



CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART

200 RANDOLPH AVENUE † SOUTH PLAINFIELD, NJ 07080 † 908-756-0633 † FAX 908-756-2650



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2011-2012

www.churchofthesacredheart.net

*Welcome to the Church of the Sacred Heart
Parish Faith Formation Program*

Faith Formation is the primary focus of parish life. We are happy to have the opportunity to provide quality and compassionate instruction. Our program provides instruction in doctrine, scripture, ritual, culture and customs of the Roman Catholic Church.

Our staff consists of a professionally credentialed Director, a part-time volunteer administrative assistant and large number of Diocesan Certified Volunteer Catechists from our parish family. Through prayer, dedication and stewardship, we are your partners in faith formation in service to our Lord and His children.

Our handbook explains the necessary and current policies of our program and will be amended as necessary. We encourage you to join us in the full active participation of parish life with complete cooperation in the process of Faith Formation for all our parish children.

MISSION STATEMENT

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son so that all who believed in Him would never die but have eternal life.” Jn 3:16

Our mission is to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. We believe that God is the source of all truth. We believe that, by faith, we are all saved in Jesus Christ. We are each called by name to be His disciples and faithful stewards of His good gifts. As good stewards we are called to lead others to Jesus Christ through prayer, good works and example. Beginning at baptism and continuing through life, we hope to enable the members our parish community to discover, grow and mature in their faith experience. We make every effort to help others deepen their relationship with Christ and His Church.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

*“Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” (from the **Rite of Baptism**)*

In addition to instructing your child in Christian truth, we welcome this opportunity to assist you in fulfilling your primary obligation in teaching your children to walk in the ways of faith. This can only be done when each family places Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of their lives through Sunday worship, family prayer and daily living of the Christian mission.

As partners in faith formation, we look forward to sharing the task of communicating Catholic Christian values to your children. As we pray together, talk together, and plan together, we can fully integrate ourselves as believers of Jesus Christ. We embrace the Catholic standard of living by using as our guide Sacred Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium (teaching authority of the Catholic Church). Together, we can support each other in instilling these values in our children.

A strong foundation in the Catholic tradition of faith in the Most Holy Trinity will help our children navigate all the challenges throughout their lives. Living life in the Catholic lifestyle means being a witness to Jesus Christ everyday by what we say, what we do at home, at work, at school and at play. We join together each week in celebration of that witness when we gather for Mass.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

Our office is located in the Parish Center at 200 Randolph Avenue, South Plainfield, NJ 07080. The Parish Center office hours are Monday through Thursday 8:00AM to 4:00PM and Friday 8:00AM to 2:00PM (8:00AM to Noon in July & August), closed for lunch 12 Noon to 1:00PM. While Religious Education classes are in session, there is someone in school building to accept paperwork or to answer general questions.

If you have questions or concerns, it is best to leave us a voice mail at 908 756-0633 extension 143 or an e-mail at sacredheartred@gmx.com The program director will be happy to make an appointment to meet with you at your convenience. All forms and program information are posted on our web page on the parish website. (www.churchofthesacredheart.net)

MASS ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance at Mass with your children is an essential part of their religious education and Catholic faith formation. Our Catholic tradition reminds us that Jesus is present in the Word (Scriptures), Sacrament (Eucharist) and in the people who have assembled. We join together in praise, thanksgiving and worship of God who is ever-present to us in the Most Holy Trinity. The songs we sing and the scriptures we read remind us of the teachings of Jesus. Together, we are renewed, validated and affirmed. We make the choice to grow deeper in faith and love with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As the song by the contemporary composer Marty Haugen proclaims, “*All are welcome in this place!*”

PARISH MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday 5:00PM (Vigil)
Sunday 9:00AM & 11:30AM
Holy Days 6:30AM, 9:00AM, 7:00 PM

Daily Mass 7:00PM Monday in the Church (except on National Holidays at 9:00AM)
7:00PM Thursday Parish Center Chapel
9:00AM Tuesday, Wednesday Friday & Saturday in the Church

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Jesus told us that the Kingdom of God is within each of us. He gave us the *Beatitudes* to help us be good stewards of the Kingdom of God. As Catholics, we adopt an “attitude of gratitude” while we share our Time, Talent and Treasure for the benefit of the entire community of faith. We live out the Gospel message through our participation in the *Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*. We reach out to the global community in *faithful stewardship* to our neighbors. If we want our children to be good stewards, we need to help them live in faithful stewardship.

PUNCTUALITY

Being on time is an excellent way to show your child that attendance in Religious Education is important.

