



St. Callistus

Religious Education
Family Handbook



St. Callistus Religious Education

Parent / Student Handbook

Introduction

The Catholic Church has issued many documents that describe the ministry of catechesis. This program is based upon the principles and guidelines found in these documents: *The General Directory for Catechesis*, *The National Catechetical Directory*, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* as well as diocesan statements on ministry of catechesis provide a framework for our parish programs. The following is a summary of the most important directives provided by these documents and a clarification of how they help guide the catechetical program in this parish.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes Pope John Paul II from *Catechesi Tradendae* as he describes what is entailed in the ministry of catechesis:

Catechesis is an education in faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.

CCC #5

The National Catechetical Directory further clarifies what elements should be a part of a quality catechetical program:

Like other pastoral activities, catechetical ministry must be understood in relation to Jesus' threefold mission. It is a form of the ministry of the word, which proclaims and teaches. It leads to and flows from the ministry of worship, which sanctifies through prayer and sacrament. It supports the ministry of service, which is linked to efforts to achieve social justice ...

NCD #32

Guided by the principles found in the documents of the Church concerning the ministry of catechesis, the catechetical program of the parish will include the following elements:

MESSAGE

The story of Scripture and the teachings of the Church will be communicated within the context of the faith story of each student and the signs of the times.

COMMUNITY

Efforts will be made to form Christian community among the students through interaction and faith sharing.

WORSHIP

The participants will experience many forms of Catholic prayer and worship to help them become prayerful people.

SERVICE

Participants will be called to service and justice, which is inherent in the message of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

Religious Education and formation of Saint Callistus Parish are meant to provide structure and foster growth in Christian living. Our purpose is to provide opportunities, so the faith of all members becomes living and active through the light of formal and informal instruction.

This educational ministry, supplemental to that of the instruction by the individual family is offered on the elementary, middle and high school, and adult levels on the fundamental pillars of:

Message, Community, Worship, Service

Saint Callistus Religious Education

Vision Statement

The Community of St. Callistus provides a warm environment so that all will be able to grow in awareness of the Love of God through knowledge and the practice of a faith sharing community to show the love of God to others.

Love God, Love Others, Make Disciples

PROGRAM GOALS

Saint Callistus Catholic Parish strives to be a Christian community faithful to the Gospel and the Catholic Tradition. The parish is a community of communities: students, faculty, townspeople, commuters, laborers, all united in the endless struggle and search to know, love and serve God, self and one another. The unique diversity of the parish offers at once a challenge and a rich resource for learning.

The goals of Saint Callistus Catechetical program are:

- To provide a program of formal religious instruction for the children and youth of the parish.
- To support parents in their role as primary educators of their children.
- To offer sacramental preparation to children and youth.
- To help youth discover the richness and challenges of Scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church.
- To build a strong Catholic identity among the youth of the parish.
- To allow youth to experience the Church as community.
- To deepen the prayer life of children and youth.
- To motivate youth to live lives rooted in charity and justice based on the moral teachings of the church.
- To expose students to the liturgical and sacramental richness that is part of the Catholic Tradition.
- To enable students to become responsible, self-reflecting, loving and praying individuals.
- To make programs that meet diverse spiritual needs available to adults of the parish.

ADMISSION POLICIES

Saint Callistus religious education program does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, physical or mental challenges.

Any family that is registered in Saint Callistus parish may enroll their children in the catechetical program. In order for their children to be admitted, the family must complete the appropriate registration and student information forms and indicate that they have read and accept the policies contained in this handbook. Parents are also required to fill out a health form on each of the children they seek to enroll in the program.

Students are typically enrolled in the grade in which they are currently attending school, unless other arrangements are made with the religious education leader. An exception to this may be necessary to meet specific requirement for sacramental preparation.

A general registration session for all children not already attending religious education classes will be held in September. Families who wish to enroll their children at other times during the year may do so by contacting the religious education leader.

BOOKS AND MATERIALS

All students will be given the necessary books and supplies for class. Materials are to be kept in the classroom. If, for any reason, materials are damaged, the family would be asked to pay for a new set.

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES

Families with children who were not baptized at this parish are requested to bring a copy of the baptismal certificate, along with any other sacramental records, when they initially enroll their child in the program. Children who have not been baptized will be accepted into the program provided the family intends to have them baptized and is willing to work with the Religious Education Leader and priest to make that happen.

