

St. Laurence Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) Parent/Student Handbook  
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*“Catechesis aims to bring about in the believer an ever more mature faith in Jesus Christ, a deeper knowledge and love of his person and message, and a firm commitment to follow him. In many situations, however, catechesis must also be concerned with arousing initial faith and sustaining the gradual conversion to complete adherence to Jesus Christ for those who are on the threshold of faith. With God’s grace, catechesis develops initial faith, nourishes the Christian life, and continually unfolds the mystery of Christ until the believer willingly becomes his disciple.”*  
(National Directory of Catechesis, 55)

## **Introduction**

While every effort has been made to include in this handbook as much information as needed, no handbook can be all inclusive. From time to time changes, additions, or deletions need to be made. Such changes are communicated to parents through the weekly classes, emails, phone calls, the parish bulletin, and at occasional parent meetings. The parish website, [stlaurenceelgin.org](http://stlaurenceelgin.org) also has information. All parents are invited and urged to contact the Pastor or the Religious Education staff with any concerns.

## **Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) Goals**

1. Acting as a supplement to the family, create opportunities for students and families to encounter Christ, grow in relationship with Him, and grow as disciples.
2. Strive to be not only an encounter with Christ but also a “minister of mercy” for our students, families, and team in word, action, and demeanor.

## **Vision for Catechesis in the Diocese of Rockford**

The diocesan vision for catechesis believes that faith formation for parishioners of all ages should be guided and directed by the following theological and pastoral principles.

1. Catechesis is Christ-centered
2. Catechesis is Evangelizing
3. Catechesis is Systematic and Comprehensive
4. Catechesis is Modeled on the Catechumenate
5. Catechesis interprets and Illuminates the Human Experience
6. Catechesis Infuses the Gospel Message
7. Catechesis is Lifelong
8. Catechesis is the Responsibility of the Entire Parish
9. Catechesis Respects Human Dignity
10. Catechesis Necessitates Ongoing Catechist Formation

## **Catechist Information**

All catechists have completed, in accordance with the Rockford Diocese’s Safe Environment Requirement:

1. The training, Protecting God’s Children for Adults, by VIRTUS
2. Signed the Diocese of Rockford Guidelines for those working with youth
3. Agreed to the Diocese’s Pastoral Code of Conduct
4. Signed the Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Misconduct
5. Signed the Code for Pastoral Use of Technology and Social Media
6. Signed and agreed to act as a DCFS Mandated Reporter
7. Undergone a Criminal Background Check

## **General Program Information**

For Kindergarten through Sixth grade students, Religious Education classes are held on Wednesday evenings from 6:00 to 7:15 pm in the school building.

For Seventh and Eighth grade students (Confirmation Preparation), classes are offered both Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings.

Tuition and fees are due by October 1 each year.

## **Sacramental preparation**

Reconciliation/First Communion Program: Students preparing to make their first Reconciliation and First Holy communion are expected to attend Religious Education classes for two years prior to making both sacraments. They are also expected to attend Mass at least 3 times per month.

### Confirmation Program:

1. All students are expected to attend Mass 3 out of 4 weekends per month and attend at least 3 out of 4 classes.
2. All students must select a saint name and complete an essay about their chosen saint. Further instructions are provided during the course of the year.
3. All students must master the course material to be confirmed and should try to attend a confirmation retreat.

## **Enrollment and Attendance**

Learning the faith and practicing the faith are the twin pillars that can help a person become truly Catholic. Along that line, parents and their children should make commitments to religious education classes and Mass attendance. Either one alone will leave a large void in the child's development. Along this line, the child's schedule should be studied and priorities and practices set to properly cover both classes and Masses, including the curtailment of other activities if necessary. Religion has to have priority over excessive sports, arts, and other school co-curricular activities.

The child should try to attend all classes and be on time unless sickness or exceptional circumstances intrude. At St Laurence we have an eight year progressive program of instruction so that each year's study and application represents a measured advancement in knowledge of the faith. Skipping one or more years is detrimental to this progress.

For our optional Kindergarten program, the students do a lot of drawing and coloring, interspersed with the catechist teaching a few prayers and with frequent but very short visits to the church.

Grades 1 through 6 utilize the Faith and Life Series which carefully develops an understanding of the Catholic faith as the student matures. Each grade includes a textbook and an activity book where the student's understanding is helped by constantly referring back to the textbook to complete the lesson in the activity book.

Grades 7 and 8 Utilize Chosen for Confirmation and Envision: Theology of the Body. In all grades, the catechist schedules time to ensure that the students are learning prayers and to visit the church, for familiarization and prayer.

