

Religious Education Family Handbook & Policy Guide

Grades K-8



2019-2020 Catechetical Year

Introduction

“Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2222-2226). They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators, or catechists. They catechize primarily by the witness of the Christian lives and by their love for the faith” (*National Directory for Catechesis*, pg. 234).

In the Scriptures, God commands parents to educate their children in faith: “Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children” (Deut. 6:5-7).

Parents catechize their children primarily through the lived experience of the faith and through conversations often brought about by specific occasions. The parish Religious Education program exists in order to support you in your role as the primary catechists of your household by providing a systematic presentation of the basics of the Catholic faith. When this systematic presentation resonates with the child’s lived experience of the faith in the home, it becomes deeply meaningful and lasts a lifetime.

The systematic presentation of the faith in a gathered setting requires certain policies and guidelines to ensure a smooth program operation. St. Christopher Church’s policies and guidelines are contained in these few pages. Please read them over and use them as a reference throughout the catechetical year.

Our Mission

We at St. Christopher’s Church work hard to create and maintain a peaceful and welcoming environment for all students; where they can grow in their Catholic faith formation. We are dedicated to making our classes interesting as well as educational. It is important that students do their assignments and read their materials. Students should come to class on time, prepared, ready to learn, and willing to participate. The more students contribute the more they will grow in our religious education program. Questions are always encouraged.

Contact Information

Director of Religious Education: Mrs. Katie Sukley

Office Hours:

Sunday 7:00AM-1PM
Wednesday 3PM-8PM

Monday (Off)
Thursday 8AM-3PM

Tuesday 8AM-3PM
Friday 8AM-12PM

E-Mail: ksukley@stchristopherski.org **Office Phone:** 410-643-8489 **Church Fax:** 410-643-4055

Mailing Address: 1861 Harbor Drive Chester, MD 21619

Class Times Offered:

- **Weekly Class Session**, Sunday 8-8:50AM Grades K-8th
- **Weekly Class Session**, Wednesday, 6:30-7:45PM Grades 1st-8th
- **Monthly Family Catechesis** option w/take home lessons Non-Sacramental Grades: once a month Sunday 10-11AM Grades K, 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th
- **Weekly Class Session**, Sunday 10-11AM Grades 2, 6-7th (please note there is no 8th grade class option for this session)
- **Confirmation Sacramental Prep** (see calendar for scheduled days & times)
- **First Reconciliation/First Holy Communion Sacramental Prep** (see calendar for scheduled days & times)

Communications Regarding Religious Education

Website

www.stchristopherski.org - The website is an important form of communication that we use regularly. It contains all forms and paperwork pertaining to our Religious Education program and Sacramental Preparation programs.

Social Media

Our Parish Facebook account serves a twofold purpose: 1) it provides a quick and easy way to remind our families about special events and schedule changes, and 2) it serves as a forum for the parish to provide parents with information related to parenting, child and teenage trends, and personal formation.

Email

If you would like to receive religious education information via email, please send your email address to Katie Sukley (KSukley@stchristopherski.org), if you did not include it on the registration form.

Parish Bulletin/E-Bulletin

Weekly parish bulletins are an important source of information about our Religious Education programs for children and youth. All upcoming events are posted there as well as any special announcements or reminders.

Calendar

A yearly Religious Education calendar can be found on the parish website (www.Stchristopherski.org) for the upcoming catechetical year. Updates and information about special events will be sent home as needed. Please keep the calendar for reference throughout the year. Please note that we do not ALWAYS have off the same breaks/weekends that Queen Anne's County Schools are closed.

Inclement Weather and Unexpected Closings

When Queen Anne County Public Schools are closed for the day or close early and cancel after school events, **ALL** evening events and meetings in the church and church hall will be canceled. The safety of our parishioners is of great importance to us.

If there is any cancellation for Sunday morning classes, an email will be sent and there will be a message of cancellation on our parish website and parish Facebook page. If all else fails, look for a sign posted on the main entrance doors of the parish hall building.

