

Parent Handbook



St. Richard Church Religious Education

2012–2013
Year of faith

“We want this Year to arouse in every believer the aspiration to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope”. – Pope Benedict XVI (Porta Fidei)



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A Message from Father Menei

Dear Students and Teachers,

Welcome back after a pleasant summer. It is time now, to put our minds and hearts in motion to learning about God and the Church. It is only by living His life that you will be honorable Catholic adults. Be on time for class, listen to your teacher, and out into practice at home all that you learned.

Teachers, how special you are! God has chosen you to give His children both knowledge and example. It is so important that you set a goal at the beginning of the year that both you and your students can achieve. Remember you are the eyes, ears, hands and mouth of Jesus. You must always be an image of Him.

May God bless all of you, teachers and students!

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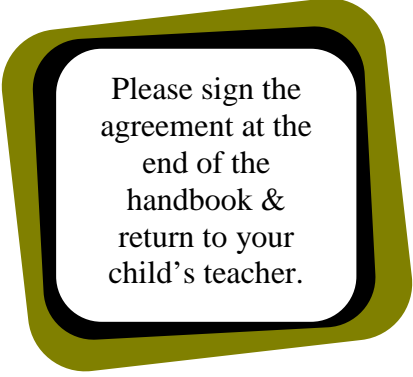
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INTRODUCTION

Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and discern 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 catechesis of children and parents. CCC 2226

Our program is faithful to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, and it upholds current documents, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The policies in this handbook are based upon

the Diocesan handbook policies and principles. The entire Diocesan handbook is available for review in the CRE's office. Please read and sign the agreement at the conclusion of this handbook and return your signed agreement



Please sign the agreement at the end of the handbook & return to your child's teacher.

page to your child's teacher. The agreement page will be kept on file in the parish religious education office. **If this office does not receive the signed agreement page of the handbook and your child(ren) continue(s) to attend religious education classes, this office will consider your child's enrollment in classes as your formal agreement and acceptance of this handbook.**

PHILOSOPHY

St. Richard Religious Education Program is committed to providing quality religious education to the children of our parish. Our Catechetical Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their child in the faith. It never replaces the parents' obligation to carry out this responsibility.

Your child's faith journey began at their Baptism and continues with the moral and spiritual values you've imparted to your children. So, even though our Catechists make every effort to share our Catholic faith with your children, the primary responsibility of faith formation rests with you, the parents.

A weekly experience of Sunday liturgy is a must for complete Catechetical formation. Without the children attending weekly Mass with their families, our program will not be effective. Catechesis, or Religious Education, is the process of communicating the beliefs, values and practices which make people Catholic Christians. It is the work of handing on, from one generation to the next, the faith that has come down to us from the apostles, and the way of life to which that faith calls us.

Our goals are:

- to teach students what a Catholic believes and assist them as they grow in faith, hope and love;
- to integrate faith and Christian living by encouraging participation in our Parish community, especially at Sunday Mass and other Sacramental celebrations;
- to enable parents to share in the preparation of their children for the reception of the sacraments; and
- to encourage parents to continue their own religious development

ATTENDANCE:

Religious education classes must be given first priority. **Athletic and social activities are not an excuse for continuous absence or early dismissal.**

The diocese requires us to provide 30 hours of instruction. It is imperative that a child be present for **ALL** classes unless illness or some other serious reason prevents this. If a child continually misses class, he/she will not be eligible for the next grade. Excessive absence may delay the reception of sacraments. When a child is absent due to illness a written note must be given to the child's teacher explaining the reason for the absence. If you know

your child will be absent or tardy, please alert his/her teacher or the CRE. Parents are responsible for inquiring on missed lessons and assisting their child in making up material.

Please Note: The sacramental preparation classes (First Communion and Confirmation) are two (2) consecutive year programs. Therefore, a child will not be eligible to receive the sacraments if they miss one year of preparation. Religious Education is a continuous program. Grades 1 through 8 are required.

EARLY DISMISSAL AND PUNCTUALITY:

No child will be released to anyone other than a parent/guardian unless we have explicit written permission from the parent/guardian. If a child is to walk home after classes, the teacher must receive a note from the parent/guardian before he/she can be released.

