

St. Francis of Assisi Religious Education Program

PARENT HANDBOOK 2016-17

ST. FRANCIS PHILOSOPHY

We, the faith community of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, believe that Religious Education is a process of initiation into the faith community of the Church.

It [Religious Education] nurtures and prepares people to participate in the ministries of prayer and worship, building community, and service to the poor.

(The Christian Initiation of Children, Duggan & Kelly).

We believe that a person comes to know Jesus and responds to God's message at home and in religious education faith sessions.

The measure of the success of our educational ministry is how well it enables our children to hear the message of hope contained in the Gospel, to base their love and their service upon this message, and to achieve a vital personal relationship with Christ.

(To Teach As Jesus Did, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

MISSION STATEMENT

Religious Education at St. Francis of Assisi is a process in which children:

- LEARN** the stories, beliefs, traditions and prayers of the Catholic Community.
- INTEGRATE** experiences of life and faith traditions in order to develop meaningful Christian lives.
- PARTICIPATE** in worship...symbols of the Catholic faith as celebrated in Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the Religious Education program of St. Francis! Whether you are registering your child for the first time or the eighth time, welcome!

It is important, for the education and formation of our children, that parents understand not only the philosophy and the methodology of our program, but also the critical role of the parent in the religious formation of the child.

We ask that you take time to review this handbook. The handbook provides important information regarding procedures, sacramental preparation, telephone numbers and other important information related to religious education. Some topics are frequently repeated.

- **Religious Education is a PROCESS**

It is an educational process that shares the information of faith, and a formational process that touches the spirit of a person.

- **Religious Education is INITIATION**

The program prepares the children for two of the sacraments of initiation, namely Eucharist and Confirmation. It also builds on Baptism, which began their life of faith, by fostering participation in the community of faith and by participation at Sunday Mass. Parents and children are expected to attend Mass on Sunday.

- **Religious Education is a COMMITMENT**

Parents are asked to sign the statement of commitment found in the back of the handbook (and in your Family Packet). The signed page must be returned to the youngest child's catechist at his/her first RE session. Signing your name is an expression of serious intent.

- **Religious Education is DISCIPLESHIP**

We are called to be followers of Jesus. The children will be offered specific opportunities for this discipleship to share their talents as musicians or artists; to share their time as a reader or liturgical minister; to share their treasure in donating to the missions or for those in need.

Every year brings new challenges and exciting times. We look forward to sharing the year with you and your children.

Fr. Sowa

Fr. Dombrowski

Mary Kay Burberry

Maureen Krzyminski

Jackie O'Malley

St Francis of Assisi Parish † Orland Park Illinois † 60467
Contact Page

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EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

Emergency closings due to inclement weather or any other reason will be posted on the parish website www.sfaorland.org or www.emergencyclosings.com. The emergency closing hotline number is (847) 238-1234. You may call and find out the closing status of St. Francis at anytime. You will be required to enter the RE telephone number when prompted. The RE number is (708) 460-0155.

Families will be notified by telephone, email or, if possible, through notices in the various School Districts should the closing occur during the day. St. Francis will automatically close if Orland School District 135 closes due to inclement weather.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

In the event of a family emergency you may call (708) 460-0155 and speak to a member of the Catechetical staff or leave your name and number and someone will contact you. If you are unable to contact the RE office, please call the Church at (708) 460-0042 and follow the prompts for emergency calls.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CUSTODY ISSUES

St. Francis of Assisi RE Program assumes that both parents have equal access to their child, even if the parents are separated or divorced. The RE staff will permit either parent to have access to the child while at the Catechetical site, and will release the child from the site to either parent, or to a guardian unless provided with legal documentation that states otherwise. Parents/guardians should provide a copy of legal documentation to the Catechetical office for our file related to custody issues.

SECURITY PROCEDURES

DROP-OFF/PICK-UP

The inside doors to the St Francis Center are locked at all times. Children can be dropped off in front of the St. Francis Center **no earlier than 15 minutes** before the start of their religious education session, and a staff member or adult volunteer will let the child into the building. You may walk the child to the main entrance doors but no adult except staff or registered volunteers will be allowed into the building during the RE session.

Parents/guardians may wait outside the locked doors or join the cars waiting in the dismissal line at the end of the RE session. No adults, siblings, caregivers, etc, will be allowed to wait inside the building for regular dismissal or for early dismissal.