## **Behavior Rules and Expectations**

1. Respect our shared community. Respect others. Respect one's self.  
Students should not in any way damage, vandalize, or alter any church, school or classroom furniture, nor any church, teacher's, or student's belongings. If any student was found to have damaged, vandalized, or altered any of the aforementioned, the student's family will be asked to repair or replace said item(s). A student should not remove or steal anything that is not his or hers.  
There should not be any unwanted or inappropriate touching between students, between staff members, or between students and staff. Furthermore, there is to be no harassment, bullying, or any unwanted or inappropriate conversations or discussions. Finally, students must respect one's self.
2. Students should be as attentive and cooperative as possible toward each other and toward the catechists, and not intentionally try to be distracting to the classroom learning environment.
3. The program does not condone or accept any view of sexual identity that is contrary to the Church's teachings, including views of gender and sexuality contrary to Catholic Church teaching. At all times the program shall act toward a person in accordance with his or her biological sex at birth. At all times, employees, volunteers, students, and children participating in religious education or youth ministry activities shall conduct themselves in accord with their biological sex at birth. Trendy concepts encompassing Gender Identity and Transgender are not recognized in any way by the program. At the same time the program and its staff are sensitive to the individual stress and trauma resulting from gender dysphoria and same-sex attraction, as well as to the confusion currently being created in youth by proponents of gender ideology.
4. If "homework" is assigned in class, students are expected to complete this in a timely manner.
5. Cellphones may not be used in the classrooms during class time nor in the restrooms at any time. They should be muted or left with the catechist. If a necessary call comes from a parent or driver, the call should be taken in the hallway.
6. NO food or drinks of any kind (to be conscience of allergies).
7. NO paraphernalia of any kind.

## **Flu and other contagious diseases**

If a child has the flu, Covid, or a cold, please keep him/her home to prevent infecting others.

## **Student Drop-Off/Pick-up Policy and Early Pickup**

Students (and parents) should enter via the North (office) entrance to the school building and proceed to their classrooms. For Kindergarten through third grade, the parent, driver, or older sibling must SIGN THE CHILD IN, on a sign-in sheet in the classroom. After class, parents of Kindergarten through third grade are to SIGN THE CHILD OUT.

If your family arrives late, follow the same procedure. (On occasion, a class may be in Church, in the gym, or in the parish hall. Usually a door attendant or hall attendant is available to assist you.)

If a child needs to be picked up early, please advise the catechist or the DRE in advance.

## **Communication**

Communications are generally via email and text and occasionally via telephone. It is essential that we have an email address and a cellphone number that are regularly monitored. If not, please let us know so that we are able to communicate!

## **In the event of an Emergency**

### ***Weather:***

**Because driving conditions vary** within the area and can change quickly, parents and other drivers should use their own discretion as to whether to bring their children to class.

The Parish Religious Education Program is prepared in the event of a **fire, tornado**, or necessary **lock-down** situation.

In the event that our school needs to enter into lockdown mode, an administrator will make every effort to communicate with parents any updates or further instructions, taking into consideration that the safety of the students must come first while they are in the building.

### ***Medical (Student):***

The administrator has all student Medical Emergency Forms readily available. 911 will be called and the emergency contacts will be notified as soon as possible, the order depending on the degree of severity of the situation.

## **In the event of class cancellation**

We will try to contact the person or persons specified on registration documents (text message or email) when class has been cancelled due to weather or other extenuating circumstances

## **Students with additional classroom needs, including physical and/or developmental disabilities**

St. Laurence Religious Education Program administrators and catechists do not discriminate or wrongfully categorize any student by academic, physical, or developmental ability level. Each student is treated with dignity and worth and respected as a child of God.

Religious Education Programs and personnel are not automatically privileged to information that pertains to your child's physical or developmental abilities. Examples of this information include, but are not limited to, Individual Education Plans, documents prepared by their school, doctor, etc. With that said, at St. Laurence we believe in making every effort to educate your son(s)/daughter(s) in the most beneficial and least restrictive environment as possible. Because of that, we rely entirely upon the information you provide us. We seek to adapt and adjust content to the understood physical or developmental level of your son/daughter, again, per the information we receive from you.

Should you and your family feel that a Catholic faith formation program that takes on a different structure may be a better fit, there are several local SPRED (Special Religious Development) programs. That program's website is [www.spred-chicago.org](http://www.spred-chicago.org).

## **Empowering God's Children**

To assist parents in teaching their children to protect themselves, the Rockford Diocese utilizes the program "Empowering God's Children" developed by VIRTUS. This is presented (grade specific) to all classes once per year. More information is available on the website [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). Parents may opt out of these presentations.

**Homeschooling**

Please consult the DRE well in advance if you are interested in homeschooling, as homeschooling involves significant commitment on the part of parent or caregiver each week and must be sustained for the entire year to be effective. Where health issues and transportation permit, in-person classes are generally recommended.

**Asbestos Management Plan**

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency promulgated in October 1987 the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (40 CFR 763). The law regulates asbestos containing building materials in schools. In compliance with this law, the Rockford Diocese hired Cape Environmental Management to inspect and write management plans for its parish schools. This 1988 plan gives the guidelines for operations and maintenance. All work performed is accomplished in accordance with guidelines and regulation set forth by various government agencies. A Management Plan is on file at the school office for your inspection. For more information, speak to either the Pastor or the DRE.