

St. Rita Catholic Parish's

Journey Catholic Kids & Journey Catholic Youth

Religious Education Program Parent Handbook



Journey Catholic Kids

St. Rita Parish - Racine, WI

Journey
catholic youth

St. Rita Parish - Racine, WI

Rachel Kroes
Director of Religious Education
262-639-6280
KroesR@archmil.org

Program Overview

Our Religious Education Programs, Journey Catholic Kids and Journey Catholic Youth, offer class instruction concerning the teachings of the Roman Catholic faith for children and youth in Preschool through 11th grade.

Our programs aim to foster the spiritual development of children and youth within the context of family: as a member of his or her own family, as a member of the family of our faith, and as an important member of our parish community. We acknowledge and understand every person is on their faith journey and welcome all people no matter where they are on that journey.

Classes are taught by dedicated volunteer catechists who are committed Catholic Christians and who are knowledgeable about the teachings of the Church.

Materials, which are developmentally appropriate and are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are used throughout the program. Our curriculum is structured via the requirements of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. We also use interactive instructional approaches to involve all children and youth in order to recognize each individual's unique gifts and growth in the faith and the community.

Class Materials

Every student that is part of the Journey Catholic Kids and Journey Catholic Youth programs will receive instructional material specific to their grade level.

In Preschool, our children are introduced to the love of Jesus Christ through "Stories of God's Love" packets published by RCL Benziger.

In grades K-8, students will receive a new book through the "Finding God" series published by Loyola Press. Each book will be labeled with your child's name and kept in their classroom in order to ensure the books are readily available to use during each class period.

The 9th graders use the video based "Chosen" series. It walks them through why they are chosen to be Catholic. It gives them good thought provoking conversations.

The 10th graders use DOCAT. Using this book, they learn about the Catholic social teaching of the church.

Our Confirmation candidates spend their year preparing for the sacrament itself using specific Confirmation preparation materials. This year, our Confirmation candidates are using "Decision Point" which is written and created by Matthew Kelly and published through Dynamic Catholic. Each Confirmation candidate will receive a workbook.

Please note, catechists are also encouraged to pull in outside activities such as Stations of the Cross, the Holy Rosary and other interesting, age-appropriate topics in order to enhance the curriculum. Activities in the classroom that supplement the curriculum will also take place during your child's time in the program. There will also be a class period where children and teens in grades 3-11 will have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Catholic Church requires practicing Catholics to receive this sacrament at least once a year; therefore, we make it easy for our children and youth to fulfill that requirement.

Attendance

We are all here to learn and grow in our faith. Therefore, it is paramount to be present so we can achieve our goals!

Please call or email if you know your child/teen is going to miss class. If you do not call your child/teen in as absent, and they are not in class, you will receive a call from the Religious Education Office to let you know your child was not present. *This is done as an extra safety precaution.*

You may call the Religious Education Office at **262-639-6280** or email **KroesR@archmil.org** with the following information concerning an absence:

- 1. Name of child, first and last**
- 2. Class session and grade**

If a student has missed many consecutive classes, as a parent/guardian, you may request make-up work to be picked up and completed by your child. If a child or teen is preparing for a Sacrament and has a chain of absences, an appropriate plan consisting of make-up work may be required in order to ensure they are prepared. This is handled on a per-situation basis.

Service Projects

Serving others and helping within our community are an important part of being a Catholic.

Students within PreK-8th grade may be completing service projects during their class time if time allows. Service projects at this age are encouraged within the classroom, but not required in any way. It is up to the catechist's discretion.

High school students are to complete service hours to expand their knowledge on Catholic Social Teachings and the Spiritual & Corporal Works of Mercy. In addition, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires service to be completed prior to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. **Therefore, 20 hours' worth of service hours must be completed before the conclusion of 11th grade. At least 5 hours must be done here at St. Rita's.** Service work may involve the parish, local community and they are allowed to volunteer within any capacity possible. (Sports, Parish Functions, Animal Shelters, etc.)

High School Students: When a service project is completed, please track your service hours on a service hour chart which is also to be signed by the person you are doing the work for. **Current 10th and 11th graders: you may fill out these charts based on the honors system and hand them into me as I know you have previously done a lot of service work prior to this year! I just need something on file. 😊**

Classes

Where is my classroom?

Preschool will be meeting in the "Bride's Room" in the church.

K-5th graders will meet in a designated classroom in the school. There will be a map as you enter through the side door of the school building indicating where each grade's classroom is. There will also be a sign posted on the door of the classroom with the grade level.

Middle School and 9th and 10th graders: you will be meeting in classrooms in the school.

Confirmation students will be meeting in a designated classroom in the school. Please look for the sign!

Children and teens may meet in the gym before class begins at 6:00pm. Please enter through the doors on the southeast corner of the building.

Door Locking

Our doors will be locked for the majority of class time for safety purposes. If the doors are locked and you need to get to your child/teen, please simply press the buzzer by the southeast doors.

Transportation

When students are being dropped off and picked up from the building we ask that drivers maneuver very carefully in and out of the parking lot. Please be aware of students running to their parent's vehicle and express patience with each other.

Parents with students in grades PreK-3 must drop off their child and pick them up at their classrooms. Please help us in keeping our children safe by walking them to their classroom doors and picking them up at their classroom every week. An older brother or sister is not allowed to sign them in or out as it has to be an adult (parent, grandparent, friend, nanny, etc.)

If your child must leave in the middle of class time, please come into the building to pick them up. If you are unable to leave your vehicle, please send Rachel an email stating when the child should be walked out to your vehicle.

If someone of driving age who has driven themselves to class must leave early from class, an email from the parent must be on file in order for them to leave unless it is an absolute emergency and we are notified by the parent/guardian. Under no circumstance are teens able to leave class early without notification.

