45pm

Wednesday Evening – Grades 6 and 7 – 6:15pm to 7:30pm

CURRICULUM

Our First session begins the second Tuesday and Wednesday of September with Children and their Parents. This meeting takes place in our Church with prayer and a talk from our Pastor. Then our children go to their assigned classroom in the Parish Center to meet their catechist and aides and the parents remain in Church for a review of procedures.. A Commitment Contract is given to all families to sign and return that day.

Our curriculum is built around the Religion guidelines from The Office of Catechetical Formation of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. What Catholics believe, how Catholics worship, how Catholics live and how Catholic pray are taught in every unit, at every level, every year. This ensures that the beliefs of our faith are introduced to and reinforced for our children as they grow, develop and mature in their faith.

This educationally sound method means that each catechist will build upon and reinforce what students learned previously in other grades. The result is age-appropriate learning on all topics of the faith.

Our yearly calendar is built upon the official calendar of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, not your school districts.

Progress reports are given to the children in the first week of February and at the end of the year. The student's knowledge of their religion, effort and conduct will be evaluated and recorded.

Each month, students are recognized for "Student of the Month". At the end of the year, students receive certificates for perfect attendance and good attendance (one absence). Catechists will be in touch throughout the year if they need to discuss your child's progress or behavior in school.

Each child will be given a tote bag with a folder with homework sheets, announcements, flyers and homework plus a textbook. Parents are asked to go through the communication folder

as soon as possible and see to it that your child completes any homework. Families are asked to provide a pouch with crayons, pencils, glue stick, safety scissors and markers.

Communication to families is sent through email. If your email addresses change, please let us know as soon as possible. Also, if your mailing address/phone numbers change, please inform us of the changes. School calendars, sacrament schedules are all posted on the parish website: stjohnfisherchurch.com.

RECEPTION OF SACRAMENTS

The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are first celebrated in second grade after two years of preparation as required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated in the spring of the student's seventh grade year.

Before the reception of Sacraments, proof of the reception of Baptism is required from the parish that the child was baptized.

Candidates exhibiting chronic absences, lateness, early dismissal or who present persistent discipline problem may have their reception of the above Sacraments deferred until the following year.

Preparation for the reception of a sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A student's and parents' desire to celebrate a sacrament is reflected in the student's positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus, proper attendance and behavior are required.

Family meetings will take place throughout the preparation year. Parents are asked to be present at all our gatherings. The candidates will also experience retreats in preparation for the above Sacraments. Paperwork will be given out to families at different gatherings. Parents are asked to keep track of all materials and keep

them in a safe place. If lost, a duplicating fee of \$10.00 will be charged. If the special family books are lost, a new one will cost \$20.00.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Parents are asked to bring their child to religion school at the required session time. Please allow for traffic in the area and make sure your child has had a snack. Parents are asked to park their cars in the parking lot, behind the cones, and walk their child(ren) to the Parish Center. Your child(dren) will then proceed to their respective classroom.

At dismissal, parents are to wait in the lobby of the Parish Center. The children will assemble in the Parish Center hall, say a closing prayer and then we open the doors for parents to enter.

Please note: If a child is to leave early, please contact the Religious Education office or send in a note with the reason your child is leaving early. If there are too many early dismissals, you will need to change sessions so the child is not constantly missing too much information.

EMERGENCY CLOSING: In the event of an emergency or inclement weather, we will have a message sent to all through email and followed by a phone call from the catechist or aide. Also an outgoing message will be placed on the PREP phone line.

ATTENDANCE/ABSENCES

Time is precious and we are required by the Archdiocese to complete the same grade curriculum that is required of all children, whether in Catholic school or PREP. Therefore, three (3) absences is the limit as dictated from the Archdiocese.

Students are required to make up all assignments to the catechist's satisfaction. Throughout the year, students are given

tests/quizzes to see if they are remembering the taught material. Too many absences affect the child's retention of taught material.

Sessions begin promptly at their designated times. Therefore, any student arriving after the designated time will be considered late. It is strongly recommended that children arrive 10 minutes prior to the scheduled time. Lateness will be noted on the Progress reports. Chronic lateness will require a conference with a parent and might interfere with a student's promotion and reception of Sacraments.

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Our students must always be respectful of the property we share with the parish and also respectful of their catechists and aides.

Inappropriate behavior of any kind will not be tolerated!