Curriculum

Purpose and Guidelines

The goal and purpose of all catechesis is to support parents in their task of forming their children into disciples of Jesus Christ and life-long active members of his Church. In a continuing effort to do this, the religious education program of the parish attempts to propose the beliefs of the Catholic faith in a comprehensive and systematic way by following the Diocese of Wilmington's "*Becoming Disciples*" curriculum which is available on our parish website under Religious Ed Curriculum.

Textbooks

Students in First through Seventh Grade use the "Alive In Christ" series, published by Our Sunday Visitor. Students in Kindergarten use "God Loves Us," published by Loyola Press. Students in Eighth Grade use the Chosen program for Confirmation prep, published by Ascension Press. Students in Seventh and Eighth Grade also use "YOUCAT" (the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church), published by Ignatius Press, and the "Catholic Youth Bible," published by Saint Mary's Press.

Sacrament Years and Records

Baptismal Certificates

A baptismal certificate is required for a child not baptized at St. Christopher's Church, as well as a certificate for those who celebrated First Communion at another parish. Please submit this information as soon as possible—students in sacramental years cannot receive their next sacraments until St. Christopher's Church can verify their reception of the previous sacrament. All sacramental records are kept on file in the office of the parish where the sacrament was received, and parishes will mail the certificate(s) to a parent if you call and request one.

Sacramental Prep Programs

Please note that the Sacramental Prep Programs at St. Christopher's Church are separate and distinct from our regular Religious Education class offerings; as stated in our Diocesan Policy on all Sacramental Programs including First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, & Confirmation. If your child is planning to receive one of their sacraments this year please make sure you complete both Sacramental Prep & regular Religious Ed registration sections of the registration form.

Your child must be enrolled in both their grade level for Religious Education as well as the appropriate Sacramental Prep (unless they attend a Catholic School).

Celebration of Sacraments

Please remember to keep the Sacrament as the center of your celebration. As your child receives First Reconciliation and First Communion or Confirmation, remember that receiving the sacraments of the Church is entirely about your child's growth in faith and the relationship s/he shares with Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Please keep these special days in the life of your son or daughter holy by showing reverence to the Sacrament being received. If you feel your child is not ready to receive a sacrament, please call us. Families will receive information on meetings, home preparation, dress requirements, etc. Full and Active Participation is expected for sacramental preparation programs.

First Reconciliation and First Communion

Second grade is the usual grade for children to receive these sacraments. Children must attend Religious Education in First and Second grade in order to receive these sacraments. Weekly Mass attendance, Parent Orientation meetings, home preparation, and regular attendance at Religious Education are required. If your child was not baptized in the Catholic Church, please inform us immediately so that we can facilitate his/her reception of these sacraments with his/her class.

Confirmation

Eighth grade is the usual grade for children to receive this sacrament here at St. Christopher's Church. Children must regularly attend Religious Education from first through eighth grades. Confirmation preparation will take place outside of regular scheduled Religious Education classes along with special sessions scheduled during the school year (Confirmation Retreat etc.). Parents and sponsors will also be responsible for some of the child's Confirmation preparation.

Required Sacramental Parent Orientation Meetings

At the beginning of each school year there will be a separate orientation meeting held for First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. At these meetings all of the expectations and requirements for the sacramental year will be explained. These meetings are required for parents/guardians to attend. Date and time will be announced via email, parish bulletin, and website.

Program Policies and Guidelines

General Policies and Guidelines

Sunday Worship

Sunday Mass is a vital component of every Catholic's formation, whether they are children or adults. Weekly Mass attendance as a family is critical for effective faith development and community building. During religious education sessions the children are being taught the importance of participating in the liturgy and need to have an opportunity to do this.

Child Protection Policy-For the Sake of God's Children

The Diocese of Wilmington and St. Christopher's Church take your child's safety seriously. Each Catechist and Volunteer working within the Religious Ed program is screened prior to beginning their ministry. Annually, a review of this policy is presented to our Catechists and volunteers. If you would like a copy of the policy, visit <http://www.cdown.org/giving/fsgc/>.

Attendance

Children are encouraged to attend all sessions. Thank you in advance for your efforts to prioritize religious education amidst busy family schedules. When planning family trips, please check the Religious Ed calendar to see when classes are not in session.