PARENTS AND CATECHISTS

Catechists that teach the classes in the religious education program are volunteers. The parish has made every effort to screen them to ensure that they can handle the responsibility involved in this ministry. The religious education leader supervises the catechists to help them fulfill their responsibility. As parents you are asked to recognize the challenges involved in being a volunteer catechist and to support them in whatever ways possible. If any problems arise, however, please first contact the religious education leader to discuss the situation. The leader will discuss the situation with the catechist to try to find a resolution.

CLASSES

ATTENDANCE

Children who are enrolled in the parish catechetical program are expected to be in attendance for each scheduled class session. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) to ensure their presence. If your child is absent, you are asked to contact the religious education leader / office in advance. Attendance will be taken weekly. It is so important to have your child in class, we get so little time to spend with the children. There are attendance stipulations, set forth from the diocese, for sacramental preparation. Class attendance should always be a priority, but during the preparation years for sacraments we will require an 80% attendance to properly be prepared. Any student who misses more than 80% of the classes will be required to make up class time: either with Mrs. Smith, with materials being sent home, or with online materials.

ABSENCES

When a child is absent, a written note, email, text message or phone call should be sent to the religious education leader.

MISSED CLASSES

Each class session builds on the material covered in the preceding classes. Children who are absent miss a great deal and will have to make up the material covered in the missed class.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Classes are held in the Religious Education Center. Parent(s) are asked to bring their children before the start of class. Supervision will be provided for students during the stated class times. Please pick your child up promptly at the end of class. Elementary students are asked to be picked up at the classrooms, unless otherwise stated due to an activity. Middle and High school students can be picked up in the back parking lot. Children will only be permitted to ride home with designated people from their registration packet. If a child has permission to go with another adult, please send a note, email, call or text to the Religious Education leader prior to class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Elementary classes will be held Sunday mornings between masses from 8:45 – 10:15. Middle school and high school classes will meet Sunday evenings from 6:00 – 7:30. The calendar of classes gives the starting and ending dates of classes, along with weekends with no classes.

STUDENT RECORDS

Saint Callistus' religious education leader will maintain a file for each student / family. Included in the file will be: registration form, copy of children's Baptismal Certificate, record of sacrament received at St. Callistus, along with attendance records. These records are the property of St. Callistus and are available to all the professional staff of the parish. This material will not be released to anyone outside those mentioned without the written consent of the parent.

CURRICULUM

Saint Callistus follows the Diocese of Erie *Curriculum Guidelines* issued by Bishop Lawrence Persico. Textbooks and other materials used in the classrooms of Saint Callistus are in the conformity with the teachings found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and have been selected to most closely match the Diocesan Curriculum. They have also been chosen because they offer the catechist the resources necessary to conduct classes, which include all the elements of the ministry of catechesis. Presently the textbooks / materials used are:

Elementary	St. Marys Press – Discover
Middle School	EDGE – Lifeteen
Confirmation	PURPOSE – Lifeteen

HOMESCHOOLING

Some parents, especially those who homeschool their children instead of sending them to public school, may choose to offer catechetical instruction to their children at home. Because the pastor is responsible for all forms of catechesis in the parish, it is the parent's responsibility to communicate with the pastor and the Director of Religious Education that they wish to offer catechesis to their children at home.

The Diocese of Erie has specific requirements concerning home schooling. As a parish of the Diocese of Erie, we follow these policies and guidelines. If you are interested in home schooling, please contact the religious education leader for a copy of the diocesan guidelines concerning home schooling. Once you have read the guidelines and feel that you would like to undertake this project, please contact the religious education leader as she has been delegated to oversee this process in the name of the pastor.

SACRAMENTS / LITURGY

The parish follows the Diocesan policies for sacramental preparation.

Children are prepared for the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** during the second grade. The preparation involves family workshops (parent meetings), a retreat, and catechesis at home, along with classroom preparations as found in the regular classroom text. First Reconciliation will be held during the Lenten season.

Students are prepared for **First Holy Communion** in the third grade. The preparation involves family workshops (parent meetings), a retreat, along with regular classroom instruction. First Holy Communion is celebrated during a weekend mass set by the pastor of the parish, typically during the Easter season.

Confirmation is celebrated in 9th grade at Saint Callistus. The preparation involves gathered sessions with the youth, a retreat, parent meeting, service opportunities, and a small group meeting with the pastor. Confirmation is celebrated with other parishes in the spring. The parish that hosts confirmation is determined by the Divine Office of Worship at the diocesan offices.

