



Religious Education Program



St. Robert Bellarmine
Patron of Catechists & Catechumens
Pray for us

Welcome to the Cathedral Parish's Religious Education Program!

It is great to be back and preparing for another year in our religious education program. We hope you have all had an enjoyable and safe summer and look forward to growing in Christ with you and your family this year!

As you are well aware, communication will be vital throughout the year. Please check the parish website (www.isthmuscatholic.org) and the parish bulletin regularly for announcements and information on the weekly classes, sacramental preparation sessions and special events for your child.

The Cathedral Parish is unique in being composed of several distinct communities: Hispanic, Anglo home schoolers, and Anglo non-home schoolers. Each population has its own needs and desires when it comes to a religious education program. In these various communities and cultures, the Cathedral Parish is very fortunate to have strong parishioners from each population who conscientiously desire a solid religious education program for their children.

Our *mission* in religious education is to collaborate with parents to form a new generation of Catholics who know and love Jesus Christ, live as His disciples in the community of the Catholic Church and give witness of Christ's love to the world. Toward that end, we strive to offer a unified, solid, and engaging religious education program.

While our children and youth will receive important formation in the parish religious education program, the Church strongly encourages all parents to walk closely with their children as they grow in knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith.

- *"When they are given the dignity and role of fatherhood and motherhood, parents will eagerly carry out their duties of education, especially religious education, which devolves primarily on them." (Vatican II – Gaudium et Spes no. 48)*
- *The Christian family is the first place for education in prayer. (CCC #2694)*
- *"The parish... is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God. ...It must however, continue 'to be the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis.'" (General Directory for Catechesis #257)*

With an aim to provide a faithful and engaging curriculum for all communities, religious education classes will be based on a common bilingual curriculum approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and provided for all children and youth in English. The basic curriculum for grades 1 – 6 selected for the Cathedral Parish's Religious Education Program is *Vivos en Cristo*, a bilingual program from Our Sunday Visitor.

Regular weekly religious education classes will begin on Catechetical Sunday (the third Sunday in September) and end on the first Sunday in May for all grades. All classes will take place at the religious education center next to St. Patrick's church. (30 South Franklin Street) There are a limited number of special sacramental preparation classes for those seeking the sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion, which will also include parish children receiving their religious education classes at home. Please be sure to check the bulletin and webpage for the dates and time of these special sessions.

1 – 6 Religious Education Program

Children in grades 1 – 6 follow Our Sunday Visitor's *Vivos en Cristo* (Alive in Christ) text and meet from 9:00 am until 10:30 am each Sunday in the religious education center next to St. Patrick's church (30 South Franklin Street). The children also partake in Kerygma 4 Kids, a program specifically aimed at fostering a personal relationship of discipleship with the Risen Lord.

Grade 7 Religious Education Program

Youth in grades 7 engage in Decision Point from Dynamic Catholic, as well as Theology of the Body for Middle Schoolers. The youth also partake in Kerygma 4 Kids to encourage a personal relationship of discipleship with the Risen Lord. Classes meet from 9:00 am until 10:30 am each Sunday in the religious education center next to St. Patrick's church (30 South Franklin Street). In addition to their class time, youth are encouraged to participate in parish youth and service activities, which help these youngsters socially and personally as they form their identities.

Grades 8 – 12 Religious Education Program

Eighth grade and high school youth spend two years in study and preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation. They meet from 9:00 am until 10:30 am each Sunday in the religious education center next to St. Patrick's church (30 South Franklin Street).

During the first year, the youth begin with eight weeks of studying sacred Scripture to understand the story of salvation and the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. At the same time, they participate in Kerygma 4 Kids to encourage a personal relationship of discipleship with Jesus. The first year will also include a study on the Mass, with a special emphasis on the Eucharist, Theology of the Body for Teens (during the latter part of their first year of preparation) as well as other activities.

In the second year of Confirmation preparation, the youth will embark on a journey through Ascension Press's program Chosen. This program addresses how God has chosen each youth for a special purpose in building up His Kingdom. Youth are engaged in learning about how they can develop and maintain a healthy and loving relationship with God, and as a result find true happiness in their lives. They learn core doctrine of the Church with a special emphasis on the sacraments and what it means to truly live one's faith. Encouraged by examples of Saints present and past, and of those striving daily to fulfill God's purpose

for them, the youth come to see holiness and happiness go hand-in-hand. Our religious education program is intended to help our young people grow in all four aspects of the Christian Life that the Catechism describes as “pillars”: doctrine, sacraments, the moral life and prayer.