Absences

Occasionally, a child will be unable to attend due to sickness or for other reasons. If your child is absent from Religious Education class, we will assume that you, as a parent, have determined that your child(ren) is/are unable to attend for a valid reason; you do not need to call the Director with a reason unless you prefer to do so for your own peace of mind. Students are responsible for covering the material that they miss with their parents. There should be no more than five absences during the catechetical year. If absenteeism becomes a problem, the Director will contact the parents.

Religious education, just like secular education, is a building process, missing too many classes' results in students not having a sufficient knowledge of the material. ***The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our students are prepared at the end of the year to advance to the next grade level.*** Students who miss more than 5 (UNEXCUSED) classes and who have not completed the assigned make-up work will not be promoted to the next grade level until all make-up work is completed and turned in to the Religious Education Office. If you have a specific family circumstance that prevents you from fulfilling this attendance requirement please notify the Religious Education Office so that arrangements can be made for your child.

Attendance Matters!

Students are expected to attend both Mass and classes weekly, committing the time to learn their faith. Family obligations, vacations, or illnesses are to be expected during the school year. Parents are required to make up any missed assignments and or class lessons. Please meet with your child's catechist to obtain any missed assignments. At the end of each year, students take home their textbooks and are expected to complete any incomplete chapters from their books over the summer.

Illness or Injury Outside of Religious Education

If your child is ill or unable to attend school for any other reason, please do not send him or her to Religious Education. If your child will not be in attendance at Religious Education for an extended time due to illness or injury, please let us know, and we will make arrangements for him/her to remain current with his/her class.

During Religious Education Classes

Attire

We ask that all children in grades K-8 come to Religious Education with clothing appropriate for a church setting. Specifically, no exposed midriiffs or shoulders and no offensive t-shirts. Any type of "cleat" footwear or "heelys" (shoes with rollers on the bottom) are not permitted. These are not safe indoor shoes.

Church Property

Please remind your son or daughter to be respectful of the space we are using, whether it is the pre-school, church, parish hall, or grounds. This is a shared space used by many. Please do not write on the desks/tables, play with the preschool things, or bring any food into the classrooms.

Arrival

Please do not bring your children to class before the scheduled start time-unless instructed otherwise. The majority of our catechists have jobs and families that prohibit them from arriving before the scheduled time. When arriving, parents with children in grades K-8 should walk their children to the classroom.

Tardy Arrival and Building Security

Please make every effort for your child to arrive on time as tardiness is disruptive and causes the student to miss important announcements. Arriving on time also ensures your child is here before the doors are locked—the doors of the parish hall will be locked fifteen minutes after the start of class and will remain locked the entire time Religious Education classes are in session.

Entrance to the hall will be through the front doors only. We ask that you please not open the back doors for anyone (even if it is someone you know). The doors in the back of the hall are locked at all times, they may be used as an exit only. If you arrive after the doors have been locked, please use the intercom system that is located to the right of the main doors. An office aide will let you in.

Illness or Injury During Religious Education

If your child is hurt or becomes ill, you or the emergency contact will be notified. For minor scrapes or cuts, we will give the child the necessary items to clean the wound and offer bandaids. All injuries or illnesses will be documented. Please inform us of changes in health or emergency contacts.

Fire Drills

The plan in case of an emergency including a fire will be discussed with students during the first day of class. Please remind your children that this is important for their safety and that of their classmates.

No Food In Classrooms

Due to the increase of children with severe and life threatening food allergies there should be no food in the classrooms at any time.

Dismissal

Early Dismissal

If your child must leave early, a dated and signed note must be brought in that day. Your child may not leave the building until you come into the building to pick them up. Children will not be permitted to wait in the parking lot for early dismissal. Your child will be waiting for you in the Religious Ed Office.