Students are expected to be on time for their classes. Habitual tardiness will not be tolerated. Please do not ask that a child be dismissed from classes early. If an emergency arises and the child needs to be released early, the parent/guardian must write a note and come to the classroom to pick the child up. Students may not wait outside or run across the parking lot to a waiting car. This ensures the safety of each and every child.

SNOW DAYS:

In the event of inclement weather, the catechist will contact the parent/guardian of each child in that class. The Pastor will make the decision to close as early as possible. WGAL will also be informed of the cancellation.



CALENDAR:

The entire Religious Education year is outlined on the Religious Education Calendar which is given to each family at the start of classes. Please keep the Calendar in a convenient place for easy referral. **The calendar can also be accessed through the parish website.**

The Parish Catechetical Program is open to registered parish families. A parent/guardian must register the child. All new students must present their Baptismal Certificate (and proof of any other Sacraments received – in the case of transfer students) at the time of registration. Transfer students must also bring a letter from their former parish stating years attended and grade completed. It is expected that children will attend Religious Education Classes each year. Parents/guardians whose children have left the program are required to meet with the Pastor before a child can be re-admitted to the program.

TEXTBOOKS AND CURRICULUM:

Each child in grade 1-8 will receive a textbook as part of the registration fee. This textbook must be brought to class each week. If a student forgets to bring this book, it will reflect a lack of preparation. Lost books must be replaced and can be purchased from the Religious Education Office.

The textbook used in Grade 4 is Sadlier's "We Believe" Program. Grades 1-3 and 5- 8 utilize Loyola Press' "Faith and Life Series" textbook and activity book.

HOMEWORK:

The Catechists might assign homework to the students on a continuing basis. If so, students are responsible for the completion of these assignments by the next scheduled class. Please make sure the homework is being done.

TESTING:

Quizzes and testing are our way of measuring the student's progress. At the end of each Religious Education grade, a final test will be administered to all students covering the material learned during the year.

DISCIPLINE:

Each student is expected to uphold proper decorum showing respect for the Catechist and his/her fellow students.

If a child is disruptive, disrespectful, or acts in any other inappropriate manner, these guidelines will be followed:

1st offense - a warning by the Catechist

2nd offense - Catechist will meet with the student after class

3rd offense – Catechist and/or CRE will contact the student’s parents

4th offense – Pastor and CRE will meet with the student and parents to assess the situation.

If after this initial meeting the inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be asked to leave the program. Behavior which takes away another child’s right to learn will not be tolerated.

Examples of inappropriate behavior are as follows:

1. improper language, attitude or gestures
2. destroying property
3. gum chewing
4. violence of any type (i.e. fighting, name calling, etc.)
5. rudeness, disrespect of those in authority
6. insubordination

*An incident report will be filled out by the child's teacher and **MUST** be signed by the parent/guardian each time the child is asked to leave class due to improper behavior.

In the event that **THREE (3)** incident reports are filled out during the Religious Education year, that child will be suspended from the Religious Education Program for the remainder of the year. The student may be re-admitted the following year only after the parent/guardian and child have met with the Pastor. It will be understood that the child will repeat the grade and that there will be no repetition of unacceptable behavior.

GENERAL RULES:

- No eating or chewing gum in class.
- No hats inside the building.
- Children are asked to have respect for the books and supplies that are used in the classrooms which belong to the parish.



CONDUCT

Students enrolled in St. Richard Religious Education program are expected to model their behavior after Christ and act in a manner that reflects favorably on themselves, their families and their parish. Behavior problems will not be tolerated. Use and/or possession of any illegal drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, weapons (real or novelty) are forbidden. A violation will result in immediate expulsion from the program. Any form of harassment (physical, psychological, sexual or verbal), or threats of violence are prohibited and will result in immediate expulsion from the program.

FIRE DRILLS:

Will be performed twice per school year.

FOOD ALLERGIES:

Food allergies are a growing health concern for children across the country. Even a miniscule amount of the allergenic food is sufficient to cause a life-threatening reaction and inadvertent contact (via nose, eyes, mouth) can be sufficient enough to put a child in danger.

