



St. James Parish

Office of Faith Formation

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Philosophy

The philosophy of the St. James Parish Religious Education Program is to aid the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each student in preparing that child to become a mature and contributing member of the Christian community and society at large. The program will aid parents/guardians in their role as the primary educators of their child by providing opportunities for their child to increase his/her knowledge and experience of God, the Church, self, and society.

The program further assists the parents/guardians by cooperating with them in preparation for their child's reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. Similarly, the program aids the parents/guardians in increasing their child's understanding of, appreciation for, and participation in the Church's celebration of these sacraments and in fulfilling the Church's mission of service to society.

The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in Him. In catechesis, "Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, is taught—everything else is taught with reference to Him and it is Christ alone who teaches—anyone else teaches to the extent that he or she is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his or her lips. Every catechist should be able to apply to themselves the mysterious words of Jesus: 'My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me.'" (CCC 427)

These Guidelines have been developed to provide the family with information regarding the policies and procedures of St. James Religious Education Program.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- The family of each student in the Religious Education Program should be **registered members of St. James Parish.**
- **All new students at the time of their registration are required to provide a copy of the following:**
 - Baptismal Certificate.
 - Certificates of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist if these sacraments have been received at a parish other than St. James.

Any student presented for admission without sufficient documented catechetical history shall be evaluated and placed accordingly in a class.

TUITION

In order to defer the cost of books and materials used for instructional purposes a fee is assessed to each family.

Other fees for sacramental preparation (First Reconciliation/Eucharist and Confirmation) will be charged separately.

A child will not be denied enrollment in class or sacramental preparation due to a family financial hardship.

- **Tuition for the Religious Education Program for the 2024-2025 school year:**
 - One student: (\$170); Two students (\$285); Three or more students: (\$400)
 - NOTE: There is a discount for early registration (before July 1st)

TIME AND PLACE

- Classes are held on Sunday mornings from 9:00 am to 10:15 am in St. James Elementary School for Grades K through 8.
- All students are expected to be on time and ready to begin class promptly.
- Students must respect the property and items in the classroom in which they meet.

Please refer to the REP calendar for holidays and special activities for students in sacramental preparation classes.

In the event of inclement weather, look for an email from the Religious Education office. Please keep your phone and email information updated.

ATTENDANCE

- Attendance will be taken promptly at 9:00 am each day classes are scheduled.
- *Children are expected to **attend all scheduled classes and activities.***
- **After 4 absences, parents will be contacted** to discuss plans for completing the material necessary to progress to the next grade.

The following procedures are in place for the safety of our students, catechists, and parishioners.

VISITORS

- All visitors are required to report to the Office of Faith Formation in room 6A, first floor.
- **AT NO TIME ARE PETS ALLOWED IN THE BUILDING.**
- Anyone who wishes to enter the school with a ***certified service animal*** is required to obtain written permission from the Office of Faith Formation prior to the visit.

DROP-OFF

- Please park your vehicle and walk your child/children into the cafeteria using the door at the rear of the school.
- Children will be seated with their class at designated tables in the cafeteria.
- Attendance will be taken in the cafeteria at 9:00am; after attendance morning prayer will be said together.
- Children will be dismissed to their classrooms immediately after morning prayer.

Please note that **doors will be locked at 9:10 am** for the safety of the children.

For admittance after 9:10am, go to the center doors at the rear of the school and sign in.

DISMISSAL

- Parents are to come into the cafeteria to **sign out their children**.
- At dismissal, children will be brought to the cafeteria, and seated at their assigned tables.
- They will be dismissed according to grade level (K through 2 at 10:05am) (3 through 5 at 10:10am) (6 through 8 at 10:15am)

Pick-up by non-parent/guardian:

If someone other than the pre-designated person is to pick-up at dismissal.

- **Please submit a signed note** to the Office of Faith Formation **before the pick-up date**, naming the person who will pick-up.
- **Alternate pickup personnel will be required to show photo ID.**
- **In the case of an emergency change in pick-up person, please call Mrs. Fiorenza directly at 732-298-1804.**

Early Dismissal

Early dismissal is discouraged and should be limited.

- **If a child must be dismissed early from class, parent(s)/guardian(s) must submit a signed note to Mrs. Fiorenza before the date of early dismissal.**
- The child will be dismissed from the Office of Faith Formation.

PARKING

You may park in any numbered parking space in the St. James lot. Additional parking is available in the municipal lot behind the St. James lot. **No one is permitted to pull up to the back door of the building.**

SUPPLIES

- Each child will receive a religion textbook for his/her appropriate grade.
- Grades 2 and 8 will also receive Sacramental textbooks in preparation for their respective sacraments.
- There is a book replacement fee of \$15.
- Each child is required to bring his/her textbook to class, as well as a pen or pencil.

INSTRUCTION

- The Religious Education Program at St. James Parish consists of 27 class meetings, from September to May.
- The classes follow the Diocesan Guidelines for Elementary Religion Curriculum for the Diocese of Trenton.
- **All assignments or projects are to be completed fully and on time.**
- It is the parent(s)/guardian(s)'s responsibility to take an active interest in their child's work and to see that assignments/ projects are completed promptly.
- **All lessons missed due to absence must be made up, and can either be submitted directly to the catechist, or to Mrs. Fiorenza at lfiorenza@sjredbank.org.**

CODE OF CONDUCT

Students are expected to behave appropriately before, during and after class.

