

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CATHOLIC
CHURCH

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PARENT HANDBOOK

Susan Kramer, DRE/ Office Hours-9:00 to 4:00 p.m. M-F, Best reached on Tuesdays and Thursdays

Sunday mornings
(Class Dates Only)

Grades K4-8th | 0:45 AM to 11 :45 AM

For appointments at other times, or to make sure that someone will be in the office, please call in advance. Class hours are a hectic time--if you need to speak to a catechist, or the director at length about any concern, please call the office to set up an appointment-244-2430.

Welcome to St. John the Evangelist Religious Education Program. This handbook was designed to give parents and guardians basic information about our program.

PARENT'S ROLE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

You must be your child's primary example in matters of faith. Church authorities have helped us by developing positive laws called Precepts of the Church (Pg. 3 booklet) to ensure our growth in our love of God and neighbor. We are obliged as Catholics to meet these minimum requirements of our faith (CCC 2041-2043.) As parents, we need to pass these precepts on to our children. This can make a big difference in their spiritual journey.

1. Attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from those works and activities, which would keep us from going to Mass on these days.
2. Confess our sins at least once a year. (Once a month is recommended.)
3. Receive Holy Communion at least during the Easter Season. (If you have committed any mortal sins you should not receive Holy Communion until you go to confession.)
4. Observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. Provide for the needs of the Church according to your ability.

"Parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children. They catechize

informally but powerfully by example and instructions. They communicate values and attitudes by showing love for Christ and his Church and for each other, by reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit, by fostering justice and love in all their relationships. Their active involvement in the parish, their readiness to seek opportunities to serve others and their practice of frequent prayer, all make meaningful their profession of belief. Parents nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith." (Sharing the Light of Faith - National Catechetical Directory for the United States)

Both parents (mothers and fathers) and children in prekindergarten through Confirmation preparation are invited to attend faith formation classes. Children will be assigned to developmental level classes. Parents are invited to attend adult classes being offered concurrent with their children.

REGISTRATION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS

Only registered parishioners who regularly attend Mass at St. John are welcome to register for Religious Education. Before attempting to register for the Religious Education Program, please ensure you have officially registered in this parish. Parents will be asked about parish registration status prior to being allowed to register. Parish registration will be verified. You can contact the parish office if you need to verify your status and/or register as a parishioner for the first time. Registration can be completed in office, sent by email, and dropped in offertory basket, or received from the Director of Religious Education, Susan Kramer. We have a welcome packet for everyone who registers. New families will need to submit a Certificate of Baptism for each child registering.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES/DATES

The Religious Education program will meet each Sunday and will follow the local city/county school calendar. A First Holy Communion and Confirmation parents meeting will be held in September to go over dates for Sacrament class requirements, and deadlines for turning in sacrament documentation/certificates. The date for the Confirmation Mass has not yet been determined by the office of the for Bishop for the 2018 class of candidates. Please monitor communications from the Religious Education Director and your child's catechist to learn of any schedule changes and important Sacramental dates.

SACRAMENTAL CLASSES REQUIREMENTS

Children preparing for the sacraments are expected to participate and attend Mass, Confession, and spiritual devotions.

Confirmation I & II students:

- Sunday Mass Attendance
- Holy Days of Obligation
- Confession
- Stations of the Cross During Lent (a minimum of 3 out of 6 dates)
- Eucharistic Adoration
- October 16th-18th Fall Mission with Jon Leonetti (a minimum of 1 out of 3 dates)
- Lenten Mission Feb. 25-27th with Adam Storey (a minimum of 1 out of 3 dates)

Sacrament I & II students:

- Sunday Mass Attendance
- Holy Days of Obligation
- Stations of the Cross During Lent (a minimum of 3 out of 6 dates)
- Eucharistic Adoration

MASS ATTENDANCE

Sunday is the Lord's Day and all other work should be laid aside. Sunday is the natural day to spend time exploring our faith and God's teachings following Mass. **Students are expected to attend *all Sunday Masses and Holy Day of Obligation in addition to other important liturgical dates (see below).***

2017-2018 Academic Year Holy Days of Obligation and Important Liturgical Dates with required attendance:

- November 1st – All Saints Day
- December 8th – Immaculate Conception
- December 25th – Christmas
- January 1st – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, Octave of Christmas
- February 14th – Ash Wednesday
- March 29th – Holy Thursday
- March 30th – Good Friday
- April 1st – Easter

RECONCILIATION ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to maintain a regular regimen of Confession, monthly suggested, following First Holy communion.

