

**ST. PAUL VI PARISH
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Guided by the documents of Vatican II and the National and General Directories for Catechesis, we respond to our baptismal call to proclaim the Kingdom of God by:

- ❖ creating a positive and welcoming learning environment where lifelong learning and faith sharing can take place.
- ❖ leading people to Christ through the Word of God, the Eucharist, and the rich tradition of the Catholic Church.
- ❖ forming disciples who witness the Gospel through our lived example of prayer, service and sharing.
- ❖ living the challenge of the Catholic Social Teachings in the pursuit of unity, justice and peace.
- ❖ building partnerships as co-workers in the vineyard that respect the ministry and mission of all.
- ❖ meeting participating families where they are and guiding them along their faith journey.

PHILOSOPHY

Parents are the first educators for their children in faith.

They remain the most important ones, no matter how long a child goes to school. It is through their understanding and practice of their faith at home that allows the child to continue to learn as an extension of their religious education in class.

The curriculum and participation in each grade should be approached the same as the public-school curriculum and the advancement from one grade to the next.

“The family’s catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable...Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children’s tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel...Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.”

- Pope John Paul II (1979 Catechesis in Our Time)

Parents and the Parish function as partners.

Parents are the primary religious educators of their children. No religious education program will be able to instill values, tell stories of faith, and witness to God's love and companionship if it is absent in the home. Parents are the image and likeness of God in the eyes of their children. With communication and cooperation, we create an environment in which children can grow in their faith. As participants in the religious education program, parents make a commitment to the religious formation of their children at home which includes:

- ❖ Becoming an active member of St. Paul VI Parish to model a living, conscious and active Christian faith and to reinforce the values and attitudes for living that faith.
- ❖ Supporting St. Paul VI Parish and the Faith Formation Program with your time, talent and treasure
- ❖ Learning prayers and Catholic practices
- ❖ Exploring the Scriptures together
- ❖ Teaching their child to live a moral life according to the values and teachings of Jesus Christ and the teachings, laws, and norms of the Catholic Church, realizing that the primary way parents teach this is by living it themselves
- ❖ Preparing their child for participation in Religious Education by fostering an openness and positive attitude toward the religious education which the child will be receiving.
- ❖ Assisting their child with assigned at-home activities as needed
- ❖ Making sure their children attend the sessions and make up any work that is missed
- ❖ Attending all parent required meetings throughout the year.
- ❖ **An essential part of this commitment is for families to worship with their children and the whole parish at Mass every week and on six (6) Holy Days of Obligation.**

This is particularly important as the children prepare to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. The role of the parish is to support parents. Throughout the religious education school year, students are taken to church to:

- Receive reconciliation (twice throughout the year for every member of the family- parents need to support their children by participating in this sacrament as well)
- Attend a Teaching Mass to understand the parts of the Mass and its traditions (according to grade-level curriculum)

- For the confirmation preparation classes (6th, 7th and 8th grades), participate in Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction. Parents are encouraged to participate in these services which are outlined on the school year syllabus.

STUDENT OBLIGATION TO THE PROGRAM

The obligations of children enrolled in the Program are:

- ❖ Living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus Christ
- ❖ Participating in the Parish Mass each Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation
- ❖ Receiving the Sacrament of Penance at least twice a year
- ❖ Following the teachings, laws, and norms of the Catholic Church
- ❖ Attending the Religious Education sessions
- ❖ Arriving on time each session for the Religious Education Program
- ❖ Being well-prepared for each Religious Education session by having all assigned home projects completed satisfactorily and bringing all learning materials to class each week
- ❖ Memorizing all required prayers
- ❖ Participating in class discussions and activities
- ❖ Being attentive and respectful during sessions
- ❖ Performing satisfactorily on assessments of the material taught in the sessions
- ❖ Fulfilling all requirements of the Religious Education Program

CURRICULUM

The structure of the curriculum consists of three main sections:

- 1. First/Second Year – Reconciliation and First Communion preparation**
- 2. Third/Fourth/Fifth Years – Solidification of the faith and application of Reconciliation and First Communion**

3. Sixth/Seventh/Eighth Years – Confirmation Preparation

Each section builds on the one prior to successfully guide and prepare the student to receive the sacraments. Omission of any of the eight years can significantly alter the student's faith journey. **Children will be placed in the appropriate level of catechesis at the discretion of the Faith Formation office regardless of the child's year in school. Children that have missed several years of catechesis will be asked to participate in intensive programming to make up work missed in their absence.** In all years, students will receive grade appropriate instruction to develop and deepen their understanding of the Mass.

To assist parents in understanding the purpose and expectation of their child's faith journey, the sections are detailed in the following pages.