Grades K to 8	Sunday	10:10AM to 11:20AM
Grades K to 6	Wednesday	4:00PM to 5:15 PM
Grade 7 & 8	Wednesday	7:00PM to 8:15PM
Grades 1 to 6	Thursday	4:00PM to 5:15PM
Summer Session (K-6)	Mon-Fri	8:30AM-Noon

The Summer Session is 10 days during the 2nd and 3rd week of July. Vacation Bible School is scheduled during the last week of June.

EARLY DISMISSAL

- On the rare occasion that your child needs be dismissed early, please write a note to the Director of Religious Education to request an early dismissal.
- For safety reasons, we ask that you please come into the school office to collect your child.
- Please show your child that Religious Education classes are important by scheduling appointments on days other than the scheduled class time.

CANCELLATIONS

- Classes will be cancelled when the South Plainfield Public Schools and/or Holy Savior Academy School are closed due to bad weather or other emergency situations.
- Cancellations are announced over the radio station WCTC-1450AM.
- Every effort will be made to contact you via e-mail.
- Please call the Religious Education Office at (908) 756-0633 extension 143 as our outgoing message will also advise callers of Religious Education closings.
- In the event of unscheduled early dismissals for snow/ice emergencies at the South Plainfield Public Schools, Religious Education classes will be cancelled.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL – SAFETY FIRST POLICY

Arrival:

- PARK YOUR CAR in the appropriate designated area.
- Please escort your children (Grades K to 3) into the school entrance foyer.
- Older students (in Grades 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8) can go directly to their class.
- Please be on time.

Dismissal:

- PARK YOUR CAR and meet your children (Grades K-3) on the front sidewalk.
- Grades K-3 children will be dismissed five minutes before Grades 4, 5 & 6.
- As matter of safety for all the children, please supervise your children after dismissal.
- We ask that children do not run around on school property.
- If there is thunder and lightning, heavy wind or other strong weather at dismissal time, please meet your child in the school cafeteria.
- Please be on time.

Traffic Flow:

- Please use the proper exits when leaving the parking lot of the church campus.
- Please drive slowly and attentively through the parking lot of the church campus.
- Please do not park or block the parish center/convent parking lot, driveways and fire zones.
- Please do not enter the orange-coned zone with your vehicle.
- For their safety, children who are not picked up immediately, must return to the lobby of the school.

Walking/Biking Home:

- If there is absolutely no other means of transportation and it is your wish that your child walk home or ride their bike home, we must have **your consent, in writing, on file in our Office.**
- A letter of permission must be dated and signed each year if you wish your child to walk to and from class.
- We strongly recommend that children do not walk home alone.

ABSENCES

- Please call the Religious Education Office before class on the day of the absence.
- Please make every effort to have your children attend the scheduled classes.
- Please show your child that Religious Education classes are important by scheduling appointments on days other than the scheduled class time.
- Excessive absences will require make-up classes.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY

STUDENT CODE OF BEHAVIOR

- Students are expected to comply with standard classroom rules.
- **Cell phones** must be turned **off** during class time.
- Students are expected to show self-control while on the church campus.
- Students are expected to show respect for all persons in words and actions.
- Students are expected to respect the property of the church and school campus and are not to remove or damage property on/from the church and school campus.
- Candy, chewing gum, snacks or soft drinks are not permitted in the classrooms, hallways or lobby.
- Zero Tolerance Policy consequences for physical harm to one's self or others.
- Zero Tolerance Policy consequences for Drugs, alcohol, or weapons on the church campus.
- Zero Tolerance Policy consequences for any and all verbal and non-verbal threats.

CONSEQUENCES

- If a student is found to be in possession of any illegal substances or weapons, makes any verbal/non-verbal threats, or physically hurts one's self or others, the student will be detained. The police will be notified. The student will be immediately dismissed from the formal program and placed on home study.
- Parents are financially responsible for all church property that has been damaged by their child.
- If a student comes to class with an electronic device of any sort, the device will be kept in the office until class is concluded.
- If a student causes any of the above listed disruptions, the student will be removed from the classroom and appropriate measures will be taken, i.e., notifying police, notifying parents and/or dismissal from the program.

CLASS SCHEDULES

- Calendars for all Religious Education Classes are posted on-line, on our parish website. (www.churchofthesacredheart.net)
- When South Plainfield Schools are closed, no Religious Education classes are scheduled on those week days.
- Please do not drop off children without being certain that class is in session.

COMMUNICATION

- Our event calendar is published on-line on our Religious Education Page on our parish website. (www.churchofthesacredheart.net)
- All communication from the Religious Education Office is sent via *e-mail*. If you do not have internet service, please notify us by phone or regular mail.
- Please check our parish bulletin for other relevant information.
- Leave a phone message at our office 908-756-0633 extension 143; we will return your call as soon as possible.