CATHOLIC DEVOTIONS ATTENDANCE

Students and parents are expected to attend Catholic Spiritual Devotions including Eucharistic Adoration and Stations of the Cross. Eucharistic Adoration is offered on Sundays and Wednesdays. During the Liturgical period of Lent, students are required to participate in Stations of the Cross held at 7pm on the following dates during the 2017/2018 Academic Year (a minimum of four dates must be attended for Stations of the Cross):

- February 16th and 23rd
- March 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd

CLASS ATTENDANCE

You have asked us to help you with the religious education of your child. Their attendance is of utmost importance for the ability to grasp this very important material. If too many absences occur (**more than 3**) in a sacrament year, it may mean that your child will have to repeat the year in order to get a full understanding of the material. (This does not apply to preschool)

All attendance is mandatory (extracurricular sports and other activities are not excused absences). When a student is going to miss a class, the parent should contact the office and Religious Education Director. If you know of the absence in advance please send a note with them prior to the week they will miss or notify their catechist. If the child is ill or it is a last-minute absence, email skramer@stjohnevang.org before class begins. Letting us know that the child will be absent and why will help us to keep them up to date with the rest of their class. We will take into consideration the reasons for the absences and what has been done to catch up with missed lessons. Absences for extracurricular activities (sports and arts etc.) will not be excused.

SACRAMENT ATTENDANCE

First Communion and Confirmation students are expected to be at every class unless the student or parent is ill. Contact the Religious Education Director if there is a situation which prevents the student from attending class. Parents may be asked to postpone

sacrament preparation when there are more than three absences. If a child misses a class for whatever reason, he/she is expected to make up the work (except for preschool.) Absences for extracurricular activities (sports and arts etc.) will not be excused.

CHILD ABUSE

It is the policy of the Diocese of Savannah that all employees and volunteers, report all forms of abuse (i.e. physical, mental, psychological, emotional, etc.) against any minor, even if the person is no longer a minor, perpetrated by any person. If a child discloses any information that leads us to believe the child is unsafe we will report it to the proper authorities.

PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

The Diocese of Savannah also requires that any employee or volunteer who may have contact with children must submit to a Criminal History Background Check before beginning their volunteer assignment and attend a "Protecting God's Children" VIRTUS training. Volunteers and employees will also sign a code of conduct.

COMMUNICATION

WE are here to serve the catechesis needs of our children and youth. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to share them with your child's Catechist or contact Susan Kramer, the Religious Education Director at skramer@stjohnevang.org. Electronic communication will be sent to your home through the email address you provided during registration. This mail will keep you up-to-date on all religious education happenings. Our website will post ALL information and notices as well, <http://www.stjohnevang.org>. Please "like" our Facebook page, notices and updates will also be posted there. When possible a REMIND notification will be sent to all families that are signed up to receive. Finally, the weekly parish bulletin always contains updates.

HOME ASSIGNMENTS/CHILD'S COMMUNICATION FOLDER

Prior to each class, parents MAY be asked to read the upcoming chapter/lesson to their child and engage them in a brief discussion and review of the material. Mothers and fathers are encouraged to participate in this class preparation. Parents are asked to accomplish this pre-reading of the lesson as the chapter will not be re-read in its entirety in class due to time restraints. Please check the student's communication folder

to determine which lesson/chapter(s) must be read prior to class. Additionally, Students in Grades 1-7 may be given brief home assignments each week. Please check your child's communication folder regularly for homework or notes from their teacher. Parents are asked to discuss class-covered material and help children review what took place during class. It's important that they learn their prayers for their grade level and continue to practice those from previous years. Student books may be sent home to complete assignments. Students will be required to bring their books with them to class each week.

LOST MATERIALS

Lost books will be replaced at the expense of the family who will pay the lost book fee. If a student misplaces, books or communication folders, this must be reported to the classroom catechist immediately so a replacement can be provided ASAP.

PROGRESS REPORTS AND TESTS

Students may be tested periodically on their knowledge of the faith and especially the memorization of prayers and basic catechism. Test scores along with the Catechists observation of classroom participation will be used to assess the student's understanding of the material being presented. A student that does not grasp the material may be retained at the same grade for the following year. (Typically, this will only happen if the student misses too many classes, and if given permission, does not make up the missed assignments.) Progress reports will be available upon request. If you have concerns about your child's progress do not hesitate to contact the DRE. For children in the four sacrament years (two prior to First Holy Communion and two prior to Confirmation), an attendance warning will be sent home following a child's second absence.

SPECIAL NEEDS

"All baptized persons with disabilities have a right to adequate catechesis and deserve the means to develop a relationship with God." (National Directory for Catechesis) This statement includes all learning disabilities. If there is any information you can provide to help us better work with your child, please call the Religious Education Director, Susan Kramer. Together we can create a plan for their faith formation. Please include their strengths, difficulties, and any accommodations that they may need when registering your child.

CLASSROOM RULES

- No messaging or use of electronic devices is allowed in class, unless permission is given by the catechist.
- Please make every effort to be in class on time.
- If you are absent, you are responsible for making up missed work.
- No candy, gum or drinks are to be brought into the classroom. Hats are NOT worn in the building.
- Proper manners and Christian behavior are expected at all time. Inappropriate behavior will not be allowed. There will be no improper language or comments.
- Students will not talk when the catechist is talking.
- Students will respect the property of others. Students will treat each other with respect.
- No toys or other items of entertainment are to be brought to class without permission of the catechist. Additionally, use of cell phone, texting, or other forms of communication are not allowed during class time. If they are, they will be confiscated and returned at the end of class.