First Year (RECONCILIATION & FIRST COMMUNION ONE)

Theme: God is our Creator and loves us as our Father. Jesus came to tell us about God the Father and how He saved us through his life, death, and resurrection. The Holy Spirit shares the life of the risen Jesus Christ and forms the community of the Church. We know Jesus through personal prayer and by worshipping God together as a family and as a church community, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. We can thank Jesus for the gift of Himself and the Holy Spirit by obeying the Commandments, caring for one another and caring for the world.

First Year Expectations: By the end of the first year, students will be expected to know the:

- ❖ Sign of the Cross
- ❖ Our Father (Lord's Prayer)
- ❖ Hail Mary
- ❖ Glory Be
- ❖ Ten Commandments
- ❖ Prayers before and after meals
- ❖ Parts of the Mass

Second Year (RECONCILIATION & FIRST COMMUNION TWO)

Theme: God loves each of us and we are called to act on God's love for us by loving one another and living as Jesus wants us to live. As we prepare for the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, we give special attention to our examination of conscience, how to make a meaningful confession and the importance of preparation before receiving Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

Second Year Expectations: By the end of the second year, students will be expected to be familiar with the:

- ❖ Ten Commandments
- ❖ Act of Contrition
- ❖ Basic Responses during the Mass and a prayer to say after receiving Communion
- ❖ Parts of the Mass

Third Year

Theme: God creates us and calls us to live well in community. We emphasize the role of Jesus calling us to a new way of life – what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus and how close Jesus wants us to be with our Father. We learn how each of the sacraments deepens our relationship with God and how the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are the foundation for the moral choices we make as we grow to be more like Jesus.

Third Year Expectations: By the end of the third year, students will be expected to know the:

- ❖ Apostles' Creed
- ❖ The roles in the church in terms of priest, deacon, bishop, pope and the basic structure (parish, archdiocese, Vatican) of the church.
- ❖ Parts of the Mass
- ❖ Stations of the Cross
- ❖ Supplement: Focus on the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Fourth Year

Theme: God calls us to lead a moral life. He revealed the Ten Commandments to provide us with the parameters to live a life for God and others. Jesus taught us the Beatitudes and their relationship to living a Christian life. We give special attention to Sacraments of Reconciliation and Sacraments of Communion as part of the moral dimension of our faith.

Fourth Year Expectations: By the end of the fourth year, students will be expected to list the:

- ❖ Ten Commandments

- ❖ Mysteries of the Rosary
- ❖ Hail Holy Queen
- ❖ Beatitudes
- ❖ Precepts of the church
- ❖ Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy
- ❖ Parts of the Mass

Fifth Year

Theme: Strengthened in the sacramental life of the Church, we are better able to live like Jesus in making choices for God and others. We enter a new way of life when we celebrate the sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation). Through the sacraments, we live more fully in the Holy Spirit as members of the Church, united in diversity.

Fifth Year Expectations: By the end of the fifth year, students will be expected to know:

- ❖ Apostle's Creed (Profession of Faith)
- ❖ List, describe and define each Sacrament
- ❖ Understand and list the basic parts of the mass
- ❖ Describe the Liturgical year (Advent, Ordinary time, Lent, etc.) and the Holy Days of Obligation
- ❖ Recite the Seven Sacraments and the Nicene Creed
- ❖ Parts of the Mass
- ❖ Supplement: Seven Sacraments / Prayer

Sixth, Seventh & Eighth Year (CONFIRMATION ONE, TWO & THREE)

Themes: The sixth year explores the history of salvation – from Creation through the Old Testament; to its fulfillment in Jesus as we share stories of our ancestors in faith: Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon. Ensure recognition of the importance of the prophets as witnesses for God and their relevance to our own time. As followers of Jesus, we explore the meaning of the Psalms as the prayers of Jesus and the themes of the Wisdom literature books that teach practical ways of living for God in everyday life.

We find our connection to Christian worship from its roots in the Old Testament and we learn of the special connection between the celebration of Passover and the celebration of the Eucharist.

The seventh year is the second of three required years of study leading to Confirmation. The goal of the seventh year consists of two modules: Christian morality and Jesus and discipleship. The first module will help lay the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and will give students information about the Church's guidance in moral decision-making.

The second module will give a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told in the Gospels and pose the challenge of discipleship to the students.

The eighth year is the third of three required years of study leading to Confirmation. The goal of the eighth year consists of three modules: Scripture and Creed, a review of Catholic teaching and sacraments and immediate preparation for Confirmation.