Furthermore, retreats and youth activities are incorporated into the program to help the youth deepen their faith and respond to Christ’s call to be the “light of the world.” (Mt 5:14-16)”

Sacramental Preparation

Sacramental preparation for children and youth wishing to receive the sacrament of Baptism (ages seven and older) consists of Wednesday evening classes from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm at the religious education center next to St. Patrick’s church (30 South Franklin Street). Baptismal classes begin the Wednesday after general religious education classes start and end mid-May.

During the second year of formation, those preparing for Reconciliation and First Communion need to participate in special preparation classes in addition to being actively enrolled in the religious education program for their grade. Special preparation classes for Reconciliation are held in the fall of the second year, followed by the children and youth making their First Reconciliation. Special preparation classes for the Eucharist are held in the spring semester of the second year. These classes are held on Monday evenings, from 6:30 – 8:00 pm at the religious education center.

- *Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation. They ground the common vocation of all Christ's disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer the graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland. (CCC #1533)*

Baptism

- Children seven (7) years or older seeking to be baptized are required to participate in a special yearlong formation class.
- Parents with an older child to be baptized are required to participate in a parallel class.
- Preparation for godparents may also be required prior to the Sacrament being conferred.

First Reconciliation

- First Reconciliation is celebrated with baptized children in the second grade (or later) prior to making their First Communion.
- Children seeking their First Reconciliation need to be actively enrolled in religious education at the Cathedral Parish for two consecutive years or be receiving formal religious education, approved by the USCCB, at home. (<http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>)
- To receive the sacrament of First Reconciliation, children seeking the sacrament are required to participate in a three-week preparation class, regardless of where they receive their primary catechesis. A parallel class is also offered for the parents.
- First Reconciliation is generally celebrated during the fall semester.
- Please watch the bulletin for more details.

First Communion

- Children wishing to receive their First Holy Communion must be at least in the second grade and actively enrolled in religious education at the Cathedral Parish for two consecutive years or be receiving formal religious education, approved by the USCCB, at home. (<http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>)
- Children making their First Communion must have already received the sacrament of First Reconciliation.
- To receive the sacrament First Communion, children seeking the sacrament are required to participate in a three-week preparation class, regardless of where they receives their primary catechesis. A parallel class is also offered for the parents.
- Prior to making their First Communion, children are expected to attend a retreat.
- First Communion practice will be held in following completion of the special preparation classes.
- First Communion Masses are generally celebrated in both English and Spanish during the Easter season on Divine Mercy Sunday.
- If a child/youth is unable to receive the Sacrament at the scheduled time, arrangements can be made for him/her to receive the Sacrament at a later date.
- In order for their children to receive their First Communion, parents are asked to provide their child's birth and baptismal certificates prior to the reception of this sacrament.
- Please watch the bulletin for more details.

Confirmation

- Preparation for Confirmation begins in the 8th grade.
 - Youth desiring to receive the sacrament of Confirmation are expected to receive two years of consecutive catechetical preparation prior to the reception of this sacrament.
 - The sacrament of Confirmation is generally celebrated in the spring following completion of the Confirmation program, when possible on the Feast of Pentecost.
 - If a youth is unable to receive the Sacrament at the scheduled time, arrangements can be made for him/her to receive the Sacrament with another parish at a later date.
 - Parents are asked to provide their child's birth, Baptismal, and First Communion certificate in the beginning of the second year of formation.
 - Youth are expected to actively participate in classes and activities.
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- *"Great is the mystery of the faith!" The Church professes this mystery in the Apostles' Creed (Part One) and celebrates it in the sacramental liturgy (Part Two), so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (Part Three). This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.*

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy. (CCC #2558)

General Cathedral Parish Religious Education Policies & Procedures

Communication:

Information on religious education and sacramental preparation will be shared with students and parents via a variety of methods including: the parish website (www.isthmuscatholic.org), texts, emails, the parish bulletin, class communications, this handbook, and/or phone calls and letters from catechists and the Director of Religious Education.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's catechist and/or the Director of Religious Education regarding the progress of their child in class. If there is a matter of serious concern, it will be brought to parental attention immediately. If you have any comments, questions or concerns, we ask that you bring them to the attention of your child's catechist and/or the Director of Religious Education at (608) 257-5000 ext. 12.

Attendance & Homework:

Attendance to religious education and sacramental preparation classes is very important for your child's spiritual and moral development. It is essential that your child attends class regularly and punctually in order to enter into a greater understanding of and relationship with God.