LATE ARRIVALS

The afternoon session begins at 4:30pm and the evening session begins at 7:00pm. Saturday morning begins at 8:30am. **All inside doors are locked at those times.** Children dropped off after session has begun will be allowed into the building as usual.

EARLY DISMISSAL

A parent or guardian may call (708) 460-0155, or send a note to the RE office with their child informing us of the time of the early dismissal. Parent, guardian, or parent-approved driver still needs to come to the door to sign the child out. Staff/registered volunteer will then call child down for early dismissal. Adult will wait for child outside the locked door. **No adult is allowed in the center until the session is over.**

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Individual situations that would necessitate an adult accompanying a child into the building should be discussed with the Director of Religious Education for approval prior to the RE session.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. TO CREATE A WELCOMING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BASED ON THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

REGISTRATION POLICY

Registration includes completing and signing the registration form, updating the emergency file and, for new families, submitting a copy of each child's baptismal certificate. Tuition is due at the time of registration. If payment is a problem, the parent should contact the Director of Religious Education to make payment arrangements.

Registration for new and returning families is at the Religious Education (RE) office located in the St. Francis Center. Registration packets are made available to currently enrolled families in the spring each year and should be returned no later than your child's last RE Session.

Children who move into the parish mid-year may enroll in RE for the current year if they are transferring from another RE program or Catholic School. Children, who have had no previous religious education and move in mid-year, will be enrolled for the next school year.

SESSION SCHEDULE AND LOCATION

Religious Education sessions are held for grades K-8 in the St. Francis Center located at 15010 S. Wolf Rd, which is at the western end of the campus, on top of the hill. RE sessions are scheduled, for alternating weeks from September through May, for Grades K-8 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the afternoons and/or evenings, and Saturday morning. Special Religious Education meets on alternating Mondays and Tuesdays.

A list of scheduled sessions for your child's class is included in your Family Packet. The full RE Calendar can be found at www.sfaorland.org by clicking on the "Calendar" tab.

2. TO OFFER YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE A COMMUNITY WHERE RELATIONSHIPS MAY BE FORMED AND WHERE THEY CAN GENUINELY GROW IN FRIENDSHIP, TRUST AND PRAYER.

ATTENDANCE

Children should attend sessions regularly in order to provide a continuity of religious education and faith formation.

Children should arrive 5 minutes prior to the starting time of the session.

Absences are reported by calling the RE office at (708) 460-0155 and following the telephone instructions. Parents will be contacted if there are unreported absences.

In the event of an early dismissal, the parent/guardian and or other persons designated to receive your child come to the front door and sign the child out. Early dismissal authorization should to be written.

Excessive tardiness and absences will result in a meeting with the Religious Education Director.

The parish website contains information on current lessons and homework. The parish website, www.sfaorland.org/re, may be accessed on the Monday after the weekly faith sessions for updated information on a missed faith session. Children are expected to complete any missing assignments at home and be prepared for the next RE faith session.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Children are responsible for bringing all required materials to each faith session. These materials include all books and assignments.

Children should respond with respect and be courteous toward catechists, office aides, other RE volunteers, and other parish ministers involved with the RE program.

Children should respect each other, and respond in a kind and compassionate and Christian manner to any child they encounter in the RE program.

Children should respect the property of St. Francis of Assisi Center and Church, as well as the property of any child or adult involved with the program. Any damages will be the child and the family responsibility.

Children are expected to attend and participate at Sunday Mass with their family, especially their specific grade level Masses, as well as Holy Days of Obligation.

Children are not allowed to chew gum, wear hats or cleats inside the Church or the St. Francis Center.

Children who are absent should access the parish website, www.sfaorland.org/re, for missed lessons or homework.

3. TO ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN LITURGY AND SACRAMENTS

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Celebration of the sacraments is a time when we recognize the presence of God in our lives in a special way. Children and their parents participate in sacramental preparation programs and celebrations within the parish community without preference to program or school.

Parent/Guardian/Child meetings are designed to provide parents/guardians with faith formation in order to minister to the religious experience and faith development of the children. These meetings provide parents with the opportunity to develop and build community with other parish families experiencing the sacramental process.