Expectations: By the end of the eighth year, students will be expected to:

- ❖ Know the Nicene Creed
- ❖ Identify and describe in chronological order the major events in the Old Testament
- ❖ Know the major events in the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ
- ❖ Participate in group activities outside of the scheduled classroom sessions in order to prepare for Confirmation
- ❖ Understand the parts of the Mass
- ❖ Supplement: Major characters in the Pascal Mystery (Jesus in the Gospels)
- ❖ Know the Prayer to the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Know the Theological Virtues, Cardinal Virtues, the Spiritual Works of Mercy and the Corporal Works of Mercy
- ❖ Know the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Understand the parts of the Mass
- ❖ Supplement: Biblical walkthrough of the Mass
- ❖ Supplement: Review of the Seven Sacraments and the Teaching of the Church
- ❖ Be fully prepared to be Confirmed

❖ Understand their further role in the wider Catholic Church

ATTENDANCE

As every session is important to their faith journey, all students are expected to attend all sessions and be ready to begin class promptly. Attendance will be taken at each session by the teacher and maintained on file by the Office of Faith Formation. If a student must be absent, notice should be given to the Office of Faith Formation as soon as possible so the teacher can be made aware and can prepare to provide the lesson content to the parent for making up the work at home. All absences must be made up by completing the online lesson work prior to the next class.

Excessive absences and failure to complete make-up work can result with a child repeating a year if deemed necessary by the Office of Faith Formation and the Pastor. Reasons for repetition of a year are as follows:

1. Excessive absence: after 3 unexcused absences the parent will receive an official notification of the child's absences. If the unexcused absences continue beyond 5, this is grounds for repetition of the year.
2. Poor performance: if the child does poorly when assessed on the content of the textbook and the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis, remedial work will be required and organized by the Office. If the remedial work is not enough to enable the child to grasp the content, repetition of the grade level may be the best solution.
3. Excessive lateness or early dismissal: after 3 occurrences, the parent will receive an official notification. If the late arrivals or early dismissals continue beyond 6 occurrences, this is grounds for repetition of grade level.

EARLY DISMISSAL

If your child needs to be dismissed early, the request for an early dismissal should be given to the Office in writing by the parent prior to the scheduled session. This request should include:

- the name of the person picking up the child
- the designated date and time
- the reason
- the signature of the parent.

The parent must come to the Faith Formation office to pick up and sign out the child. The Office of Faith Formation staff or appropriate adult will go to the session and walk the child out to meet the parent. For security reasons, the parent may not go directly to the session area.

CELL PHONES

The use of cell phones and other electronic devices by the child is not permitted during the Religious Education session unless this is directed by the Catechist as part of the educational process. Cell phones brought into the place of the Religious Education session should be turned off. Children in need of

contacting a parent must ask the Catechist's permission to go to the Faith Formation Office to place the call.

REINFORCEMENT AT HOME

The total in-person class time that students experience consists of a minimum of 24 hours of instruction. Since this time is limited, reinforcement at home is essential to ensure that students totally absorb the objectives of their spiritual learning. To assist parents in reinforcing their child's religious education at home, an outline of each session's objectives will be distributed at the first class of the year outlining the entire school year. Any associated material(s) will be sent home with the students after each class. Short assignments and outside classwork may be assigned to deepen your child's faith and understanding.

In addition, parents can contact the Office of Faith Formation directly to answer any questions parents have about the material.

SAFETY AND CONDUCT

All catechists and other volunteers and employees who have contact with children have undergone both a security and a background check. In addition, each one must actively participate in *Virtus* training, an initiative of the Archdiocese which follows "Protecting God's Children" to educate those who work with children about preventing child abuse.

Students are expected to contribute to a positive learning experience by cooperating with classroom rules which will be explained by the teacher. These rules are:

- ❖ Respect yourself, others, and things around you.
- ❖ Actively participate by attending and coming prepared for class. This includes all workbooks, course books and assignments.

If a student does not adhere to the rules as set by the teacher, parents will be notified and possibly asked to attend classes with the student. For their safety, children will not be allowed free access to the building unsupervised by an adult. This is for both the child's safety and building security. It is assumed that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorced or separated. Unless informed otherwise in writing and with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have qualified access to the child, the Religious Education Program will release the child to either parent.

Parents are welcome to visit the classroom. Advance notice to the office and the teacher of a visit would be appreciated.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS

Our Religious Education Program for participation in the Sacraments for students attending public school is an eight (8) year commitment. Each year is unique and important and builds on the previous

year's curriculum. As such, all eight years are required for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The requirements for reception of the Sacraments are as follows:

- ❖ The child must be a baptized Catholic and a copy of the baptismal certificate must be submitted to the Office of Faith Formation
- ❖ Confirmation students will need to provide a copy of their Baptism and First Communion certificates.
- ❖ The student/family must have regular weekly attendance at Mass
- ❖ The student must have regular and consistent attendance in the Religious Education Program. This includes supplementary meetings and events as proscribed in the yearly calendar.
- ❖ Parents must be involved in the preparation to receive the Sacraments.
- ❖ Parents must attend the preparatory meetings and participate in planned events throughout the program.
- ❖ All children must participate in all years of study OR provide proof of attendance at another parish.

