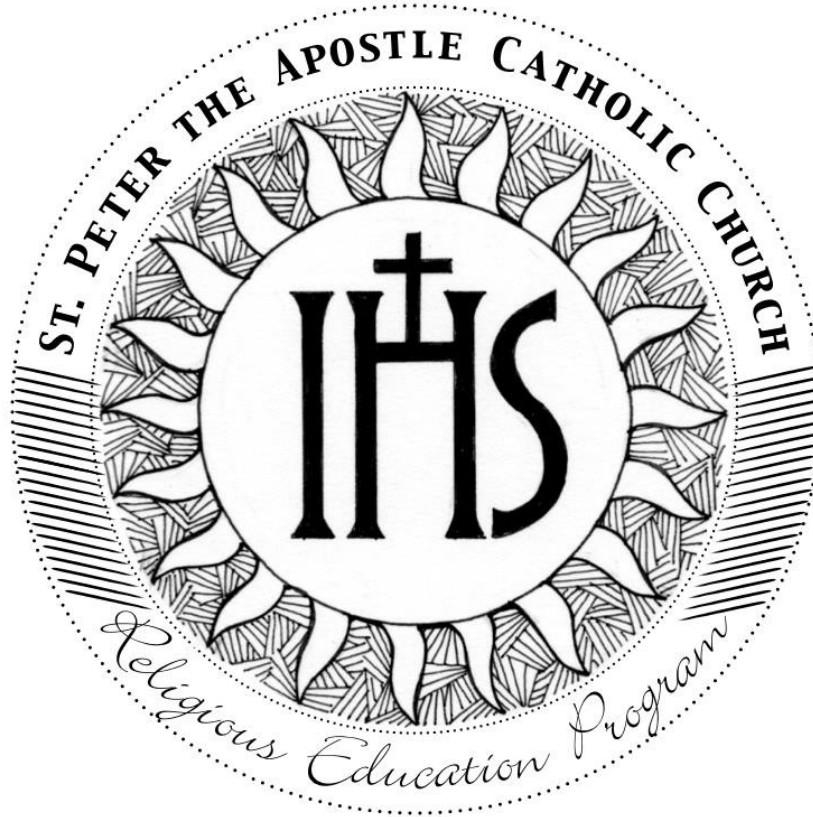


ST. PETER THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Religious Education Program



Family Handbook

Year 2023-2024

551 N Rush Street, Itasca IL 60143

Phone: 630-773-1272 (ext. 216) or 630-773-1272 (ext. 215)

www.stpeteritasca.com

August, 2023

This handbook is designed to answer frequently asked questions about Religious Education at St. Peter the Apostle Parish. The parish staff takes very seriously the importance of providing a solid religious education to the children of the parish from first through eighth grade. While the parish provides these services; it is important to note these programs do not replace the duty of the parents. As stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents".

We are grateful for the dedicated parishioners who have come forward to offer their talents to teach, assist, and safeguard the youth of St. Peter's in our religious education program. We invite all of you to consider volunteering in the program as: Catechists, Assistants, Substitutes, Hall Monitors, and Office Helpers. We pray for the guidance from the Holy Spirit for all of us – our pastor, deacons, staff, catechists, all other program volunteers, and all our Religious Education families.

All families are asked to subscribe to RE email or provide a cell phone number to receive important information and updates. Updates and important information are distributed on at least a weekly basis. Please make sure to check your child's folder each week for hard copies of important information and progress checks as well.

PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

The safety of your child from all aspects is most important to us. We promise to provide a safe environment.

As required by the Joliet Diocese, all volunteers and paid staff in our program have had background checks and have attended the mandated program, **Protecting God's Children**.

Because all volunteers are required to comply, we strongly recommend completing the **Protecting God's Children** course, and submission of a background check through www.virtus.org.

GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

St. Peter's Religious Education program follows the guidelines of the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC, 1997), and official statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for the sharing the Catholic faith.

All programs are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), a presentation of the truths of the Catholic Church. These include the teachings of Sacred Scripture, the Traditions of the Church, and the teachings of the magisterium of the Church.

The Religious Education Office of the Diocese of Joliet issues a policy handbook to coordinate the efforts of all parishes in the diocese.

REGISTRATION

It is required families are registered members of St. Peter the Apostle Parish before being able to register in the program.

Families new to the program may obtain registration materials from the Religious Education department or on the parish website at www.stpeteritasca.com. Please complete the information and return the documents to the RE Office. Baptismal Certificates are required when the child first enters the program for those not baptized at St. Peter the Apostle.

