

*Saint Peter's Parish*

# PARENT HANDBOOK

*Saint Peter's School of Religion  
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Rev Jun 2017

## **SOR Mission Statement**

Faith is a precious gift, which leads to an intimate relationship with God. We show our gratitude to him by loving and serving him with all our heart, mind and soul. One of the primary ways we do this is by handing on the faith passed on to us through the generations.

Saint Peter's School of Religion assists and supports the families of Saint Peter's Parish in providing religious instruction and formation for children attending Non-Catholic schools in kindergarten through the eighth grade in accordance with *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum Guide*. The School of Religion is also responsible for providing and supervising sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation for all students who have not reached high school age, and providing the Rite of Christian Initiation as it applies to children.

This religious instruction and formation seeks to evoke and mature a life-long relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and the Church he founded. It endeavors to develop this relationship with Christ through the promises and commandments contained in the Gospel message, as well as through prayer, the liturgy and the sacraments. We do so within an organized setting that will promote the love of Christ within our parish, and the greater Olney community. We go about our task under the guidance of our pastor who is the archbishop's representative, and in union with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

## **SOR Policies**

### **Registration**

Registration forms are mailed to returning families in the SOR program beginning in April. Registration forms may also be picked up in the SOR, Rectory, and on the parish website, [www.stpetersolney.org](http://www.stpetersolney.org), under Ministries, School of Religion. New families please call the SOR office. During the summer months, (May, June, and July) announcements are made in the bulletin for families new to the parish or new to the program about registration.

Placement for the following year is on a first come-first served basis. We encourage parents to return completed registrations as soon as possible.

Completed registration forms are to be returned to the SOR office as soon as possible. Be sure to complete the top part of the form, including email address and cell phone number, even if nothing has changed from last year. Incomplete registration forms will be returned.

Between August 15 and September 1, no new registrations will be processed to enable the staff to fully prepare for the new school year.

### **Fees**

Fees are charged per family.

\$100 for first child, \$175 for two or more children until August 1

\$125 for first child, \$200 for two or more children until September 1

### **Class Placement**

Class lists are put together on a first-come, first-served basis. A family may request a particular catechist by legibly writing request on the registration form. Changes in class assignment must be requested in writing and will be made on a case-by-case basis.

It is disruptive for both students and catechists when the class roster is constantly changing. Therefore, no class changes will be accepted after October 1. If extenuating circumstances arise, permission to change classes will be made on a case-by-case basis, and there is a \$25 charge for changes made.

### **Attendance**

According to Policy 3330 of the Archdiocese of Washington Policies for Parish Catechesis, "Regular attendance shall be expected of all children enrolled in the parish catechetical program... the expected norm of 85%." The DRE / Catechetical Leader may require students whose attendance is irregular to complete make-up work at home. The student may have to repeat the year if there are too many absences. Excused absences are included.

If a student is ill, please notify SOR office prior to class, if possible. Please send a note explaining the absence when the child returns to class.

If a student must miss a class because of a MCPS activity, the SOR office should be notified in advance. The student will be responsible for completing all class work and homework.

Each year of catechesis builds on the previous year's knowledge, since faith formation does not have an ending.. Therefore, continuous enrollment in SOR and attendance of classes beginning in First Grade is expected.

No student will be permitted to attend classes only in the year a sacrament is conferred. Children transferring in from another program must provide a letter from the director of their previous religious education program citing the years attended and textbook series used.

Children in families who are unable to provide proof of prior instruction will be placed in the Catechumenate program. (See Sacramental Preparation)

### **Early Pick-up**

Occasionally students may need to leave class early. Families intending to pick up children earlier than the stipulated closing time must send in a signed note to the SOR office. For the protection of the child, the note must state the reason, time, date, grade, and catechist's name (to forestall legal issues). To ensure minimum disruption of class, parents need to check in at the SOR office before proceeding to the classroom. Remember that your child will only be released to those persons whose names are listed on your emergency card. In case of doubt, a photo ID may be required.

### **Mass Attendance**

Regular attendance at Sunday (Saturday evening) and holy day masses is expected.

### **Sacramental Preparation**

Preparation for reception of the Sacraments is family based and follows a two years period of instruction. Typically, First Reconciliation and First Communion preparation begins in First Grade with the child receiving these sacraments in Second Grade. Preparation for Confirmation begins in Seventh Grade and then received in Eighth Grade.

Parents are to attend all sacramental meetings in which the expectations and requirements of the process are detailed. A copy of the Baptismal certificate must be provided to the SOR with the name and address of the parish with its seal clearly printed on the certificate, at the beginning of the school year. Additionally, students in both years of the Confirmation preparation program (Year A and B) will receive a Confirmation Booklet with the requirements and forms needed. Students are evaluated prior to receiving the Sacrament, including for Confirmation Year B students, being interviewed by parish priests, deacons, and teachers.