It is our policy to provide a safe, secure and respectful educational environment for all students. Acts of harassment, hazing, intimidation and bullying (including cyber bullying) are prohibited in our school. Students and faculty alike will be instructed to report any such behavior to a catechist and Mrs. Aaronson. If incidents do occur, students should be able to report and know that the inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and such behavior will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This behavior will lead to a parent/student meeting with Mrs. Aaronson and with the Pastor for further discussion and/or removal from the school.

The following behaviors are considered bullying:

1. Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling.
2. Getting another person to hit or harm someone else.
3. Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks.
4. Excluding or rejecting someone.
5. Making rude and threatening gestures.
6. Spreading rumors about another which would be harmful.

If the bullying is threatening harm in any way, a student should tell an adult in authority and report the incident to Mrs. Aaronson.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written or electronic, by a child against any member of the school community, the child, if suspended but not dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance before returning to school.

CONTRABAND

Bringing contraband to sessions is strictly prohibited and will be confiscated and returned to parents.

Items considered contraband include, but not limited to food, beverages, toys, electronic games, beepers, hand-held music devices, weapons, drugs and alcohol products. It is unlawful for minors to be in possession of alcohol or tobacco products. Students found to be in possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the school. Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.

It is our policy to respect the privacy of its students. However, in the event that a student is suspected of having weapons or drugs in his/her possession, or is believed to be a threat to himself/herself or others, the director will be notified immediately. The director will conduct a search with an adult staff member as a witness. Refusal on the part of the student to cooperate will result in the parents / guardians being contacted and asked to assist in the student's immediate dismissal from the school.

PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

According to the policies of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, a Safe environment lesson will be introduced to each class during the school year (March).

DRESS ATTIRE/SNACKS/PREPARATION

Although we meet after day school hours, students should be appropriately dressed for school. Pajama pants or slippers or cleats are not to be worn at any time. Students should be prepared for class with their pouch of supplies, books and their communication folder. Snacks are not permitted in the classroom unless we have a medical note. Water bottles are acceptable. Our classrooms are for the use of all children in the parish and we all must respect each other's property.

HOMEWORK

Our catechists spend a great deal of time preparing lessons. It follows that our students should also prepare. Your responsibility as a parent is to see that your child completes any homework assignment prior to class. The homework may be a prayer to memorize, a page to read to the family, a worksheet to complete. Parents are encouraged to set aside time to review these assignments along with your child's regular academic homework

LEGAL ISSUES

Any court order concerning visitation rights/custody issues should be given to Mrs. Aaronson by both biological parents. A copy should be on file in the Religious Education office. If there are changes during the course of the year, it is the responsibility of both parents to provide the new documents immediately.

MEDICAL ISSUES

If your child has a special medical need requiring administration of medications such as Insulin, Epi-pen, Inhaler etc., this information is to be presented to Mrs. Aaronson. No child should have these drugs on their possession.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones are to be turned off before entering the Parish Center. If a child has it out in the classroom, the catechist will hold on to it and return to the parent at dismissal. We are not responsible for lost or damaged cell phones

PARISH ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

Parents are welcome and encouraged to become involved in our programs throughout the Parish. Our PREP students are welcome to become altar servers, choir members and youth lectors. Parish activity flyers will be sent home with the students.

OUTREACH PROJECTS

AUGUST – BACK TO SCHOOL SUPPLIES
SEPTEMBER – PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY
OCTOBER – THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE
NOVEMBER – ADVENT GIVING TREE
JANUARY – BREAKFAST BAGS
FEBRUARY – OPERATION BABY CARE
MARCH – LENTEN RICE BOWL COLLECTION
APRIL – OPERATION CARE

REGULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE FAITH LIFE OF THE PARISH

Sunday Masses, Prayer services, Sacrament celebrations, etc.

Parents play a very important role in forming the values and attitudes of their children, especially as those children prepare to receive the Sacraments of the Church. Through their words and actions, "parents nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness of lived faith".

If you and your children are not participating in Mass and the sacraments, real conflicts may arise between the doctrine that is taught in religion class and what is practiced at home. Please celebrate our Catholic faith with your children. It is a lifetime gift.

EVERY CHILD IS A CHILD OF GOD

As parents and catechists, it is important to share these faith messages with your children to foster a sense of well-being and self-esteem:

God loves you and so do I.
God believes in you and so do I.
God will be with you in every situation.
God will help you and care for you.
God listens to you and so do I.
God cares for you and so do I.
You are unique and important to God, and
you are unique and important to us too!

***GOD IS GOOD!
ALL THE TIME!***

***ALL THE TIME!
GOD IS GOOD!***