RECONCILIATION

All children receiving religious instruction in the Archdiocese of Chicago are required to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation prior to First Eucharist. The preparation process focuses on the understanding of God's love and the reception of that love in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Please refer to the Eucharist Parent Handbook for more information.

The sacrament becomes the focus of the program again in fourth grade when the child is better able to identify and discuss the moral aspects of living a Christian life and the importance of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

EUCCHARIST

First Eucharist preparation and celebration includes all children of the parish who are eligible to receive the sacrament. Please refer to the Eucharist Parent Handbook for further information on preparation requirements.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation is received in Grade 8 as part of a two-year preparation process beginning in Grade 7 that is designed to integrate Catholic Tradition, Catholic Social Teaching, Prayer and Spirituality with the daily living experience of today's young people.

4. TO FOSTER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

SUNDAY ENVELOPES

Sunday envelopes are distributed to every family, in support of the stewardship values of Time, Talent, and Treasure. The children are taught about the value of the gifts that God has given to them and their responsibility to use those gifts in service to others.

CAPITAL PLEDGE DRIVE

Parents with children in the religious education and sacramental preparation programs are asked to support the parish and the Capital Pledge Drive, as an example to their children of living out their stewardship responsibilities and commitment to the St. Francis community.

CATHOLIC ACTION

St. Francis sponsors a number of outreach events during the year. Families are encouraged to plan for these activities and to participate fully. The children are taught at an early age that living a Christian life means sharing our personal time, talent and treasure with not only our families, but also with those who need it most.

5. TO ASSIST PARENTS TO PREPARE THEIR CHILDREN TO CELEBRATE AND RECEIVE THE SACRAMENTS

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Family participation models a living, conscious and active Christian faith and reinforces the values and attitudes for living that faith. Families that enroll in the St. Francis Religious Education program

sign a commitment in which they agree to act in accordance with these values and attitudes.

VOLUNTEERS

Parents are encouraged to assist in the RE program and sacramental process. There are a number of events and activities that require additional hands now and then. Parental/guardian involvement in the sacramental process role models Catholic Identity.

CATECHESIS

Parents/guardians are a child's first teacher. Children imitate what they see and hear. Parents/guardians are expected to be a role model to their children of Christian response and Catholic identity. This requires weekly Mass, Holy Days of Obligation and other obligations of our faith.

PRAYER

Prayer is important in developing our relationship with God. Parents should teach their children the Mass responses and the prayers that are a mainstay of Catholic life. The responsibility of the parent is to pass on the faith by incorporating what the child learns in the faith session with their daily life.

PARENT/GUARDIAN/CHILD MEETINGS

Sacramental preparation incorporates sessions that are meant to develop an understanding of, and provide a foundation for, reception of the sacraments. It is important that the parent/guardian places the highest priority on attendance at these preparation sessions.

6. TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP VALUES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

OUTREACH PROJECTS

Stewardship is an important part of the Religious Education program. Children are taught the importance of giving of themselves to support the community that is Church. The concepts of Time, Talent and Treasure apply to everyone who believes in God. The children are provided with opportunities to live out their faith by helping others who

are most in need. Outreach Projects related to each grade level mass, and to the liturgical seasons, are assigned and the children are asked to contribute toys, food, clothing and other items that are given to organizations for distribution to those in need.

SUNDAY ENVELOPE

Every child receives Sunday envelopes at the beginning of the faith formation year. These envelopes serve a dual purpose. The envelope has a picture of a saint and a description of that saint on the front. There is also a space for the children to write down a gift of charity that was given by the child to someone they encountered during the week. While we appreciate the monetary donations, we understand that most children are not able to contribute in this way. Instead, we encourage the children to perform some corporal or spiritual work of mercy as their gift. The gift is written on the envelope and placed in the collection basket. The children learn that their Time and Talents are also valued in the parish community, and that works of charity are possible and welcome at every age.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is teaching the child to control his/her behavior and to respect the rules of the faith community. Respect is the key element to a disciplined environment. The catechist in charge will handle minor discipline action. It is understood that obscene language, insolent behavior, bullying and any other serious misconduct will not be tolerated.

The catechist will refer discipline problems of a serious nature to the administrative staff. In cases where lack of self-discipline is extreme, the parents will be called and may have to meet with the Director of Religious Education.

Personal property brought into the center will be inspected if there is reasonable belief that the individual is violating the rules, regulations and policies of the St. Francis of Assisi Catechetical program.