Any child, for any reason, who has not received the Sacrament of Baptism, Reconciliation, and First Communion, will take part in a two-year sacramental program

(RCIC) along with his or her parents to prepare for reception of those missing sacraments concurrent with enrollment and attendance in SOR.

### **Evaluation and Testing**

Policy 3161 of the Archdiocesan Policies for Parish Catechesis states the following regarding testing: “All parish catechetical programs shall annually assess students in grades 3 through 8 using the archdiocesan Faith Knowledge Assessment in accord with procedures.” Catholic homeschool students are encouraged to take part in the annual assessment.

Assessment will include written tests, observations, participation, and work of the student over the course of the year. Accommodations are made for students who need such assistance. Parents are to inform the SOR of any special needs their child may have. This information is kept confidential and will aide in a more positive class experience.

### **Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy**

It is the intention of the Archdiocese of Washington to ensure a safe and protected learning environment for all children. Anyone who works with or has substantial contact with children or young people here at Saint Peter’s Parish or in any of the various ministries of the Archdiocese of Washington must first:

1. Fill out and return an informational questionnaire.
2. Pass criminal background checks by both federal and state agencies.
3. Take part in a three-hour training session, *Protecting God’s Children*.
4. Take part in a one-hour updating session in child protection each subsequent year.

Parents can obtain a copy of the Archdiocese of Washington [Child Protection Policy](#) from the School of Religion office, or from the Archdiocesan website, [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org).

### **Discipline Policy**

An atmosphere conducive to learning and growing in faith is necessary for fruitful catechesis, and is at the heart of the SOR discipline policy. Good and positive behavior is expected from each student at all times. If a discipline problem arises, the student’s parents will be contacted and briefed about the situation. If the problem continues, the parents will be called to pick up the student immediately. The student will not be allowed to attend class again until a conference is held between the parent(s), student, and DRE.

### **School of Religion Advisory Board (SORAB)**

When deemed necessary, the pastor convenes the School of Religion Advisory Board whose purpose is to provide advice and assistance about the catechetical ministry of the parish to the Pastor and the Director of Religious Education of the Saint Peter’s School of Religion.

The Board provides advice and assistance to the Pastor and to the Director of Religious Education in following areas:

- a. Planning and setting of both short-term and long-term catechetical goals and objectives for the School of Religion;
- b. Formulation of policies in order to provide a guide for discretionary action and for the development of regulations by the Director of Religious Education;
- c. Financial matters relating to the budget and tuition policies;
- d. Public relations, in particular, developing and maintaining a program to project the image of the School of Religion both within the parish community and to the wider community outside the parish; and
- e. Evaluation of the overall programs of the School of Religion, as well as evaluation of the Board's own effectiveness in fulfilling its mission.
- f. Assist SOR as needed with social events and projects.

### **SOR Weekly Procedures**

Classes are held on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays for children in grades Kindergarten thru Eighth. The school year is from September to May.

Mondays and Wednesdays have two sessions:

Afternoon session from 5:00pm – 6:15pm for grades K thru 6

Evening session from 7:00pm – 8:15pm for grades 3 thru 8

Tuesdays have one session from 6:00pm – 7:15pm for all grades K thru 8

#### **• Drop Off Procedures**

Students enter the school through the Parish Hall and may be dropped off beginning 15 minutes prior to start of each class session. Vehicles line up in single file to discharge students. Drivers must wait for the first vehicle in line to move before proceeding.

Drivers must not go around the car in front of them. Parents may park in the parking lot adjacent to the Parish Hall and walk child into Parish Hall.

Students gather in the Parish Hall, along with their catechists, for prayer and announcements. Students are dismissed in their class groups from the Parish Hall to walk to their classrooms.

It is important for parents (and carpools) to ensure that students arrive on time. Chronically late students can miss time totaling an entire class by the end of the semester. This does count toward attendance. (see Policies)

Once classes have started, parents must escort their child to the classroom. The School of Religion cannot be responsible for children who are left to walk by themselves into the classrooms.

- **Pick Up Procedures**

All students are dismissed from the classroom after the dismissal bell has rung. Students are to remain in the classroom until the parent or another adult with permission to do so comes to the classroom to pick up student. Students will *not* be released from the classroom before the dismissal bell, and before the parent comes to the classroom. Early release from class is permissible only with prior notice from the parents to the DRE.

A written note must be on file in the SOR giving permission to an adult other than the parent to pick up student. Forms may be obtained from the office.

