

In this new school year,
may God bless
the children and
families of
St. Joan of Arc Parish

***RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
PARENT HANDBOOK***

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INTRODUCTION

Catechesis/Religious Education is the process of communicating the beliefs, values, and practices, which contribute to the formation of Catholic Christians. It is the passing 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.

- The goal of Catechesis/Religious Education in all parish programs is:
- To teach students Catholic beliefs and how to live as a Catholic Christian
 - To involve students in the life of the parish in worship, service, and community
 - To assist parents/guardians in imparting the life giving Catholic Faith to their children
 - To encourage parents/guardians to continue their catechesis and faith development through involvement in the life of the parish
 - To encourage all adults to continue their on-going catechesis and faith development as members of the parish community

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS

(Excerpt from the Rite of Baptism of an Infant)

Priest: “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are doing?”

Parents: “We do.”

Parents/guardians have the primary and sacred responsibility to educate their children in the faith. The parish religious education program is established to **assist them** in this responsibility. It is essential to the child’s growth and development in the Catholic Faith that parents/guardians live the life of faith in the home. The effectiveness of the religious education process radically depends upon this. Children are taught in religious education classes that **celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday in the local parish as a faith community is an essential part of being Catholic**. With that said, children **must** attend weekly Saturday evening or Sunday Liturgy with the support of their parents/guardians.

It is obvious that the values of parents/guardians become the values of their children. Children receive a “mixed message,” which causes inner conflict, when what is taught by the Church is not experienced by them in their family.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHEDULE

2010/2011 School Year

Please note that this year there is a new schedule regarding the times of religious education classes.

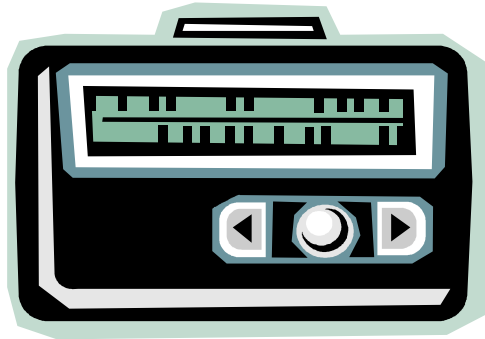
Grades K-Five:	Sunday 9am — 10am and Mass at 10:00am
	Thursday 4:15pm — 5:45pm
Grades Six –Eight:	Thursday 6:30pm — 8:00pm

Please refer to the religious education calendar for the dates when there will or will not be a class during the year. If the date is shaded, there will be no class on that day.



SNOW EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In case of inclement weather, please tune into Radio Station **WRCR located at 1300 AM** or go to the **religious education website** for weather related cancellation of religious education classes.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. Rockland County Catechetical Office: Parent Handbook for Parish Catechetical Programs
2. Archdiocese of New York Handbook for Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education.



THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR

The Director/Coordinator of the Parish Religious Education Program:

- Is responsible for the development, implementation, and administration of that program in accordance with the Guidelines of the Archdiocese of New York
- Has the responsibility of implementing the principles of civil law concerning the safety of students in accordance with the Archdiocesan Safety Guidelines.
- Is required to provide catechesis for all students of the parish, including those who have physical, emotional, mental, or learning disabilities. The Church is responsible to nourish the faith of the baptized person to the degree that the individual is capable of growth.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

St. Joan of Arc parish is committed to protecting its children and to supporting and helping families. Every effort is taken by the parish to assure that all persons working with or near its children have had background checks and have seen the required “safer spaces” training video. Learning the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect will enable parish staff and catechists to recognize when a family begins to show the risk factors for abuse or neglect; and perhaps be able to offer services or referrals to prevent the problem before a child is hurt. The Director/Coordinator educates each catechist and all the volunteer staff to recognize the indicators of abuse and neglect, and to respond appropriately to the suspected victim.

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

“When a catechist or volunteer needs to intervene and implement ‘universal precautions,’ they do so from an informed, voluntary response under the Good Samaritan Act’ and use prudent public health protective procedures.”

THE ROLE OF THE CATECHIST (TEACHER)

The catechists in our religious education program are usually volunteers. They prepare weekly lesson plans, attend meetings and training, and take religious formation classes. The Archdiocese strongly encourages certification of all catechists. Opportunities for certification are provided and all catechists are urged to participate in order to, not only adequately understand the teachings of our Church, but also to share the faith with our children.

The catechists at St. Joan of Arc Parish are a group of dedicated lay volunteers who are willing to cooperate with parents/guardians in any way possible. Any parent who wishes to speak with a catechist may make an appointment at the religious education office.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

St. Joan of Arc Parish does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, illness, or disability. All medical information is strictly confidential and only people with a legal right to know may be granted access to it.