Families currently enrolled may register for the following year by mail each spring. Registration packets will be sent home with the students in late March or early April. Placements will be honored on a first come, first served basis. A \$20 discount is given to families registering by the determined mid-May date. A \$50 late fee applies to those registering after July 16 to compensate for additional material shipping costs.

TUITION

Tuition covers a portion of the program expenditures. Fees are applied toward the cost of student books and curriculum supplies, Bibles, Massports, and other supplies used during instruction. If a child loses a book, the family will be responsible for paying for its replacement.

Other fees, include the second grade Holy Communion fee of \$50, and Confirmation fees of \$30 for seventh grade, and \$90 for eighth grade.

All families are expected to pay the tuition and other fees as applicable. **However, no child will be denied religious education due to financial need.**

FAMILY ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

According to the promises made at a child's baptism, the parents are the primary teachers of the faith for their children. The purpose of the parish program is to assist the parents in carrying out this responsibility, especially in the preparation for the reception of a sacrament.

Parents are responsible for training their children in the practice of the faith. As the domestic church, the parents must provide a foundation for their child's Religious Education by:

- Teaching your child how to pray.
- Attending the Sunday liturgy and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Instilling a love of the Faith.
- Being a model of active Christian service in the parish.

We also ask families to support the Religious Education program in the following ways:

- Attend a "Protecting God's Children" Class (1 class only).
- VOLUNTEER to assist in your child's program.
- Instill habits of prompt and regular attendance.
- Ensure necessary materials (books, folder, etc.) are brought to each session.
- Maintain standards of good taste in dress for class and church (no short shorts, halter tops or t-shirts with inappropriate language).
- Attend all meetings and special liturgies.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS

Baptism for older students, prior to second grade, must be discussed with the Director of Religious Education.

First Eucharist (Holy Communion) preparation normally occurs in the second grade of Religious Education. It is a diocesan policy for children to be enrolled for two years in religious education when making a sacrament. Students enrolling in the program who have not received their first communion and are beyond the second grade in public school will be enrolled in their grade level class the first year and in a sacramental class the following year. They will receive their first communion the second year in May.

Children who enroll in the program in the second grade will be placed in the first grade class and will attend the second grade or sacramental class the following year. They will receive their first communion in their second year of attending classes.

Reconciliation (Confession) is prepared for and celebrated in the second grade and the Sacramental class in February. Parents are required to attend sacramental informational meetings and participate in their child's preparation.

Confirmation is conferred in eighth grade. The confirmation program is two and a half years in length and begins in sixth grade. Those newly entering the program will be placed in the sixth grade if they have not been in a Religious Education program at another parish. Eighth graders who fulfill the requirements of the Confirmation preparation program will receive the sacrament of Confirmation in the spring of eighth grade. Parents are required to attend sacramental informational meetings and participate in their child's preparation.

The diocese requires a minimum of 30 children for the bishop to come to the parish for Confirmation.

ATTENDANCE

Religious Education Absences

Notification of ABSENCES should be made as soon as possible. This can be done by sending an email, leaving a message at the Religious Education office, or sending a note to the catechist before or on the day of class. No absence is excused unless an official documentation of the absence is received. If a child exceeds the allotted number of absences for a given year the program year will need to be repeated.

To complete a program year, no more than 5 classes may be missed unless in a documented case of dire emergency. A student enrolled in sacramental preparation who misses more than 4 classes may not be allowed to celebrate the sacrament.

Students are expected to attend every session, arrive on time and remain in class until dismissal. Excessive absences in a given semester will result in delay of reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation or advancement to the next grade.

Religious Education Late Arrival and Early Dismissals

LATE ARRIVAL AND EARLY DISMISSAL is distracting to the educational process and will not be permitted on a regular basis for sports or other activities. If a sport or other extracurricular activity interferes in the regular attendance of your child at Religious Education classes, serious consideration should be given before enrollment. Every three times a child is late or early dismissed will be an unexcused absence.

Children are never allowed to leave class early unless notification is received from a parent. For first through sixth grades, a parent must check in with the office and sign out their child. A hall monitor or office attendant will retrieve the child from the classroom and bring him/her to the parent. If written permission is given from the parent for early dismissal, children in seventh and eighth grades are allowed to sign out at the office.

Identification will always be required to ensure we are releasing a child to a parent. Children will not be released to anyone other than a parent unless arrangements are made in advance with the Office.

For the safety of your children, there are no exceptions to this rule!!