Parents who are delayed (due to traffic congestion, accidents etc.) must call the SOR to notify them. Please remember that catechists, aides and office aides are volunteers too, who need to be with their family at the end of the day. By being on time, you help us to help you and your families. In extreme cases, Montgomery County Police may be called for abandonment.

## **Parent Guidelines**

It is the responsibility of parents to:

1. Be active role models of faith to inspire their children.
2. Attend and participate in Sunday (Saturday evening) and Holy Day liturgies with their child.
3. Ensure that their children attend SOR classes on time and regularly.
4. Communicate with the SOR office regarding any special need, be it medical, physical, or other, that affects their child within the learning environment.
5. Be active in their child's learning process, especially helping with assignments and homework.

### **Prayer**

Parents are truly the primary educators of their children in their Roman Catholic Christian faith. We encourage you to take this role seriously and to pray with your child at home and in Mass. Appropriate prayers for your child's grade level are located in the back of the textbooks.

We are here to partner and support to you in passing on the faith to your child. Class time is limited with so many aspects of our faith to teach the children. Teach prayers at home. Go to Mass. Sing the hymns. When the students arrive in the classroom, both parents and the child will be familiar with this integral part of their spiritual development, which will allow for deeper catechesis.

### **School Property**

The school building, as well as all structures and equipment on the grounds belong to the Parish. Please remind your son/daughter that we share the classrooms with the

Parochial School. All items in the room, in the desks belong to the day students and their property must be respected no matter how strong the temptation to “borrow” may be. Each classroom has SOR supplies, and all pencils, staplers, glue, tape, etc. must be procured from your child’s teacher. Any child found tampering with or destroying, in any way, another child’s property will be financially responsible.

### **Behavior**

We expect that both students and adults will behave in a good and positive way at all times, as Christ taught us. Discipline problems create a difficult situation for all involved. The catechist will address individual problems in a timely manner. If there is no improvement in attitude and behavior, then the situation will be handled by the DRE. Every opportunity will be given the student to improve his/her behavior, however, if no improvement is made, the child will not be allowed to stay in the classroom, and the parent will be responsible for the child’s religious formation program for that year.

All disciplinary issues are kept strictly confidential for the sake of the children and families concerned.

### **Homework**

Students may be given homework periodically. You are expected to support your son/daughter’s instructor by ensuring that your child completes the assignments. If you have any questions concerning your child’s work, please contact the School of Religion Office.

### **Lost Text Books**

There is a \$25.00 replacement fee for all lost textbooks. Call the School of Religion Office if your child has lost his/her book.

### **Address/Telephone Changes**

Make sure the SOR office has the correct address, email address, and best phone numbers to reach you. This information is vital to us especially in the event of an emergency.

### **School Calendar**

Please refer to SOR schedule calendar. Perhaps post on the refrigerator. Our class schedule does not always mirror the public school’s calendar. Extra copies are available from the School of the Religion office, and are available online under School of Religion tab, on the Parish website, [www.stpetersolney.org](http://www.stpetersolney.org).

### **Cell Phones**

Use of cell phones or other personal electronics is prohibited during class times. These items will be confiscated if student is found using them, and parents will be contacted to pick up items from the SOR office after class.

## **Weapons**

Any student found with a weapon (gun, pocketknife, screwdriver, etc.) toy or otherwise, will be immediately dismissed from class and the parent/guardian will be contacted. A student will not be readmitted until a meeting is held with the DRE and the parent. This is for the safety of all.

## **Fire Drills**

Each October, catechists will review fire drill procedures with their class. Rules for evacuation of the building follow those of Saint Peter's Parochial School.

## **Food**

Food or drink, of any form (including gum, candy, soda, etc.) is not to be brought in by the student. Your child is with us for a very limited time. The students should have a dinner or a snack before arriving for class if possible.

## **Bathrooms/Water Fountains**

Please remind your child to use the bathroom facilities at home before coming to class. This also applies to getting drinks during class time. These facilities are available for real emergencies. Since the students are with us for such a short time, we strive to avoid as many interruptions as possible. If your child has any special needs regarding use of the bathroom, please inform the School of Religion Office.

## **Emergencies, Health and Safety Issues**

### **Emergency Forms**

We live in precarious times, and unfortunately, all spheres of our lives are touched by worldwide events. For that reason, it is mandatory that each family hands in a completely filled out and signed Emergency Form. In case of any type of emergency, we will contact those people you have listed on the form.

