

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 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.

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 held on Sunday mornings from 10:45 am to 12:00 noon in the school building.

Classes are held in the school classrooms.

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 Inculturates 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

Attendance Policy

We would like your son(s)/daughter(s) to have the most enriching year possible. The only way we can assist toward that goal is by them attending class. Students should try to NOT miss more than 3 classes for the entire academic year. Confirmation students should try to NOT miss more than 3 classes for each academic year during the Confirmation preparation years.

If students miss more than the above specified amount, they need to either complete make-up work at home or repeat that grade. A student's make-up work and or their repeating a grade will be up to the determination of the Pastor and/or the Coordinator of Religious Education.

Absences may be excused for illness, emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances that are well-communicated to either the Pastor or to the Coordinator of Religious Education. Try to set your priorities so that religious education takes precedence over sports and other co-curricular activities.

Classes are offered Kindergarten through eighth grade. We urge that children attend every year so as to experience a steady deepening and strengthening of their faith. In particular we urge that children maintain attendance in third through sixth grades rather than take a break between the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation.

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 or driver must SIGN THE CHILD IN, on a sign-up sheet in the classroom. After class, parents of Kindergarten through third grade are to SIGN THE CHILD OUT. Older children may wait at the school exit for their ride or meet their younger siblings.

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 DRE in advance.

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, or student 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). Students should not remove or steal anything belonging to the school, its students, or any clubs or associations in any way affiliated with the school or church.

Similarly to respecting space, all students and staff must respect one another---which includes another's belongings, personal space, and human dignity. 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 student, and not intentionally try to be distracting to the classroom learning environment.
3. If outside activities or "homework" is assigned in class, students are expected to complete the activities or "homework" within the specified time frame.
4. NO food or drinks of any kind (to be conscience of allergies).
5. NO paraphernalia of any kind.

Tuition

One hundred dollars (\$100) is due at the time of registration. The balance, including the related book fees and sacramental fees should be paid before April 1st. Note that sacramental fees are levied for two years, the year before the sacrament and the year of the sacrament. For any family that would like to setup a payment plan, the payment plan portion of the registration forms should be filled out.

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.

Communication

Communications are generally via flocknotes (email and text) and occasionally via mail or 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!

Sacrament Preparation

All specifications listed below are up to the determination and subject to change per the discretion of the Pastor.

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 must attend Mass 3 out of 4 weekends per month at St. Laurence (either Saturday or Sunday).
2. All students must attend Confirmation class 3 out of 4 Sundays per month (9:30 – 10:45 am).
3. All students must select a saint name and complete an essay about their chosen saint. Further instructions provided during the course of the year.
4. All students must complete 20 hours of service (10 hours per year) with 5 of those hours being “Evangelization Hours”.
 - a. Evangelization hours are hours that are spent specifically speaking or living out our Catholic faith.
 - b. We ask that students don’t complete service hours for their immediate family. For example, babysitting their brother/sister.
5. All students must master the course material to be confirmed.

In the event of an Emergency

Weather:

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. 9-1-1 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 via flocknotes (text message and email) when class has been cancelled due to weather or other extenuating circumstances.

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

Empowering God's Children

To assist parents in teaching their children to protect themselves, the Rockford Diocese utilizes the program "Empowering Good'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. Parents may opt out of these presentations.

COVID19

During the summer of 2020 a Reopening Plan was developed so that the PREP could function safely. This was implemented and followed during the 2020-2021 academic year. The COVID19 situation and guidance from the Diocese of Rockford and the State of Illinois will be reviewed during the summer of 2021 to help with planning for the 2021-2022 year.

Homeschooling

To accommodate families during the 2020-2021 academic year who were not comfortable with in-person classes, homeschooling was offered and monitored by select catechists. For the coming year we will attempt to organize this effort with guidelines and monitoring. 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.