We ask that parents take great consideration in planning activities around scheduled class times. **Absences should be limited to three per year, unless health or family situations warrant otherwise. We ask that parents call in the absences of their children at (608) 257-5000 ext. 12 prior to class time.** A voice message may be left indicating the parent's name, the child's name, his/her grade, and the reason for the absence. If no phone call is received to explain an absence, it will be considered unexcused. **If there are three unexcused absences during the year, a determination will be made whether or not the child receives credit for the year.**

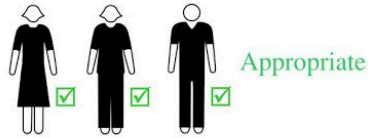
Some catechists assign homework that children and youth should either do on his/her own or as a family. As parents, you are privileged with the role as primary educator in the faith. Upon registering, you signed a commitment form that you would be a role model and teacher of the faith. Your cooperation and the reinforcement of the study and practice of the faith at home are of utmost importance. Children and youth easily see the hypocrisy behind a parent forcing his/her child to do something that they themselves don't practice or deem important. Please make sure you are part of passing on the faith to your children. If you face some sort of obstacle in this area, please contact the Director of Religious Education to help you resolve this issue.

Appropriate Dress:

Clothe Yourself with Modesty!

Vístanse con Modestia

1 TM 29



Not Appropriate / No



Thank you for your understanding / Gracias por su comprensión

All clothing worn by the children and youth should be age and temperature specific. Furthermore, as noted by the accompanying chart, clothing should be modest and fit well. It is important that parents and catechists work together to help instill the virtue of modesty in the children and youth, and the value thereof, especially given the contrary message sent by the current culture. Children and youth not respectful of the dress code will be asked to change.

Traffic Flow (Drop Off & Pick Up Procedure):

Punctuality is key. Please be on time when dropping off and picking your child up from class, as late arrivals are disruptive to class and most catechists try to attend one of the 11:00 am Masses. Parents of children in first grade should go to their child's classroom to drop them off and pick them up. Children will not be allowed to leave with someone other than a parent unless a written note has been provided to the catechist. Your promptness is appreciated.

Custody Issues:

In the case of separation or divorce, it is the assumption of the Religious Education Department of the Cathedral Parish that both parents have been awarded equal rights regarding access to their child. If there are special circumstances regarding your situation (sole custody, limited access or restraining orders) these must be communicated with copies of court/police documents to the Director of Religious Education.

Events, Activities, Retreats and Trips:

On occasion, off campus events, activities, retreats and trips may be incorporated into the religious education curriculum. In order for youth to attend such events, parental permission is needed, and youth must be supervised by at least two of the following: a program coordinator, catechist or designated adult.

Health Concerns and Medication:

Cathedral Parish catechists and religious education representatives are not allowed to dispense medication to children or youth. If, for special circumstances, you feel there is a need to make an exception to this rule, please notify the Director of Religious Education to obtain an authorization form.

Snacks and Allergies:

Snacks are discouraged during class times due to disruptions, messiness, and food allergies. If your child has a food allergy, please notify the Director of Religious Education. If, under the discretion of the catechist, snacks are allowed for a birthday or special event, parents are asked to provide something that is peanut/nut/peanut oil free, as well as something that is easy to clean up. When providing a class snack, individual servings are appreciated.

Cancellation of Special Sacramental Preparation Classes:

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances, classes may be dismissed early or cancelled. If Madison area schools are cancelled due to poor weather, we will automatically cancel our classes. Whether classes are cancelled or to be dismissed early, we will take the following steps to inform parents:

1. We will call, text or email as many parents of students as possible
2. We will place a voice message on our answering system

For *all* religious education classes, parents are responsible for being informed on class cancellations as well as determining whether or not road conditions are safe for travel. If there is a concern over road conditions, parents should not bring their child to class. Should weather deteriorate during classes, we ask parents to use their discretion in arriving early to pick up their child. In the case of tornados, flash floods, fire, etc. emergency procedures will be followed as determined by the situation.

Cathedral Parish Religious Education Discipline Procedures

Discipline and Intent of Consequences:

The word “discipline” means to teach or to educate. It is with this understanding that we use this term when referring to teaching a child or youth about the consequences of his/her actions. Consequences are never used to punish. The intent with all consequences is 1) to help the child or youth in question realize that certain behaviors bring about certain consequences, and 2) to ensure a safe and peaceful learning environment for all children and youth in class.

- First Infraction: upon a first infraction, a verbal warning will be issued. Depending on the gravity of the infraction, the Director of Religious Education and/or program representative may be informed or asked to be present in the classroom.
- Second Infraction: the child or youth will be taken to the program representative’s office for a conference. Parents will be informed of the situation and behavior and will be asked to observe their child in the following week’s class.
- Third Infraction: the child or youth will be taken to the program representative’s office. Parents will be called to meet about programming alternatives for their child’s/youth’s religious education.