PRIMARY E-MAIL ADDRESS

- All communication from the Religious Education Office is via e-mail. If you do not have internet service, please notify us by phone or regular mail.
- Please provide the e-mail address which is most frequently viewed by your family.
- Please add our e-mail to your e-mail address book. (sacredheartred@gmx.com)
- Please check your **SPAM** folder if you believe that you have not received a current e-mail.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES

- Please keep us up-to-date with your contact information.

FOOD ALLERGIES

- No food and drink of any kind are permitted during parish religious education programs.
- Parents of highly allergic children **must** make known the special needs of their child to the Director of Religious Education and catechist.
- We do not have a nurse on premises.
- A parent whose child has a life threatening allergy is required to remain at the school while the child is in class. Another family member may be designated to remain with the child.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

- If the Director of Religious Education or a catechist suspects a child has been abused in any way, State of New Jersey statutes require that the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) be notified immediately.
- At the discretion of the Director of Religious Education or catechist, a student will not be sent home with a driver who is visibly impaired and unable to drive.
- The Director of Religious Education reserves the right to call an emergency number to arrange an alternate means of transportation.

TWO FIRE/EVACUATION DRILLS

- For the safety of your children, two fire/evacuation drills will be conducted during the year.
- A lock down drill will also be conducted during the year.

NEW ADDRESS

- Please notify us if you are moving out of town. We will provide a letter of completed grade levels for your new Religious Education Program.

VALUABLES AND LOST AND FOUND

- We strongly recommend that all valuables be left at home.
- We are not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- All lost articles that are turned in may be claimed at the Religious Education Office.

RE-REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

- All families participating in the Religious Education Program must be **registered parishioners**.
- Please call the Parish Center Office to make certain that you are considered an “active” registered parishioner.
- Parish Registration Forms (Census Forms) are available at the Parish Center Office.
- Religious Education Registration Forms are available at the parish center or on-line on the Religious Education Page. (www.churchofthesacredheart.net)
- All families must re-register their children each year that they are attending classes.
- Tuition and fees are collected for every student in all of the programs.
- Catechists and Aides will receive a \$25.00 discount for one child in their family.
- All sacramental fees are collected for all candidates.
- All registrations received after the published deadline will be subject to late fees per student.
- Students must make up all missed years of instruction before continuing in a sacramental year. Materials will be distributed by the Director of Religious Education.

TUITUION AND FEES

- Registration Fees: Tuition per child is \$125
- Gr.2 Eucharist: Tuition + Sacramental Fee \$50.00 = Total \$175 per child
- Gr.8 Confirmation: Tuition + Sacramental Fee \$50.00 = Total \$175 per child
- Monthly tuition payment plans are available upon request.
- Please call the Director if you wish to discuss tuition options; no families will be turned away for financial reasons.

NEW STUDENTS

- All families participating in the Religious Education Program must be registered parishioners.
- Please call the parish office to make certain that you are considered an “active” registered parishioner.
- Parish Registration Forms (Census Forms) are available at the Parish Center Office.
- A Baptismal Certificate is required for all new students in addition to any previous records where a child has attended a Religious Education Program in a different parish or diocese.
- On the first day of class, new families may wish to attend an orientation meeting with the Director for a short overview of the program and policies.

INTERPARISH STUDENTS

- All families who are registered in another parish and wish to have a child attend our programs, are required to have a letter from their pastor granting them permission to participate in our program and/or to receive the Sacraments of 1st Eucharist, 1st Reconciliation or Confirmation.

CLASS PLACEMENT

- Candidates for 1st Eucharist must complete the first two years of the program and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving 1st Eucharist.
- Candidates for Confirmation must complete Religious Education from Grade 1-8. Please speak to the Director if your child has missed any of the grade level preparation.
- A child older than age 8, who wishes to receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, will be eligible for the RCIA program adapted for children. Children under the age of 13 will resume instruction on the appropriate grade level in Religious Education classes to continue preparation for Confirmation.

HOME STUDY OPTION

- A family with a child who has special needs may choose the Home Study Option.
- This option allows a parent to present the Religious Education materials in their home.
- All materials used are from the Religious Education Office.
- Unit testing, done at the Religious Education Office, is scheduled once a month.
- Children need to achieve a test score of 75 or higher to move on to the next Unit Test.
- This is a full tuition program.

