



St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
Religious Education
Handbook

2009-2010

Office of Religious Education
 St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
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2009-2010 Religious Education Program Handbook

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Religious Education Program at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church. I would like to thank you for enrolling your child in our catechetical program. We are grateful for the opportunity to assist you in your solemn duty of passing on the Faith to your children. It is our mission to teach our young people the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church in all its breadth and authenticity. This is an effort, however, which will prove fruitless without your leadership and example. I therefore strongly encourage you to consider anew what role you can play in this most important process.

This Handbook was put together in an effort to assist you in arranging your schedule around the important 'RE' events planned throughout the coming year. In the following pages, you will find an RE calendar (subject to change), RE program policies, contact information, emergency policies, and drop-off/pick-up instructions. Please check the bulletin and parish website for any changes to the RE calendar.

Given my many duties, the whole religious education program would not be possible without the tremendous help of our volunteer catechists, aides, substitute teachers, and office helpers. I want to thank all of them for performing this most important task of helping to teach the Catholic Faith to our young people. They are not paid but willingly volunteer their time and energy. Please be kind to them and assist them with your support.

The RE Office is here to assist you in the religious education of your children. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. Although we may not be able to accommodate your requests, we want to give you the opportunity to share your comments with us. Let us all work together to ensure that we faithfully pass on the Catholic faith to our children. When we come face to face with Our Lord after this life, may he reward our efforts and say to us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Phillip M. Cozzi
 Director of Religious Education
 Parochial Vicar

Philosophy: Our Parish Religious Education Program is structured to provide catechetical instruction in the Catholic faith to all parish children who are attending non-Catholic schools. Parents, by word and example, teach their children from birth throughout life. At Baptism, the parent undertakes the responsibility of providing for their child's Christian formation. The Religious Education (RE) staff is here to assist parents in the spiritual formation and ongoing moral development of their child through a formal program of continuous religious education.

As in building any foundation, each grade level builds upon another. Any missed material (particularly by grade) leaves that building weaker. Untaught building blocks and unanswered questions of faith can become evident later in life, especially in times of need.

In our program, we seek to provide the catechesis and skills for each child to grow and mature in understanding, positive attitudes, and faithful practice of the Catholic faith. We hope to deepen the faith and sense of belonging to the Catholic Church in our children, so that they will be moved to share their time, talent and treasure in the life of the Church, now and throughout their lives. We strive to assist children in committing themselves to a personal relationship with God characterized by a vigorous sacramental life, a lifelong pattern of prayer, Christian service, and growth in their understanding of the Catholic faith. This process is achieved with the collaborative efforts of our parish staff, catechists, parents, and students.

Committed to this active partnership between parish staff and families, we place our efforts with confidence in God's loving hands.

Class Assignment Policy: The RE Program at St. John the Evangelist Parish offers three sessions each week. For the 2009-2010 school year, we will offer two sessions on Sunday morning to make it easier for families who travel long distances to attend St. John's Church. This year we will also offer a Monday evening session in an effort to accommodate families who have difficulty attending RE classes on Sunday.

SESSION	DAY	CLASS TIME PERIOD
SESSION 1	SUNDAY	8:45 – 10:15 AM
SESSION 2	SUNDAY	10:30 – 12:00 PM
SESSION 3	MONDAY	5:00 – 6:30 PM

This year all classes have been extended by 15 minutes. The additional time will be reserved for parents to sign out their children and to touch base with their child's catechists. All children K - 6 must be signed out at the end of class by a parent or legal guardian or parent designate.

All families must be registered with St. John the Evangelist Parish to attend Religious Education classes. Please read and complete both sides of the RE Registration form. Class assignments are made on a first-come, first-placed basis in regards to your first choice of sessions. Our catechists, aides, and volunteers have the opportunity to register their children during a pre-registration period in the spring. Following pre-registration, those families with children currently enrolled in our program will receive an application for registration. All completed applications must be **HAND DELIVERED** or **MAILED** to the RE Office and include payment in full** **BEFORE** they can be accepted.

We strongly encourage early registration for many reasons. This gives us more time to ensure that we are properly prepared to teach your children in our faith. We wish to ensure that we have enough resources (materials, classroom space, teachers, aides, textbooks, etc.). Depending on the number of children enrolled in classes, we may need to add catechists and aides and they would need to have background checks and go through various training.