Cell Phones

Cell phones are not permitted to be used during class time. I understand this is difficult as we are dependent and connected to our devices; however, class time is fairly short and sometimes it feels good to "unplug" for an hour during the day.

Before class begins, students must silence their cell phone, and it should not be visible. If the cell phone is seen or heard during class time and it becomes a reoccurring issue, the catechist will make a note of it so parents can be informed. If it becomes a distraction, the catechist or DRE will take the phone and hold it till the end of that class and the parent will be notified. *If an emergency arises or the student is expecting an important call or text during the class period, the student must let their catechist know before class begins to avoid unnecessary conflict. Please call the RE office first before texting or calling your student in class.*

Snack

We are leaving it up to the catechist if they would like to do a snack or not. Parents of students with health concerns should let the catechist know. Catechists will have a list of students who listed allergies on their form. Students may decline the snack offered to them during class time, as well. Please know, the confidentiality of health concerns is kept to a high degree between St. Rita staff and the catechist.

Behavior

Just as in school or at home, there is an expectation of good behavior from all students. There is a zero tolerance policy for bullying, disrespect or poor behavior. Catechists are urged to put a halt to poor behavior with sensitivity and with kindness. If there is a student who continues to act up, there is a 3-strikes policy. On the third time poor behavior is exhibited, the Director of Religious Education will call the parents/guardians of the student to discuss what is happening during class. If the behavior issues continue then Fr. Michael Petersen will be notified, and if the issues still do not resolve themselves, the parents will be expected to attend class with the child for the remainder of the year.

Safeguarding All God's Family Classes

In the pastoral effort to respond to the need for the protection of children and youth, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee has enhanced its Safeguarding All of God's Family program and developed additional curriculum for all children and youth. As a part of this program, all children and youth in grades K4 through 12 in schools and religious education programs will be given additional information on how to protect themselves and become aware of their surroundings.

These class sessions will happen throughout the Religious Education Program year. Parents will receive a letter approximately two weeks prior to the class sessions being offered. The letter will state the date, time, concepts being covered, and goals of the lesson. You are encouraged (not required) to attend with your child/teen on the time and date scheduled. Also stated in the letter is an option to opt out of the lesson. If you choose to have your child/teen opt out of the lesson, please contact the Religious Education Office to inform us of your decision. If that is the decision you choose, you

must sign the Opt-Out Form (that does not ask for reasoning). If your child happens to be absent the day of their Safeguarding lesson, the materials covered will be sent home through the mail.

For more information about the Safeguarding All God's Family Program please visit the Archdiocesan website: <http://www.archmil.org/offices/safeguarding.htm>. Please note, you may also stop in during Office Hours to view the grade-specific curriculum that is set forth by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Communication

Website

Our website: www.st-ritas.org is an excellent place to check for information on anything happening in the parish, specifically in regards to the Journey Catholic Kids or Journey Catholic Youth programs. If you have a question, this is the first place you should check.

In general, my preferred form of communication is email. Please get into the habit of checking your emails.

At times, our internet connection in the school building is interrupted or shut down. This leads to voicemails and emails being lost in cyber space. If you send me an email or leave me a voicemail and I do not return your message within 1 business day, please try to get a hold of me again as there is a very good chance the message/email was undelivered. In addition, please note that I not only have the Archdiocesan firewall that keeps me from getting emails, but the school firewall as well. For example, if your email address is "rebecca@((your business name)).com" then the *school* firewall may read that as a potential threat and it will not be delivered to me and you will not receive a bounce-back email stating it was undeliverable. Therefore, if you email me and do not hear back, please call or use a different email address that is a @gmail or @yahoo, etc.

Weather closings: If classes are cancelled due to inclement weather, please check all major news stations (TMJ4, FOX 6, etc.). There will also be an email that goes out. Please note, the rule of thumb that I follow is: if RUSD is closed, so are we!

1st Holy Communion/1st Reconciliation

The celebration of the sacrament of 1st Communion and 1st Reconciliation is in 2nd grade. Students preparing for these sacraments need to have completed 1st Grade Religious Education before entering preparation for 1st Communion and 1st Reconciliation. If your child has not had previous catechesis before entering the 2nd

grade, each case will be handled on a personalized basis to ensure the child is ready. Please see Rachel Kroes for further details if that situation pertains to you. Families that have children in the 2nd grade will be responsible for attending ***all preparatory classes, all rehearsals, and the dates of all sacraments.*** The dates and times for all of these events are currently available in the Religious Education Office, online and will be sent home during class time and via email. There is no take home-work for students who attend St. Rita School. All prep is done as a part of their Catholic school education. Students from St. Rita School are expected to attend retreats and rehearsals. Also, students are to prepare to receive the sacrament at the parish in which they belong to as that is where sacraments of initiation should take place.

Confirmation

The celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation happens in 11th grade. Students preparing for this sacrament must have completed 10th grade Religious Education before entering preparation for Confirmation. If your teen has not had previous catechesis before entering into 11th grade, each case will be handled on a personalized basis to make sure your teen is ready.

Confirmation year, junior year, is already a busy year for students; however, the sacrament of Confirmation is something that should be fun to prepare for. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires class sessions, a letter of intent to the Bishop administering the sacrament, for a student to pick a confirmation name, a sponsor, a Confirmation retreat, service hours and an interview prior to receiving the sacrament. **All of these steps do take extra time but they are so worth it in the end.** I do my best to make these additional requirements that are put forth by the church as interesting and fun as possible. I will send out a webinar for Confirmation candidates where we explore the details of each of these requirements. **A folder will be given to Confirmation students on the first day of class with all of the materials for the year ahead!**