RCL+BENZIGER FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM

- The *RCL+Benziger* Family Life Program is mandated for all students in the parish schools and Religious Education Programs in the Diocese of Metuchen.
- The series provides a comprehensive moral catechesis for families.
- The series is designed to complement the religion curriculum in our school or parish.
- The series integrates child safety education into a holistic approach to family life education.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

- Vacation Bible School meets morning hours for one week during the summer months.
- The program features: Bible story telling, music and religious themed crafts.
- Children ages 4 to 12 are invited.
- A nominal fee is charged to cover expenses of crafts and supplies.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STAFF

- The Religious Education Office is staffed by one full-time, permanent employee as Director. The Director of Religious Education is a fully credentialed individual as set forth in the standards held by the Diocesan of Metuchen Office for Catechesis.
- The Administrative Assistant is a volunteer who provides approximately twenty hours of clerical support each week.
- The Faith Formation Team members are Volunteer Catechists, Aides, Hall Monitors and Babysitters.

VOLUNTEERS

- All employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Metuchen, 18 years of age or older, who have more than a one time contact with a minor as defined under New Jersey State Law, undergo a criminal history background check and fingerprinting in accordance with the policy set forth in the Policy on Criminal History Background Checks.
- All employees and volunteers at the Church of the Sacred Heart have completed this process and are in compliance with New Jersey State Law.

SACRAMENTAL POLICIES

- All children seeking the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation must have a valid Baptism.
- Students must complete missed years of religious instruction before continuing in a sacramental year.
- Sacramental preparation takes place in formal religious education classes.
- Attendance at practices, workshops and special liturgies are part of the preparation process.
- Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation requires documented twenty hours of Stewardship.
- Permission for home study may only be granted after a discernment process by the Pastor, the Parish Religious Education Office, and the Diocesan Religious Education Office. Home study is only approved if extenuating circumstances warrant it.

FIRST RECONCILIATION

- Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation takes place in second grade. Students must complete Grade 1 before entering Grade 2.
- It is *a partnership effort of parents and the Religious Education Faith Formation Team.*
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation continues the forgiving and reconciling work of God. We are acknowledged by the Father through the accomplishment of Jesus who is God the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Catechesis of children for reconciliation must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances of individuals.
- A clear understanding of the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life helps the child recognize moral good and evil, repentance of wrong doing, and turning toward God for forgiveness.
- Encouragement and parental example leads the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.
- Regular attendance at Sunday Mass with your child is an essential part of their sacramental preparation process.
- Attendance at the First Reconciliation Workshop is required of all candidates along with one or both parents or another adult family member. Please make your own babysitting arrangements for siblings.

FIRST EUCHARIST

- Students must complete Grade 1 before entering Grade 2.
- Instruction for First Eucharist (Holy Communion) a Sacrament of Initiation is conducted separately from catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- First Eucharist is usually celebrated on the first Saturday in May.
- A clear understanding of the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life helps the child recognize that the Eucharist is the heart of Christian life and our Catholic belief that Holy Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus Christ in His Body and Blood.
- Encouragement and parental example leads the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly especially during the Sunday Mass.
- Regular attendance at Sunday Mass with your child is an essential part of their sacramental preparation process.
- Attendance at the First Eucharist Workshop is required of all candidates along with one or both parents or another adult family member. Please make your own babysitting arrangements for siblings.

CONFIRMATION

- As a Sacrament of Initiation, Confirmation is thoroughly related to Baptism and the Eucharist.
- Candidates for Confirmation must complete Religious Education from Grade 1-8. Please speak to the Director if your child has missed any of the grade level preparation.
- A clear understanding of the relationship of the sacrament to the candidate's life helps the candidate recognize that, through "the laying on of hands" and anointing with Chrism by the bishop or his delegate, they become more perfect images of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They are renewed and strengthened in their baptismal call to continue the mission to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. They are welcomed into full membership in the Church to live and share the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Encouragement and parental example leads the candidate to approach the sacrament freely.
- Regular attendance at Sunday Mass with your candidate is an essential part of their sacramental preparation process.
- Each candidate is required to complete the entire process of preparation by actively participating in the following:
 - ◆ Completion of the Confirmation Registration Form;
 - ◆ Provide proof of a valid Baptism;
 - ◆ Attendance at all scheduled classes;
 - ◆ Attendance at the Confirmation Retreat;
 - ◆ Completion of the Journal Pages;
 - ◆ Completion of the twenty documented hours of Stewardship;
 - ◆ Completion of the Stewardship pages;
 - ◆ Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Confirmation; and
 - ◆ Providing the Certificate of Eligibility for the Sponsor.
- All forms and documents on available on the parish website on the Religious Education pages and links. (www.churchofthesacredheart.net)
- Information on Stewardship opportunities is available on the Confirmation page.