REGISTRATION AND TUITION

Families in the Religious Education Program are expected to be registered members of St. Paul VI Parish. The program does not refund fees in the case of partial attendance or transfer to another program. Students must complete registration for each year they attend religious education classes.

Annual tuition rates for families are as follows:

Per Child Kindergarten through Eighth Grade: \$175

Sacramental Fees (First Reconciliation, First Communion, Confirmation): \$50

Tuition and fees pay only a portion of the cost of the program. The parish, recognizing the importance of catechesis, subsidizes most of the program. Tuition is used for textbooks and materials. Financial need will NOT be a barrier to registering students. Parents should consult with the Office of Faith Formation to discuss payment options.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Parents will be notified of the class schedule prior to the first day of classes. Parents should work with the Office of Faith Formation to learn about alternative options with sister churches if the course times do not meet the needs of your family.

Note: The Office of Faith Formation partners with sister parishes to determine other potential scheduling options for St. Paul VI students. Since this will change annually, please contact the office directly for specific information.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The St. Paul VI Religious Education Program does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its policies, supplementary programs or any other program-based function. No child will be denied the right to participate in religious education classes due to ability to pay.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Students in need of special education have a right to catechesis and participation in the sacramental life of the Church. This will be accommodated for students to the best of the school's ability. Please consult with the Office of Faith Formation about any child with special needs. The Office will assist parents in finding resources that will meet their child's need either within the Religious Education Program or the SPRED Program. If the special need is addressed in school, the parents should meet with the Office of Faith Formation to provide information regarding procedures and strategies used in those classes.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Emergency contact information is required to be current and submitted to the Office of Faith Formation at the start of each school year or as the information changes. The information required is as follows:

- ❖ Name and all telephone numbers of student's parents/guardians
- ❖ Name and telephone number of a relative or friend to contact in case parents/guardians cannot be reached
- ❖ Any information regarding medication/physical conditions/allergies of the student

Note: If your phone number, address, or email address changes, please inform the office immediately.

EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION

In the event of inclement weather or other reason the school may be closed, parents and catechists will be notified electronically.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Catechists use behavior management appropriate to an educational environment as a necessary means for the Religious Education Program to accomplish its goals. The purpose of behavior management is to help the children develop self-control, self-respect, respect for others, and reverence for the Word of God which is being explained to them in these sessions. Several infractions of rules of conduct will result in a call by the Office to the child's parent in which the Office will describe the situation and work out a solution with the parent. If the infractions continue, the Office will organize a conference with the parent, the Catechist, the Office, and the Pastor. The Religious Education Program reserves to the Office, under the authority of the Pastor, the right to remove a child without refund of fees from the group session, either temporarily or permanently:

- ❖ If the child's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group
- ❖ If the child's behavior is seriously inhibiting the safety or well-being of others in the group
- ❖ If temporary removal is used as a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior.
- ❖ Bullying and Cyber-bullying

Bullying includes but is not limited to: threatening physical harm, verbal abuse, intimidation, cyberbullying. The Archdiocesan policy against bullying is followed. This policy states: A safe and civil environment is necessary for children to learn and achieve Christian value. Harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying (using technology to bully such as but not limited to: posting an inappropriate picture of a child on the Internet) and other violent behaviors will not be tolerated in a Religious Education Program environment. Any child who engages in this behavior may be asked to leave the religious education environment if this is seen to be in the best interest of the rest of the religious education community.

- ❖ Vandalism, i.e., willfully damaging or destroying property, will not be tolerated. Vandalism must be paid for by the parent of the child who did it. Accidental damage should be immediately reported to the Office of Faith Formation.
- ❖ Unacceptable Behavior- The following types of behavior are not allowed during the Religious Education Program. Infractions which call for discipline by the Catechist are:
 - acting in a disrespectful manner toward the Catechist, other adults or children in the program
 - speaking and interacting with other children inappropriately during the session
 - leaving a session without permission
 - using a cell phone during the session when not authorized by the Catechist
 - doing something other than the work of the session

Persistence in any of these behaviors after several corrective measures have been taken will place this behavior in the category below.

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

In the case of an absence or if a parent has any questions, the Office of Faith Formation can be reached at (708) 447-1020. The email address is stpaulvire@stpaulviparish.org.

At the beginning of each school year, catechist contact information and religious education schedules will be provided to all parents for each grade.

ENRICHMENT SERIES FOR PARENTS

There will be a spiritual enrichment series for the parents to support growth in their relationship with Jesus and help them aid their child(ren) in his/her spiritual journey. All parents are required to participate. Sessions will be scheduled and communicated once a month.

POLICY CHANGES

Statements in this handbook are subject to amendment with or without notice. The Religious Education Coordinator will attempt to keep you informed of all changes as soon as practical; however, some changes might be made immediately due to unforeseen circumstances.