DRESS CODE

The dress code for class is Sunday Best. Please dress according to the weather. No shorts allowed. Skirts and dresses should be appropriate length. Jeans and t-shirts are discouraged. Khaki pants and collared shirts are acceptable. No hats are to be worn in the building. Most students should be coming from mass attendance or preparing for mass afterwards and should be dressed according to Sunday Mass expectations.

DISCIPLINE

Please go over the discipline policy with your child. If their behavior disrupts the learning process, the steps listed below will be followed to ensure that class participation may continue:

1. When a student is sent to the Director of Religious Education for breaking a rule or for any other conduct unbecoming a Christian student, she will speak to the student and retain the student for at least 10 minutes during class time and a parent will be notified.
2. If the student is sent a second time for breaking one of the rules, a parent will be asked to come in for a conference with the DRE.

3. If the student is sent a third time for breaking one of the rules, measures will be taken which were decided upon by the Pastor, DRE, catechist and parent per their previous discussion.

If a child is threatened by another student or threatens others or brings weapons to class, the catechist will notify the DRE immediately. Authorities may be called, depending on the circumstances. Any child who displays disruptive behaviors that are deemed detrimental to the classroom or school environment or who cause safety concerns will be asked to leave the program as determined by the Pastor.

MEDICATION

The religious education director will not dispense any medication. Students may not have medication in their possession during religious education classes except for metered dose asthma inhalers, epinephrine auto-injector (epi-pen) or epinephrine inhaler. If your child needs to carry an asthma inhaler or epi-pen, please contact the religious education director prior to the beginning of classes. Written approval from their physician and a parent is required for the student to possess and use these devices. We will also need to have a written emergency plan.

VISITORS

We do not allow friends of students to attend the student's class.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS

In order to be a candidate for the reception of a sacrament {First Holy Communion or Confirmation) the student must have a minimum of two years of preparation prior to each of these sacraments. This means two years of excellent attendance in religious education prior to making First Holy Communion (often the 1st and 2nd grade years). An additional two years of excellent attendance in religious education is required prior to being Confirmed. The two years of preparation for Communion cannot be considered meeting the requirement for the Confirmation requirement. Also, no child younger than 2nd grade is eligible for First Holy Communion and no child younger than 6th grade is eligible for Confirmation according to Diocesan rules. Children entering the program later than 1st grade or missing years of preparation due to poor attendance or non-enrollment may be placed in classes inconsistent with their academic grade in order to cover the necessary material in a reasonable sequence. Student placement will be based on catechesis needs and not primarily on being placed on grade level or with similar age

peers. It is important that students not wait until after the 1st grade to begin religious education.

First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion:

It is strongly encouraged that parents register their children for religious education classes beginning with Grade 1, and continuing through Grade 8, and be present for classes each year, unless a serious reason prevents them from doing so. (An example of a serious reason would be chronic or acute illness.)

Children who have completed first grade religious education will be catechized for the celebration and reception of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion upon entering the second grade. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is received in second grade prior to the reception of First Holy Eucharist.

Age appropriate instruction is provided to lead children to an understanding of the Church's teachings about the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. This includes classroom instruction, workshops, and parental involvement. The Pastor determines whether a child is sufficiently prepared and has the right intention for the reception of First Holy Communion based on information given from the Catechist and the Religious Education Director. All First Holy Communion candidates will have 10-minute meetings with one of the parish priests beginning in March.

Verification of the child's baptism must be received prior to receiving First Holy Communion. If your child was baptized in a Christian denomination other than Catholic, they must make a profession of faith prior to receiving First Holy Communion.

Confirmation:

Upon entering the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation (Confirmation Class II) youth are expected to have completed the following:

1. Reception of the Sacraments of Baptism and First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.
2. Catechesis through 7th Grade (Confirmation Class I)
 - a. *Note that children must have completed their First Holy Communion prior to entering the Confirmation Class I and not be younger than 5th grade.
3. To be a registered member of St. John the Evangelist Church regularly attending Mass at St. John.

Youth entering the Confirmation Program will be expected to:

1. **Attend all classes.**
2. Attend weekly Mass and monthly Confession
3. Participate in regular devotions within the parish.
4. Attend ALL scheduled preparation programs, including retreats.
5. Select a Confirmation Sponsor who is a Catholic in good standing at their parish.
 - a. To be in "good standing" you're expected to regularly attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation in addition to observing doctrine (i.e. raising your children in the faith, avoiding/atoning major sins, invalid marriage, etc.) Only Catholics in good standing are expected to partake in the Eucharist and serve as Sponsors and Godparents. Please contact the Pastor if you need spiritual guidance or have questions about being in full communion with the Church.
 - b. Letters of "good standing" status will be requested for sponsors and must be turned into the DRE NO LATER THAN December 12th.
6. The Pastor will determine whether the student is sufficiently prepared and has the right intention for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation based on information given from the Catechists and the Director of Religious Education.
7. **All Confirmation Candidates will have 10-minutes meetings with one of the parish priests in April.**