- Respect and follow the directions of the Religious Education Program Staff and Catechists.
- Respect and speak to one another in an appropriate manner.
- **Respect the property of the classroom.**
- Walk in an orderly manner through halls and on stairs. **Running is strictly forbidden.**
- **Arrive on time.**

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

- **The use of any electronic device during class is prohibited.**
- **We ask that parents/guardians make sure that these items are left at home.**
- If your child must carry a cell phone, **make sure it is turned off before entering the building.**
- **Catechists are instructed to collect electronic devices and to return them at the end of class.**

THE LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

The Mass, the Eucharistic celebration, is the source and summit of our Catholic faith.

Regular family Mass attendance reinforces and puts into practice the faith and formal instruction presented in the classroom.

Religious Education classes are not meant to be a substitute for attendance at Mass.

The St. James Mass schedule found in the Parish bulletin offers ample opportunity for families to celebrate the Eucharist before or after the class meeting schedule.

In addition to the regular Mass schedule, there are many other opportunities to practice our faith such as Adoration and praying the Stations of the Cross during Lent.

We also encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to provide opportunities for their child to *frequent the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation once they have received this sacrament for the first time. To assist families in this endeavor, a Family Penance Service is scheduled in the spring. Please check the REP Calendar for the specific date.*

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Prayer is communicating with God. Therefore, an essential element of the program is teaching our students the need for prayer and how to pray. *It is also important for the parent(s)/guardian(s) to aid their child in learning common prayers of the Church so that the child will be able to participate in the prayers of the Catholic community.* We encourage the parents/guardians of our students to provide an opportunity for the students to pray together as a family in the home as well as in the larger faith community, which is the Catholic Church.

We also stress the importance of the Bible in the life of the followers of Jesus. Scripture, as well as the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church, is a source of revelation—God’s self-communication. *We ask the parent(s)/guardian(s) to aid our catechists by encouraging in their child a love and respect for the Sacred Scripture.*

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Grade 2 and Grade 8

PARENT/GUARDIAN WORKSHOPS

In order to aid parent(s)/guardian(s) as the primary teachers of the child, there will be scheduled parent meetings for those parents who have children registered in Grade 2 (Sacraments of Reconciliation (Penance) and First Holy Communion) and Grade 8 (Sacrament of Confirmation). The schedule for these workshops can be found in the REP Calendar.

These workshops are designed for the parent(s)/guardian(s) to increase their knowledge of the individual sacrament and to give information on how to assist their child in preparing for the sacraments. Important information regarding the theology of the sacrament, as well as guidelines and necessary forms, will be given during these workshops. **At least one parent or guardian is expected to attend each workshop given prior to the child's reception of each sacrament.**

FIRST RECONCILIATION and FIRST HOLY EUCHARIST (Grade 2)

In accordance with diocesan directives, the reception of First Penance precedes the celebration of First Eucharist. The reception of these two sacraments occurs in the second grade.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Trenton that, for a child to receive these sacraments, the child be enrolled in a religious education program for one year prior to entering the sacramental preparation class.

All students must have completed the first-grade level in an approved religious education program to be admitted to the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Eucharist.

The celebration of the Sacrament of First Reconciliation takes place in the Fall and First Eucharist takes place in the Spring. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and catechists will take care that the students are properly instructed in the celebration of these sacraments.

Children are expected to attend all classes and activities in this sacramental year.

It is important that requests for additional forms, the fee and materials be returned by the requested date.

Parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the preparation for these sacraments.

CONFIRMATION (Grade 8)

In preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, **students are expected to attend all classes and activities and complete all Confirmation assignments.**

Students who do not comply with expectations regarding attendance and completion of assignments will be reviewed to determine their readiness for Confirmation.

Confirmation Activities:

- Confirmation Ice Breaker (October)
- Confirmation Movie Night (February)
- The Confirmation Retreat, including Mass with Rite of Enrollment (April)
- Confirmation Candidates are expected to participate in the Family Penance Service (March)

Confirmation Assignments:

- Confirmation Candidate's Commitment Letter
- Letter Requesting Confirmation
- Saint Report (Two-to-three-page essay about the saint they have chosen for their Confirmation name)
- **Confirmation Service Project and Essay:**
Candidates are expected to complete a one-day (minimum 7 hours) service project related to one of the Corporal or Spiritual works of Mercy. Following their completion of service, candidates are to write a five-paragraph essay describing the service they completed, how it relates to the Work of Mercy chosen, what they learned from the experience, how it applies to Confirmation, and how they will apply what they learned to their life in the future.

All forms and fees required for the celebration of this sacrament must be returned on time and fully completed.

According to canon law and diocesan directives concerning the celebration of Confirmation, candidates are to choose a saint's name and a sponsor for Confirmation.

The date for Confirmation is provided by the bishop of the diocese and is celebrated in the Spring of Grade 8. Details concerning the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation will be provided at the Parent/Guardian meeting.

At least one parent or guardian is expected to attend the parent meeting, and the Mass with Rite of Enrollment.