Celebration of Liturgy and the Liturgical Year: In an attempt to help children and youth understand more deeply the power and mystery of the sacred liturgy, they will be given the opportunity to celebrate the season of the liturgical year, through workshops and prayer.

Youth will also be given the opportunity to plan and celebrate paraliturgies (prayer services) and Eucharistic liturgies (Mass).

SPECIAL EVENTS

Parents will be notified regarding any event or field trip for which the children will be taken off the parish grounds. No child will be required to attend such an event. However, if the child does desire To attend a field trip or special event, the parent will be notified with a letter about the event. No child can be taken on such trips without the required permission/medical forms. At this time you will be told of the time of departure and arrival.

DISCIPLINE

Everyone involved in the program is challenged by the words and example of Jesus to respect each person's right to be treated not only with dignity and respect but also with love. In order to provide for a safe and well - ordered program in which students and catechists can learn to follow Jesus' call to love, some rules for behavior are necessary. Students are expected by their behavior to make the classes safe and positive for themselves and their classmates. The program exists for student growth and in turn students are expected to carry out the following responsibilities:

1. Show respect to catechists, other students and program personnel.
2. Treat the property and physical space with respect.
3. Be present only in the areas of the building for which they have permission at a specific time.
4. Act in a safe manner in and around the building,
5. Use appropriate voice levels in the building.
6. Use of, or possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco is strictly prohibited. Such items will be seized and parents contacted immediately. The child will be immediately removed from the environment.

Good discipline is self-discipline and is always aimed toward growth. We recognize that children may make mistakes and the role of the catechist at times will be one of guiding and correcting those mistakes in a positive manner. These corrections will always be done with the best interest of the child in mind and at no time will Saint Callistus accept the demeaning or intimidation of children in the name of discipline.

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

At the time of the first correction, the student will be warned.

Students whose behavior becomes a continual problem in the classroom will be sent out of class to the religious education leader. Anytime a student is sent from class for disciplinary reasons their parent(s) will be contacted by phone, in person, or writing.

If a student's behavior continues to be a problem, the student will be removed from class and the parent(s) will be contacted again. In order to return to the classroom, the student and parent(s) will meet with the catechist and religious education leader to resolve the issues. At this time the parent(s) may be asked to sit in on the class for a few weeks to observe their child and his/her interaction with the catechist and other students.

As a last recourse, when a conflict between a student and catechist cannot be resolved, the parent(s) will be asked to finish the year at home with the child. The child be treated as one who is being homeschooled the parish will follow the Diocesan guidelines concerning homeschooling.

The child will be admitted into the program the next calendar year with no prejudice.

CHILD ABUSE

Saint Callistus pastor is required by the Pennsylvania Revised Code and Diocesan Policy on Child Abuse to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. All other staff members of Saint Callistus, both paid and volunteer, are bound by Christian conscience and as mandated reporters to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. All parish staff and volunteers have participated in an in-service training on child abuse identification and reporting procedures.

WEAPONS POLICY

In order to ensure a safe and Christian environment, it is forbidden for anyone to possess a weapon or any object/material/substance that could be used as a weapon or confused with a real weapon by any reasonable person (toy gun, etc.) in the buildings, or within the geographic boundaries of the Saint Callistus, or in any location used by the parish to conduct any catechetical activity, or in any conveyance providing transportation to or from any activity related to the religious education program.

Weapons or potential weapons will be confiscated by the religious education leader when this action does **not** place the religious education leader in danger. If the student has used a weapon against another person or will not surrender the weapon or offending object/substance immediately and willingly, the local police will be called first, followed by notification of the parent(s). This is a zero-tolerance policy.

Any student who violates this policy will be subject to immediate parish disciplinary action over and above any civil/criminal action brought by injured parties.

The student will be removed from the religious education class and an alternative method of religious education will be negotiated with the parents for the remainder of the year. Judgements about readmittance to the program for the following year will be made on a case-by-case basis and this decision is by the sole discretion of the pastor.

If the incident involves an exchange of bodily fluids (for example, as in a wound which breaks the skin), the student(s) will be asked to submit to medical tests for transmittable diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis B as recommended by a doctor. These tests will be at the parent(s) expense. In the name of being a community of Christians motivated by care and respect, this policy asks that the results of these tests, which are governed by guidelines of strict confidentiality, be openly shared with the respective parties on a need-to-know basis.