### **Emergency Class Cancellation**

In the event of inclement weather, St. Peter's SOR follows Montgomery County Public Schools for closings. If Montgomery County Schools (MCPS) are closed for the day, then there are no SOR classes. If MCPS cancels after school and/or evening activities, then SOR classes are also cancelled. Log on to Montgomery County Public Schools for more information about public school closings.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/emergency/>

(Note – classes are not affected by the status of community activities)

If it is unclear what conditions will be for the afternoon or evening on a day of scheduled classes or if MCPS are closed, a decision will be made by the DRE and the pastor within two hours of the scheduled SOR start time, and families will be notified thru email or phone if classes have been cancelled. In the case where classes are already in progress, children will be kept in a safe area within the school building and will only be released to parents or contact persons as stated on the emergency forms.

### **Health Concerns and Medication**

Attached to the registration form is a medical form, which must to be filled out *each* year and returned to the SOR office. Personnel and catechists are not permitted by law to administer any medications or give medical advice to students. It is therefore imperative that parents provide our office with the necessary information should there ever be a need for it.

Parents are urged to inform the DRE or office if a child has been diagnosed with a medical condition after registration has taken place.

### **Custody Issues**

Please notify the SOR office if only one parent/guardian has the custodial care of the student during class time. We must be aware of who may or may not pick up students during or after class. Parents may opt to monitor a child's class if they fear for the safety of their child due to custody issues. The School of Religion cannot responsible for any custody issues.

### **Right to Amend**

This handbook is meant to provide you, the parent/guardian with helpful information on how we in the School of Religion intend to undertake our duties. The Saint Peter's School of Religion reserves the right to amend the contents of this folder as necessary. Parents will be notified, in writing, whenever changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this folder.

## **Class Curriculum Outlines**

*The Catholic Church was founded by Christ our Lord to bring salvation to all men. It feels obliged, therefore, to preach the gospel. In the same way, it believes that its task involves employing the means of social communication to announce the good news of salvation and to teach men how to use them properly. It is the Church's birthright to use and own any of these media, which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for pastoral activity.* (Decree on the Means of Social Communication, paragraph 3)

### **Be My Disciples Program Outline**

Grades K thru 6

*Be My Disciples*, published by RCLBenziger, (2013), provides child-centered catechesis that takes a balanced approach to learning and living the faith. This approach initiates children into the community of faith and challenges them to discipleship. It helps children to know and live

their faith through loving service to others. This series has the approval of the Archdiocese of Washington and is aligned with the standards put forth by the ADW.

*Be My Disciples* uses a spiral curriculum structure, which teaches, reinforces, and extends knowledge of Scripture, Catholic doctrine, and the Church year every year in every grade. This curriculum empowers children and their families to answer Jesus' call to "Be My Disciples" by inviting the children to discipleship, teaching Scripture, Doctrine, and Celebration, and challenges children to integrate faith and life. There are six units integrating that We Believe, We Worship, and We Live. Each chapter ends with the With My Family page that includes a summary of the chapter's concepts, suggestions for reading the Bible at home, ideas for family activities, and a spirituality feature to deepen knowledge of the Church's spiritual tradition and prayer practices for the family at home.

The series has an interactive website: [www.bemydisciples.com](http://www.bemydisciples.com) that offers activities and learning tools, which will enrich your family's faith journey.

*What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes.* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, paragraph 8)

### **Chosen: Your Journey Towards Confirmation**

Grades 7 and 8

Students preparing for Confirmation use the series, *Chosen: Your Journey Towards Confirmation*, by Ascension Press (2014). The name of this series underscores we are chosen by God (see CCC 1). The goal of *Chosen*, as with all catechesis, is to bring about a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It is teaching for conversion with the result not just smart students but a community of disciples.

*Chosen* uses a combination of dvd lessons, student workbooks, and guided small group discussions in the classroom. Parents and sponsors continue the lessons outside the class using the Parent's Guide and Sponsor's Guide to encourage and strengthen the candidates on their journey, as well as strengthen and encourage the parents and sponsors themselves on their own journeys of faith.

Twenty-four lessons total, spread over the 2 years preparation period, also continues and builds upon the curriculum begun in the lower grades. In addition to the lessons, there is supplemental material and website support on ConfirmationStudy.com.

Please continue to pray for all our students and their families that they may grow deeper in love with our Lord. Pray also for the staff of the School of Religion, that we may be true examples and Disciples of Christ. Know you are in our prayers as well!

(Sign and return the following **Parent Acknowledgement Form** to SOR by September)

## Parent Acknowledgement Form

This is to acknowledge that I/we have received the Saint Peter's Parish Parent Handbook for School of Religion. I/We have read and discussed the policies with my/our child(ren).  
I/ We understand and agree to cooperate with the parish policies set forth in this handbook.

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Signed (Parent/Guardian)

Date

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Signed (Parent/Guardian)

Date

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Signed (Child)

Grade

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Signed (Child)

Grade

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Signed (Child)

Grade

(Return this signed form to the School of Religion by the first day of classes.)