- * The placement of a student with special needs is determined by the Director/Coordinator after consultation with the parent and catechist.
- * These programs are developed in accordance with the Archdiocesan Guidelines for students with special needs.

REGISTRATION/FEES

Registration in the catechetical/religious education program at St. Joan of Arc Parish is as follows:

- * Registration dates are usually published through the parish bulletin. The child's baptismal certificate must be presented at the time of initial registration.
- * To register a child in the religious education program, a family **must first be registered in the parish.**
- * Any child transferring from another parish needs to bring a letter of transfer from the DRE/CRE of the previous parish.
- * Each child entering the program is to be personally registered by a parent or legal guardian. At that time, a registration fee is required for each child. This fee is used towards educational materials (texts, classroom materials, cost of audio-visual aids, etc.), supplies, activities, postage, etc. These resources contribute greatly to a quality religious education. The registration fee should be paid at the time of registration.
- * **We encourage all parents/guardians to participate in the Spring registration.** This will enable us to order enough books, set up classes and secure enough catechists to cover requested classes in the fall. If we do not get enough students for a particular class, this will also enable us to contact parents should we need to cancel a class due to insufficient registration, before fall schedules are set in place.
- * A \$25.00 late fee will be applied to all registrations received after the June 30th deadline.



Formation programs of catechesis for Confirmation include but are not limited to:

- * Period of Instruction
- * Retreat experience
- * Events and activities
- * Prayer Workshop
- * Service hours
- * Interview
- * Letter of request
- * Confirmation fee

CONFIRMATION SPONSORS

As primary educators of their children, parents, along with sponsors, are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for Confirmation. Each child to be confirmed should have an individual sponsor. It is very fitting that the sponsor at Confirmation be the same sponsor one had at Baptism. Requirements for sponsor are the same as those for Baptism (Canons 893, 874):

- Be appointed by the candidate or, failing this, by the pastor
 - Be mature enough to undertake this responsibility (sixteen years or older)
 - Be a practicing Catholic who has received the three sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation
 - Live a life of Faith which befits the role to be undertaken.
- Since there is only one sponsor at Confirmation, the person must be Roman Catholic.
Not be bound by any canonical penalty.

All sponsors must present a written statement from the pastor of his/her parish affirming that he/she is qualified to be a Confirmation sponsor.

All sponsors who are members of St. Joan of Arc must meet with the pastor to let him know about their desire to be a sponsor. This must be done at the beginning of the program.

SACRAMENT PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS

Sacramental meetings will be provided for parents with children receiving First Penance, First Communion and Confirmation. These meetings are not optional. They are obligatory if you wish your child to receive the sacrament.



FIRST PENANCE AND HOLY EUCHARIST

“When we have been weakened by sin, we are healed and strengthened through the Sacrament of Penance.” (Excerpt from N.C.D. #115, 123)

“Catechesis for the Sacrament of Penance is to precede First Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation. The Sacrament of Penance normally should be celebrated prior to the reception of First Communion.” N.C.D. #126

“For the administration of the most Holy Eucharist to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity, and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.” (Canon 913)

“It is primarily the duty of parents and of those who take their place, as it is the duty of the parish priest, to ensure that children who have reached the age of reason are properly prepared and, having made their sacramental confession, are nourished by this divine food as soon as possible.” (Canon 914)

In as much as the sacraments require lifelong participation and study, at least two consecutive years of formal religious education are essential for the reception of First Penance and Holy Eucharist. Meetings are scheduled to help parents and children grow in their understanding and appreciation of these sacraments. The required meetings will enable parents to aid in the sacramental preparation of their children.

CONFIRMATION

“As a Sacrament of Initiation, Confirmation is intimately related to Baptism and the Eucharist. Confirmation renews and strengthens the Christian’s baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and work eagerly for the building up of His Body.” (N.C.D. #118)

Regular attendance in Grades 1 through 8 is required for eligibility for this Sacrament. The Pastor will interview all students regarding Mass attendance and sufficient knowledge of the faith before they enter the Confirmation program. The Sacrament of Confirmation will be administered at the beginning of the 9th grade.