Cell phone usage is not permitted during faith sessions. Cell phones will be confiscated until the end of the session by staff, if used by students during faith session.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARD

The Religious Education Board is comprised of parishioners who serve for a three-year term. The Board meets monthly to listen, support, and advise the Director of Religious Education and the Pastor regarding curriculum, discipline, building and maintenance and financial issues that may occur during the course of the year. The members of the Board currently have children in the parish or sacramental preparation programs.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish Religious Education program is operated under the auspices of the Catholic Bishop of Chicago, a corporation sole, in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Insofar as is reasonable, St. Francis of Assisi will make accessible its Catechetical programs to persons with disabilities. The parish will assist with alternate options for catechesis should a person be unable to participate in the regular program of catechesis.

Statements of this handbook are subject to amendment with or without notice. The religious education program will attempt to keep you informed of all changes as soon as practical; however, some changes might be made immediately due to unforeseen circumstance.

CURRICULUM

St. Francis of Assisi has a catechetical program that provides for the religious education and faith formation for the children of the parish.

GRADES K- 8

The RCL Benzinger series *Blest Are We, Be My Disciple* and *Confirmed in the Spirit*, by Loyola Press, support the curriculum and provide a balance between scripture, doctrine and liturgy. These three important elements are interwoven throughout each grade level. This balanced approach ensures that the children will come to know, love and live the rich heritage of the faith we are proud to profess in Christ Jesus.

The doctrines taught are drawn from the four pillars of faith as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. These important teachings are developmentally presented to help students recognize that the way in which Catholics believe, worship, live, pray, and study scripture makes a difference in our lives.

The *Blest Are We* website, www.blestarewe.com, recognizes that religious education and faith formation is much more than just the printed materials the children and their families receive in the parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs. The site provides resources for additional study for the parent and child.

Books and materials will be distributed at the first faith formation session. Children are expected to bring their books and materials to each session, and be prepared.

The home is the primary source for religious education. Families are expected to practice the Catholic prayers listed in the front of the *Blest Are We* grade level book, and complete any take-home assignments together. Families should regularly check the RE website, www.sfaorland.org, for schedule information, lesson summaries and suggested activities to further enhance each grade level lesson.

Families participate in Sunday Mass Lessons and attend Mass regularly.

GRADES 7-8

Our Confirmation program is a two-year process of preparation. Incorporating the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Scripture and Catholic Social Teachings. Scripture study and meditation on the Gospels and the Psalms are an integral part of the preparation process.

Seventh graders participate in Catholic Action Workshops that emphasize the corporal works of mercy. The Confirmation saint is chosen in seventh grade as well as completing the questionnaire booklet on Church doctrine. Seventh graders study the New Testament.

Catholic Action Projects integrate the Church's social teachings with daily living for eighth graders. Small faith groups are sent into the community to serve those in need. Retreats and parent/child/sponsor events are planned throughout the year for the spiritual development of the candidate.

CHILDRENS' LITURGY OF THE WORD (Pre-K- 4)

Sunday morning scripture for children provides the gospel in a format that children understand. Children are dismissed from the Mass after the Greeting and return during the Preparation of the Gifts

PARENT AGREEMENT

PLEASE READ AND SIGN BELOW. RETURN SIGNED PAGE AT THE **FIRST** RE SESSION WITH YOUNGEST CHILD.

St. Francis Parish and the parents/guardians of the children enrolled in Religious Education (RE) are committed to work together in the process of Religious Education, namely, to initiate the children into the faith community of the Church; assist the children in coming to know Jesus and respond to His message; to nurture and prepare them to participate in the ministries of prayer and worship, building community, and service to the poor.

Parents/guardians are asked to

- Send their children on a **REGULAR** and **CONSISTANT** basis to RE sessions
- Attend weekend Mass
- Support the parish through financial offerings and sharing of **TIME** and **TALENT**
- Attend all parent meetings
- Complete all requested at-home parent/child activities.

This handbook spells out, in detail, the commitment of the parish. By signing this AGREEMENT, I am confirming that I have read this handbook and understand the process and requirements of our parish RE programs, as well as my commitment to carry out my responsibility to my child/children.

Please sign below:

Parents/Guardians Signatures

Print Last Name

Date