Regular Dismissal-Sunday & Wednesday

All Students K-5th Grades are dismissed from their classroom and require a parent to pick them up. For students in Grades 6-8th they will be dismissed but must wait inside the hall area until a parent

comes inside to pick them up. **Students are not permitted to wait for parents outside the building in the parking lot. Students will not be allowed to leave the building to meet a parent at a car. This goes against our Diocesan Safety Policies.**

Behavior, Student Code of Conduct, and Discipline Policy

Please Review these policies with your children prior to registering for classes

We expect all of the children in attendance to behave in a respectful manner toward all other students and toward all adults. It is understood that all parents and students have read and agree to the Code of Conduct (found below as well as on the parish website on the Religious Education page). We expect all children in our Religious Ed program to adhere to the Code of Conduct while here at St. Christopher's Church.



Appropriate Behavior

We follow the For The Sake of God's Children Policy for our Diocese. Disruptive behavior will result in disciplinary action. We expect all students to behave respectfully in the classroom toward their catechists and fellow students. We expect all students to follow the Code of Conduct at all times and be respectful to others.

In the classroom the catechist will give verbal warnings and redirect students. When needed, if a student continues to be disruptive to the class, catechist, and or catechist assistants the student will be sent to the DRE's Office. Parents will be notified of any disruptive behavior in the classroom. If a child is sent more than once in one session to the DRE's office the parent/guardian will be called for pick-up of the child. If the parent cannot be reached the Emergency Contact person listed on registration will be called to pick-up the child.

Safe Environment

"As a faith filled people, we value and honor every individual as created in the image and likeness of God. In the works and ministries of the Diocese of Wilmington we, therefore, provide a safe environment for children, young people, and their families. Honesty, trust, and mutual respect frame an environment where healthy and responsible relationships prevail, boundaries are clear, and Behavioral Standards are mutually embraced. We are committed to providing for the safety and protection of God's children through a selfless sharing of our gifts and talents." ***-For The Sake of God's Children, Diocese of Wilmington Policy***

Discipline

We will not tolerate repeatedly unacceptable or severely inappropriate disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to the following; inappropriate language or gestures, verbal threats, interrupting the catechist or any other Religious Ed volunteer during class instructional time, bullying or harassment, any physical contact with another student, etc. We want what is best for every child in our program. In extreme cases where behavior is repeatedly unacceptable or severely inappropriate; the child will be removed from the Religious Ed Program and offered a Homeschooling alternative for the remainder of the year.



Student Code of Conduct

Our Parish Religious Education Program is committed to providing a safe and pleasant atmosphere for students in order to further their education and learning in the Catholic faith.

As we begin a new school year, the Religious Ed Program would like to work cooperatively with the catechists, parents, and students, to ensure the success of the entire program for all involved. Please review the following rules with your child/children:

Students are expected to:

- Listen and cooperate with the catechist, non-teaching parent volunteers and Church staff.
- Attend class on time, with their textbook and any other materials requested by the catechist.
- Respect the property of others in the classroom and throughout St. Christopher's Church.
- Turn off cell phones/electronic devices during class time. Keep in pocket at all times!
- Refrain from name calling, teasing, hitting, inappropriate touching, running, or the throwing of anything on St. Christopher's Church property.

Consequences for poor behavior increase depending on the offense:

- For the first incident, the catechist will issue a verbal warning. After that ...
- Removal from class to visit Director of Religious Education for consultation
- Written warning/phone call from DRE to parent/s advising next offense may result in removal from class.
- Chronic repetition of poor, disrespectful, or inappropriate behavior can lead to removal from class and a home study program which requires submitting all completed chapter & unit reviews weekly to the DRE to advance to next grade level.

Please keep in mind that the catechists are volunteers and dedicate their time and efforts to teaching your child/ren and are deserving of their respect.

Kindly read and review these guidelines with your child/ren. Each Religious Ed student

will sign this code of conduct on the first day of class in the presence of their catechist.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Religious Ed Policies & Procedures Acknowledgement Page

Please sign and return this page with your registration for the 2018-2019 school year.

We have read the St. Christopher's Family Handbook and reviewed the contents with our child(ren). By our signatures, we agree to support and cooperate with the policies and procedures listed in this handbook.

Family Last Name (Please Print): _____

Student(s) Signature:

Parent(s) Signature:

Date: _____