First and second grade students are never permitted to leave the classroom on their own and must be signed out by a parent, older sibling, or authorized adult.

MASS ATTENDANCE

Families are expected to attend the Sunday liturgy and Holy Days of Obligation as a living example of their faith for their children. During the program year, all children who are in Sacramental Preparation classes (second, seventh and eighth grades, as well as Sacramental Class) are expected to attend weekly Mass. Massports will be provided, and must be stamped at each Mass. See more on Massports below.

MASSPORTS

A "Massport" will be issued to each student with their identification noted on the front cover with pages provided to receive stamps. A stamp will be received for attendance at each Sunday liturgy or Holy Day of Obligation. This is NOT being done to keep track of "who is attending Mass and who isn't" except for those in Sacramental Preparation.

All Massports will be kept in church. Please help your child obtain their Massport prior to the start of Mass. Massports are to be stamped after the Final Blessing at the Massport table at the back of the church. Please have your Massport ready to stamp. This is on the honor system. We ask parents to be an exemplary example of honesty.

A small reward will be given out the first week of the month to those with perfect Mass attendance.

HOMEWORK

Students in **first through fifth grade** are given a quiz at the end of every lesson. These quizzes are assigned as homework for the student to complete before the next class period. This gives the parents the opportunity to see what their child is studying. Parents are encouraged to take the opportunity to further discuss the content of the lesson with their son or daughter at home.

Homework for **sixth grade** is as assigned for our new sixth grade's program of Encounter, *Theology of the Body for Middle School or Altaration*.

Students in the **sixth through eighth grade** Confirmation program are assigned a weekly challenge when a Chosen lesson is completed and prayer journal entries. These challenges are to be completed before the next class period. Students are to write about their experience with the challenge and come prepared to discuss it at the next class. Parents are encouraged to talk with their son or daughter about the challenge and to even participate in the challenge along with them.

All children are required to complete any missing work due to absence. Students in **first through fifth grade** will receive last week's quiz when they return to class the following week to complete and return. **Sixth through eighth grade** students will be able to view the lesson online at www.ascensionpress.com.

Email address: religioused@stpeteritasca.com. Password: wearecatholic

Additional homework is also assigned periodically throughout the school year for those in the Confirmation program, including a saint report and project.

CONFIRMATION REQUIREMENTS

Students in the Confirmation program are given a packet with Confirmation requirements that are to be completed and handed in on the scheduled date. Confirmation candidates are not allowed to pick up their Confirmation gown or tickets until all the requirements have been turned in.

COMMUNICATION

Whenever possible or necessary, communication will be sent primarily by email. For this reason, it is very important to provide an email address that is checked regularly. If you are having email difficulties, please notify the office so we can ensure you are receiving communication via hard copy until the difficulties are resolved. If an email is not provided, we will try our best to contact you by phone for important messages. Several handouts are also given throughout the year which is given to the **youngest** child enrolled in each family. Please check your child's folder weekly for important information and updates.

Please communicate any concerns to the Religious Education Department at 630-773-1272 (ext. 216 or 215).

EMERGENCY CONTACT

If you need to contact your child during Religious Ed on Wednesday or Saturday due to an emergency, please call 630-699-3482.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluations for students in first through eighth grade will be distributed once or twice a year, midterm, and at the end of the school year.

CODE OF BEHAVIOR

All students and adults are expected to:

- Respect others – children and adults. Inappropriate words, actions, and intents will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, foul language, bullying fighting, threats, disobedience of instructors, or disruptive behavior.
- No food or drink is allowed unless approved by the director.
- Dress appropriately – modest attire appropriate for religious instruction.
- Respect all property, and to not vandalize or destroy and aspect of the church/school property or that of others.
- Not bring drugs, alcohol, or weapons on the premises. Appropriate legal action will be taken.
- Not use entertainment devices or cell phones during religious education instruction.

We reserve the right to inspect a person's personal property when there is reasonable belief the individual is violating the rules or concealing contraband.

The following behavior warrants disciplinary action.

Each student is expected to be respectful of the Catechist and other students. Coming with an attitude ready to pray and share faith in the group is another expectation. Behavior requiring disciplinary action may include:

- Speaking out of turn in a way not respectful to the Catechist, Assistant or Helper.
- Verbally harassing another student, either by name calling or making fun of another.
- Throwing objects around the room.
- Any other behavior inappropriate for a classroom environment.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

- **First Incident:** Verbal warning by the Catechist, privately while the student is in the room.
- **Second Incident:** After warning by Catechist, inappropriate behavior continues. Parental Notice of Behavior sent home describing the behavior. Behavior is to be discussed with child by parent and the signed form returned to the Religious Education office before the child is allowed back in the classroom.
- **Third Incident:** Student is taken to the office to meet with the Religious Education Director regarding behavioral problem. Parent is called requesting parent to pick up child. Conference is scheduled with parent, Director, and Pastor.