Any changes to the registration information (i.e. status, phone numbers, e-mail and home addresses, insurance info, contacts info) should be reported to the RE Office as soon as possible.

Registration fees for the 2009-2010 school year are as follows:

(Sacramental means your child is receiving a sacrament this year. Sacramental fees help to defray the cost of the retreats, certificates, program booklets and other costs incurred with preparing the children for the celebration of the sacraments.)

Fee A: Registration Applications turned in before May 29th

- \$65.00 per child in a Non-Sacramental year
- \$85.00 per child in a Sacramental year
- There will be a Family Maximum of \$200

Fee B: Registration Applications turned in after May 28th and before August 1st

- \$75.00 per child in a Non-Sacramental year
- \$95.00 per child in a Sacramental year
- There will be a Family Maximum of \$250

Fee C: Registration Applications turned in after August 1st

- \$100.00 per child in a Non-Sacramental year
- \$125.00 per child in a Sacramental year
- There will be a Family Maximum of \$300

Families registering with the parish after August 1st will still pay the fees on the Fee B schedule. RE Registration applications cannot be accepted after October 1.

**Financial Aid may be offered for those families that can demonstrate a true need. Decisions regarding financial aid are made by the Director of Religious Education (DRE) in consultation with the pastor.

Homeschooling: Catechetical homeschooling is only allowed when the child is homeschooled in all other subjects. The religious education department follows the principles and norms outlined in the document, *Catholic Homeschooling: Arlington Diocese Position Paper*. This document can be found on the parish religious education website. The Department of Religious Education will publish more practical regulations in the near future. Home-schooling families are encouraged and welcomed to participate in our Religious Education program, especially during the sacramental years. This is a wonderful opportunity to foster a sense of community with the parish and interact with other Catholic children in a controlled and caring environment. We especially invite our home-school parents to share their knowledge of the Catholic faith and teaching skills as catechists and aides in our religious education department.

Volunteer Opportunities: Our RE program is completely run by our teachers, aides, substitute teachers, coordinators, and office helpers. Catechists, aides and substitutes are our greatest needs throughout the year. Without their generous help we would be unable to offer these vital services to our young people. All volunteers are greatly appreciated! If you are interested in offering your time and skills in any way please contact the Office of Religious Education. Please note that all teachers, aides and substitutes are required to undergo background checks, take part in an Abuse-Awareness Training Seminar, and sign an Oath of Fidelity to the Catholic Church before they can teach in our religious education department.

Parent Roles & Responsibilities: Parents are the primary religious educators of their children. Parents are expected to attend Mass each weekend with their child. Children do as they see; not as they are told. Know that your continued interest, involvement and prayers do influence your child's perception of what the Christian life is all about.

Grade Levels: Normally, students should be enrolled in a grade parallel to their academic grade. Sometimes this is not feasible.

St. John's offers a two-year sacramental preparation program for those children preparing for the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Therefore, students must complete both first and second grade before they can receive these sacraments. Students cannot be admitted into the second grade unless they have completed the first grade or can demonstrate knowledge of first grade material. Canon Law requires that Latin Rite Catholics reach the age of seven before they receive these sacraments.

Students in the religious education program are normally prepared for the sacrament of Confirmation in 8th grade and receive the sacrament the following spring

or autumn. There are a number of requirements that MUST be completed before they can receive this sacrament. For more information contact the DRE.

For those students who have never received instruction in a formal catechetical program or are too old to participate in those grades that normally prepare them for a respective sacrament, there is a special process called the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Children (RCIC)*. This group meets every Sunday morning and allows young people to receive a catechetical foundation on par with their peers. Please contact the Office of Religious Education if you wish to enroll your child in this program.

Sharing Space: It is important that the students respect the property of others. The RE program shares space with St. John's School in the school building, and at times, with many other groups in Mercy Hall and the Youth Group Room. Everyone who uses the space must respect it and the other students who use it during the week. While the RE students are in the classrooms they will be using the desks of the daily school children. Nothing in the desk is to be touched. RE students are supplied with pencils, crayons, etc., so there is no need to borrow or use anything that does not belong to them. Any items that are damaged, destroyed or missing will be repaired or replaced at the student's expense.