Therefore, parents and guardians of highly allergic children **MUST** make known the special needs of their child to the parish catechetical leader and catechist.

CONTACTS

If phone numbers or addresses change at any time during the Religious Education year, please contact the office immediately. This is absolutely necessary in the event of an emergency. This also holds true for emergency contact numbers.

ILLNESS OR INJURY:

If a child becomes ill or injured during religious education, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified. The child (ren) will be released only from the Religious Education office.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY:

If a Catechist/Director suspects a child has been abused, Pennsylvania State statutes require the Division of Youth and Family Services to be notified immediately.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY:

Drugs of any type (alcohol, illegal substances, and prescription medicines) will not be allowed on premises. If a student is found to be in possession, the student(s) will be detained until the police and parents/guardians are notified. Drug possession by a minor will always be considered a police matter.

EMPLOYEES, CATECHISTS/AIDES:

All employees and volunteers are required to have **clearances** from the Dept. of Public Welfare and PA State Police. St. Richard Religious Education is in compliance with the Youth Protection Program of the Diocese of Harrisburg. All catechists/aides and employees must watch the online child protection video on the Diocesan website: hbg.diocese.org.

CUSTODY

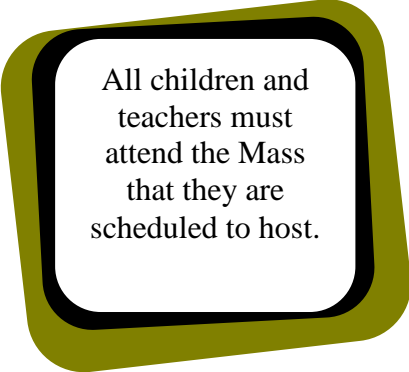
If your child is restricted as to who may pick him/her up/not pick up after class, we must have a copy of the court order.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Confirmation is only the beginning! Teens are invited to join St. Richard's youth ministry or become active in other areas of parish life. The Pastor or CRE can give students up-to-date information on activities and opportunities. The parish youth group, CIA, (Catholics In Action), is open to students in sixth through twelfth grades. They meet Sunday evenings twice a month. Contact Kaitlyn Fair (435-2704), or Brianna Ronald, (669-8495), for more information.

MASS ATTENDANCE

Mass is the source and summit of our Catholic Faith. Our faith formation builds on the Word of God and Bread of Life we receive at Mass. It is your child's right and obligation to attend and participate fully at Mass weekly and on holy days of obligation with his/her family. Each month a class will be responsible for hosting a



All children and teachers must attend the Mass that they are scheduled to host.

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SACRAMENTAL POLICIES:

For the reception of First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation the Diocese has mandated two years of instruction . Regular class and Mass attendance is necessary to be properly prepared. If requirements are not met, it may jeopardize a child's reception of the sacrament (see Religious Education Schedule for specific dates). Additional sacramental information is contained on pages 16 through 22 of this handbook.

FIRST RECONCILIATION

Our program endeavors to teach our children that Reconciliation is a call to strengthen our friendship with people and with God. We stress the basic belief that God is all loving and all forgiving. Through parental example of forgiveness in daily situations at home, children will learn of God's never-ending forgiveness and regularly use the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a means for inner peace.



First Reconciliation Requirements:

1. Attendance at all Sunday Masses and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. Attendance at all religious education classes. Unexplained or excessive absences may delay reception of the sacrament.
3. Parental attendance at all mandatory Reconciliation meetings. Parent and teacher cooperation is necessary.
4. Mastery of class material and format for Penance which includes: an Act of Contrition and basic prayers.
5. Parents are invited to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation during the celebration. If any parent/guardian has any difficulty with receiving the sacrament, please see the Pastor.
6. Dress respectfully for the occasion.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

The Eucharist is the sacrament which is the “source and summit of Christian Life.” Eucharist signifies our union with the blessed Trinity and is the source of union among the People of God. Eucharist is the sublime mystery of God’s love, a mystery which unites us to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Catholic persons fully participate in the Mass when they come forward to share in Eucharist.