NOTE: Any student who physically harasses another student or Catechist, or shows lack of respect for Church property by way of intentional theft or vandalism, will be removed immediately from a class until a conference can be arranged between parents and the Director/Pastor.

SNACKS & DRINKS

At the time of registration, a Snack Allowance Form for each child (provided in the registration packet) must be filled out and signed by the parent. This is to ensure any dietary restrictions or food allergies are known in planning for any snacks brought in for class celebrations such as All Saints Day and Christmas. **For the safety of all children, please do not send any food with your child to eat during class, unless it is approved by the Catechist and Director.**

PHOTOS

Photos may be taken of children while in Religious Education per signed permission on the Registration form.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Special Needs

Any special illness or needs your child may have, including learning disabilities, attention deficit (ADD/ADHD), a recent death or separation, health problems such as diabetes, allergies to food, epilepsy, hearing or visual impairments, etc. must be noted at the time of registration or at the time the issue is discovered so we can better serve your child. The registration form has a special place to note this.

Medication

Medication is not dispensed by Religious Education staff or catechists. If children require medication or an Epi-Pen, parents must have a permission form signed by the doctor and a written plan for administration on file with the Religious Education office.

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Drop-Off

Cars should follow the designated route entering by way of Rush Street. TURN RIGHT into the church parking lot forming two lines of traffic and proceed to the north side (parking lot side) of the school. Students should be dropped off and exit the passenger side of the vehicle at the sidewalk in front of the NORTH DOORS to school. Drivers should then proceed toward and exit south on Cherry Street. Parking is not allowed in the drop-off lane, in the first row of parking spaces closest to the school or on Cherry Street.

Pick-Up

Cars should follow the same route as for drop-off. Parents using the pick-up lane should remain in their cars and students should come to the car. Parking is not allowed in the drop-off lane, in the first row of parking spaces closest to the school or on Cherry Street.

Children in first and second grades must be signed out of the classroom by their parents or designated older sibling (third grade and up) or authorized adult. Children in third through eighth grades may exit the building via the North door to proceed to the parking lot obeying the direction of the traffic coordinator.

Late Pick Up

Any children who are not picked up from the school after Religious Education class within 10 minutes of dismissal time will be escorted to the school office. We will ask children who are not picked up in a timely fashion to wait at the school office for their continued safety.

If you are detained for any reason, please call the office immediately to alert us to the fact that you may be delayed in picking up your child.

VISITORS

All visitors to the building must report to the office and show a picture ID to receive a visitor's pass. Arrangements must be made both with the Catechist and Religious Education office in advance of the visit. Unregistered children will not be permitted in the classroom without special prearranged permission from the director.

If parking for drop-off or pick-up, please disregard painted lines and pull in and park at the angle shown on the map, so that when exiting you can pull forward and merge into the Cherry Street exit lane.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Class Cancelation

In the event classes are cancelled due to inclement weather, the following steps should be taken to check if Religious Education classes are still in session or cancelled.

- **Check your email when the weather questions if Religious Education classes are in session.**
We will send out a mass e-mail if Religious Education is cancelled. This will be sent out as quickly as feasibly possible or on the day of class.
- Please make sure we have your correct email address to avoid any non-communication. If we do not have a family's email address, they will be called to be notified of the closure.
- **Call the Religious Education office at 630-773-1272 (ext. 216 or 215).**
Both voicemails will be changed indicating classes are cancelled. If there is no message when you call indicating classes are cancelled, then classes will still be in session.
- If you have any doubt whether classes are in session, check your email or call before leaving to bring your children to Religious Education class.

Fire, Tornado and Lock Downs

Catechists have instructions for emergency procedures when programs are held on the premises. Catechists are required to review and explain these to their groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please sign the acknowledgement of receiving and reading the St. Peter Religious Education Handbook on the next page and return it to the Religious Education office.

Thank you. We look forward to a faith filled year as we all grow in faith and love of Jesus Christ.

Toni Pietrowski
Director of Religious Education

Kathy Frank
Assistant to the Director of Religious Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, the parent or guardian of _____
acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to the policies and procedures
in the 2023-2024 St. Peter the Apostle Family Handbook.

Print Name

Date

Signature