CLASS PLACEMENT

- (according to the directives of the Archdiocese of New York)
- * Parish religious education programs are preparation for life. The students are expected to attend religious education continuously from grade one through grade eight.
 - * In order to be eligible to receive First Communion, students must complete the first two years of the religious education program.
 - * Any child who is older than the first grade level who enters the program without previous formal religious education must complete the first and second grade curriculum to receive First Communion. The child will be placed in the appropriate grade level after completing the curriculum of the grade(s) missed.
 - * Any child who drops out of the catechetical religious education program after receiving First Communion will, when re-entering the program, be required to complete the grade level(s) missed.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The attendance policy at St. Joan of Arc Parish is as follows:

- * Students are expected to be on time. Catechists will keep a record of all late arrivals. If there is consistent lateness, the catechist will contact the Director/Coordinator to arrange for whatever parental involvement that will alleviate this difficulty.
- * Students are expected to attend class every scheduled week unless sickness prevents them from doing so.
- * **It is the responsibility of the student and parent to make up all class work lost because of class absence.**
- * When a student will not be attending class for any reason, we ask that a note or phone call be made explaining the nature of the absence. All absences will be considered unexcused if we are not made aware of them.
- * After excessive absences, the Director/Coordinator will contact parents/guardians to discuss the problem and the potential for the unsuccessful completion of the student’s studies for that grade level.

COURSEWORK

CATECHETICAL GUIDELINES:

The Archdiocese of New York has prepared and published guidelines for Catechesis which will ensure a clear and uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level. The guidelines are not considered a substitute for the textbook. Rather, they are assistance to the catechist in the use of the textbook by identifying the essential content to be taught.

CURRICULUM:

Each child in grades Kindergarten through eighth has a textbook. It is the responsibility of the parent to remind the child to bring his/her book and a pencil to class each week. The Religious Education Office provides the art supplies. This year the book being used for grades K-8 is **Call to Faith** (Harcourt).

CONDUCT:

Excessive or continuous poor conduct or disruptive behavior in the classroom **cannot and will not be permitted**. If, after repeated warnings, the poor behavior continues, it is indicative to us that the child is unable to remain in the regular class. Therefore, arrangements will have to be made for home instructions, or private tutoring at another time.

If a child is sent to the religious education office due to poor or disruptive classroom behavior, the parents/guardians will be immediately called and asked to pick up their child.

HOMEWORK:

In the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis there are certain prayers which the children are expected to learn at each grade level. **The work of memorizing the prayers is to be done at home.**

Homework assignments are to be completed as part of the requirements for passing on to the next level. It is important that the parents are involved in this. Please see that your child has completed all of his/her assignments, and, assist the child with the assignment whenever possible. Do not leave home assignments until the night before class. Your child receives instructions only once a week. Review is necessary during the week.

Throughout the year, testing will be administered to determine the student's understanding of the material covered. At the end of the year, a test will be given to each class based upon the requirements of the Archdiocesan Guidelines. If a child does not fulfill the grade level requirements, a meeting will be arranged with the parents, the catechist, and the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education to discuss the situation. The Director/Coordinator will decide the next course of action.

Progress reports will be sent home in January and at the end of the school year. However, throughout the year, parents will be informed in the event of any child's difficulty in a class.

TRANSPORTATION:

The parents/guardians will provide transportation for religious education classes. They will be notified of the drop off and pick up procedures for their children at the parent meeting at the beginning of the year.

COMMUNICATION:

Any reply to a letter or notice mailed or sent home with the child should be answered as soon as possible. **Please check the Parish Bulletin every week, as information pertinent to religious education is also always placed in the bulletin to keep parents/guardians informed.** If for some reason you do not attend Mass at St. Joan of Arc on a weekend, please send your child to the religious education office for a bulletin. The bulletin is also posted on the St. Joan of Arc website: <http://www.stjoansparish.org>

Please feel free to e-mail the office with any questions or concerns and someone will get back to you as quickly as possible. The office e-mail is religoused@stjoansparish.org.

HOME SCHOOLING

Every effort should be made by the parents/guardians to get their children to religious education class. However, we understand that sometimes circumstances arise when it becomes necessary to home school. When this happens, parents/guardians will need to work closely with their children and be the liaison between them and the religious education office. **Parents will be required to attend the appropriate training class, based on the curriculum they will be teaching at home, before home schooling their child.**

Children who are home schooled must meet the same requirements as those students who attend regular classes. This means, to receive credit for the successful completion of the year, the child who is home schooled must:

- attend Mass every week
- submit all work to the religious education office
- take and pass a final exam for that grade level

PREPARATION FOR SACRAMENTS

Christian initiation is celebrated in Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Through these visible actions a person is incorporated into the Church and shares its mission in the world. Full initiation into the Church occurs by stages. Religious education throughout all grade levels is essential for proper sacramental preparation.

There will be a separate sacramental fee for First Communion and Confirmation and all students will participate in a retreat before receiving the sacraments.

Requirements for the reception of First Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation are determined by Canon Law:

- Age of Reason
- Proper knowledge of sacraments
- Emotional and spiritual preparation
- Approval by Pastor, Catechist, D/CRE and Parent