In the Eucharist we are called to imitate Jesus in His giving which “was an unconditional giving of self to and for others.”

The Eucharist is a memorial and a celebration which unites us with Jesus and with our Catholic Family.



Through, with, and in the Church, Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross and the victory of His resurrection becomes present to all who receive His precious gift of Himself – **BODY AND BLOOD.**

First Holy Communion Requirements:

1. Attendance at all Sunday Masses and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. Attendance at all religious education classes. Unexplained or excessive absences may delay reception of the sacrament.
3. Parental attendance is mandatory at all meetings.
4. Attendance at the Rehearsal for First Communion is mandatory.
5. Dress code for First Communion:

Girls will wear white dresses, white socks, tights or knee socks, white shoes, and a white veil.



Boys will wear white shirts, blue or white ties, navy blue pants, and dress shoes.

Prior to reception of First Penance and First Holy Communion, children need to show a true readiness for Sacramental Life. Two years in attendance at Religious Education Classes as well as regular attendance at Sunday Mass are minimum requirements. It is expected that parents/guardians will actively participate in the education and religious worship with their child(ren).

CONFIRMATION

For many years now, our young adults have been living and growing as baptized Catholics. At this time, the Catholic Community extends an invitation to take the next step in a wonderful journey of faith – the sacrament of Confirmation.

Our program is filled with stories and questions, prayers and activities, which ask the youth to open themselves to the Holy Spirit – the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

The parish community joins with St. Paul's prayer for all:



**MAY THE HOLY
SPIRIT BE WITH YOU
AS YOU GROW IN
FAITH, HOPE AND
LOVE!**

Confirmation Requirements (7th Grade):

1. Attendance at all Sunday Masses and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. Attendance at all religious education classes. Unexplained or excessive absences may delay reception of the sacrament.

3. Mandatory attendance at all special events pertaining to Confirmation.
 - a. Parent/Sponsor/Student meeting
 - b. “YES” Retreat Day (parents are responsible for transporting their child(ren) to retreats.)
 - c. Contract signing
4. Written report on the Saint whose name has been selected for the Confirmation Report
5. Sponsor **MUST** be chosen during 7th grade. It is recommended that, if possible the sponsor be the Baptismal sponsor. This choice expresses more clearly the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation.

Church Law states that the sponsor must be at least 16 years of age. He or she must be a confirmed Catholic who has received the Holy Eucharist and is living according to the Catholic faith. The sponsor may not be the parent of the one to be confirmed. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to give assurance of his or her qualifications.

There is no regulation that states that the sponsor must be the same sex as the candidate.

Confirmation Requirements (8th grade):

1. Mandatory attendance at all special events pertaining to Confirmation.

- a. Parent/Sponsor/Student meeting
 - b. “A.C.T.S.” Retreat Day (parents are responsible for transporting their child(ren) to retreats.)
 - c. Contract signing.
2. Additional meetings and/or service opportunities may be required.
 3. Thirty hours of Service
 4. Letter to the Pastor requesting to be presented to the Bishop for Confirmation

The Sacrament of Confirmation is a powerful sharing of God’s grace. Our young parishioners are invited to complete their “Initiation in the Faith” by proudly proclaiming the fullness of life as a Catholic person. Preparation for the adult experience of our faith is a process, not an activity. Young people prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation over a period of time. They are invited to grow in wisdom and grace as they participate in Sunday Mass, attend class and perform community service. Certainly it is expected that youngsters will be faithful to their religious education throughout elementary and intermediate school.

No child shall be considered ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the eighth grade who has not completed at least two consecutive years of religious education.

AGREEMENT

I have read and agree with the policies stated in St. Richard Religious Education handbook.

_____ _____
Family Name Parent/Guardian Signature

Children are in the following grades:

Child's Name	Grade
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Home Phone # Emergency Contact Person and Phone #

_____ _____

This agreement must be signed and returned to the Religious Education Office. If the Religious Education Office does not receive the signed agreement page of this handbook and your child(ren) continue to attend religious education classes, the Religious Education office will accept your child's enrollment in classes as your formal acceptance and agreement of this handbook.