THREATS OF VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

As a community of believers who value patience over aggression, and love above all else, it is inconsistent with our basic values to tolerate an environment of threat or fear. Threats of harm made against another individual or group of individuals are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

This policy recognizes that in any community of people there will always be some conflict. Students will always be encouraged to manage their conflict in a positive, non-aggressive manner. Behavior such as cursing, pushing or fighting will not be tolerated.

In cases which are deemed by the catechist or religious education leader to be 'minor' (meaning: no reason to believe the situation would lead to physical harm) the students will be separated and encouraged to work out their differences after a "cool-down" period.

If the catechist regards the altercation as 'serious' (meaning: reasonable expectation that the conflict will lead to physical harm) the students will be immediately separated, the religious education leader will be notified, and the parent(s) of the students will be called. The religious education leader must determine that the conflict is resolved before the students will be readmitted to the program.

Students are expected to report to their catechist or religious education leader any threat made by a student which mentions killing of any person. Such threats will be immediately reported to the police for investigation. The student making such threats will be suspended from the program until such time as the police investigation is completed and the appropriate authorities are satisfied that there is no real threat of harm. In such case, judgments about readmittance to the program will be made on a case-by-case basis and this decision is at the sole discretion of the pastor.

HARASSMENT

Respect for the dignity and worth of everyone is a basic precept of Catholic doctrine and therefore Saint Callistus parish. Each person is entitled to work in an environment free from discriminatory practices such as any form of harassment based on race, sex, creed, color, age, or disability including sexual harassment. Parish leadership wishes to be vigilant regarding harassment whether between or among catechists and / or parish leaders, among students or between catechists/ parish leaders and students. Such behavior will not be tolerated and if persistent harassment is proven, the offender will be dismissed when this is appropriate. Harassment of all forms is illegal as well as immoral and individuals will be encouraged to seek legal protection when necessary.

The term 'harassment' refers to behavior that is not welcome, that is personally offensive and that fails to treat others with dignity and respect. It includes treating someone unfavorably because of their race, sex, creed, color, age or disability. Harassment may take the form of discrimination, unwelcome or critical comments or action. Harassment based on sex might include unwelcome sexual advances, requests or demands for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct, including, but not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, intimations or comments.
- Visual contact such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures.
- Physical contact such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movements, or interfering with work, study or play because of sex.
- Retaliations for having reported or threatened to report such harassment.

The term "sexual harassment" refers to harassment based on the gender of the offended individual when the people involved are of different "levels" within the parish. It involves threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of employment, grades or other benefits or to avoid some other loss and offers of benefits in return for sexual favors. It also means creating a hostile environment for the student or employee such that it is an unfit environment for learning or work. Examples include, but are not limited to repeated unwelcome sexual advances, repeated sexually explicit jokes or comments, or the displaying of sexually inappropriate materials.

Allegations and complaints of any type of harassment must be reported as soon as possible. Parent(s) who become aware of incidents of sexual harassment should report them immediately to the pastor or to the religious education leader.

WEATHER AND OTHER EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

Classes may be canceled from time to time because of inclement weather. The following direction for parents is offered:

- Remind Messages will be sent out informing you of cancellation of class.
- Text Messages will be sent out from the Religious Education Leader
- Phone calls may be sent out

As always, parents have the right to deem the weather too unstable for class. If a parent makes the decision to keep the child home because of weather, the parent should still call, text, or email the religious education leader.

SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR FIRES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES

There are safety procedures posted in each room for fire and tornado emergencies. Catechists will instruct the students in these procedures in the first week of class. In case of fire or tornado, attendance will be taken after an emergency evacuation, and no child will be dismissed without their parent or guardian. Parent(s) must check with the religious education leader before leaving with their child to avoid unnecessary search and rescue operations.

SICKNESS AND INJURY

SICKNESS

Should a child become ill while in class, parent(s) will be contacted according to the information provided on the student medical form. If the parent is unavailable, attempts will be made to reach a backup person listed. The religious education leader will make every effort to keep the child comfortable until he/she is picked up. Medication will not be administered to the child.

MEDICATIONS

Children are NOT to bring medications with them to religious education classes without advance permission of the religious education leader. It is the responsibility of parent(s) to notify the religious education leader immediately of any changes in allergies or dietary restrictions.

INJURY

Catechists are asked to report any injury to the religious education leader immediately. If an injury occurs, first aid will be administered in strict accordance with the Blood-borne Pathogens regulations of the Diocese of Erie and the parent(s) will be contacted. If the injury requires immediate medical attention, the religious education leader will call the appropriate emergency services, followed by a call to the parent(s). A first aid kit is available in the religious education office.