Snacks: Since no snack time has been planned for our RE classes, please be sure that your child eats breakfast or a snack before class.

Inclement Weather: In case of inclement weather, please check the parish website at www.stjohntheevangelist.org or call 540-347-2922 and press 5 on your telephone keypad. For Monday evening sessions, the RE program will follow the Fauquier County "after school" cancellations.

Absence: Regular class attendance is expected. Parents of students who habitually miss RE classes without a valid excuse (five or more absences) may risk not being promoted to the next grade. The final determination will be made by the DRE. If your child must miss class, please send a note to the child's teacher explaining his or her absence. Soccer games or other sporting events are not valid excuses. An absence due to seriously inclement weather is always a valid excuse and should not be a source of concern. Children who are ill are also excused from their class. If there is an illness or family emergency, please let the teacher know so the circumstances of the absence can be recorded. Please do not send a sick child to class.

Arrival: In order that we might provide adequate supervision for the health and safety of each child, we ask that you do not drop off your child earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of class. Children are not allowed into the classroom any earlier than 10 minutes prior to the start of class. Until there is an adult present in the classroom, students are expected to wait quietly outside the door to their classroom. Catechists and Aides need this time to prepare for class. Parents are encouraged to drop their

children off in front of the school entrance. Volunteers will be there to help children should they require assistance. However, parents are certainly permitted to park their vehicles and escort their children to their respective classroom. Only the front doors of the school building will be unlocked. Please bring your child to class on time as tardiness is very disruptive for teachers and the other students.

Pick-Up: *Drive-by pick up for K – 6 is not permitted.* Please park your vehicle and personally escort your child out of the classroom. Children will not be allowed to leave their classroom unless a parent or legal guardian physically comes into the classroom to retrieve them and sign them out. Older siblings younger than grades 7 & 8 may not pick up children in place of their parents. This policy has been adopted for liability reasons and to ensure the safety of our children. It also gives parents the opportunity to speak with catechists on an individual basis. Students should be picked up within the last 10 minutes of class. Because of the concurrent Mass times, we are hoping to clear the parking lots in a timely manner to make room for parishioners who are arriving for the next Mass. If you are going to be late picking up your child, please call the parish office.

Early Pick-Up: If it is absolutely necessary to pick up a child before dismissal, please go to the front office and tell the DRE or other volunteer working there. The respective child will be brought to the front office by a volunteer. For security reasons, only RE volunteers are allowed in the hallways during class times.

Late-To-Pick-Up: Children not picked up at the normal dismissal time, will be escorted to the front office. Parents must come to the RE Office to pick up their child. If the child is left at school beyond 15 minutes after the session has been dismissed, a call will be made to you home and then your cell phone (if the number has been provided). If there is no response, the call will be made to the emergency number you listed on your registration form. Please note that we cannot release your child to anyone but you or your emergency contact. Each family must have current emergency release information on file with the program. Please be prompt to pick up your child shortly after our session is dismissed.

Medical Needs: We recommend that children carry any special medications with them when they come to religious education. Please note any medical conditions, emotional conditions, or allergies on the religious education application form. This information will be kept strictly confidential and shared only with the DRE and the child's teacher for safety reasons. If there is any change to your insurance information or policy, please inform us ASAP.

Dress Code: *Short skirts, tank tops, spaghetti straps, short shorts, shoes with cleats or wheels, and other informal or revealing clothing are not acceptable.* All Catholic Christians are charged to live a life of virtue, which includes modesty and

chastity. These virtues not only challenge us to respect the great dignity of other individuals, but also the sanctity of our own human body and how we present ourselves to others. Children are required to dress respectfully in order to promote these virtues. In addition, there will be regularly scheduled visits to the Church for the students. Any child dressed inappropriately will be sent to the RE Office to call home for a change of clothing so they may return to class.

Discipline: RE students are expected to treat teachers, adults, and fellow students with respect. St. John's School has given us the privilege of using their facilities. As a result, all students are expected to show respect and care for all school property including textbooks and other materials used by our school teachers and students. Anything damaged or taken by an RE student must be replaced/returned by the person responsible for the infraction. Any child who shows disrespect toward others or intentionally damages school property will be verbally corrected by his or her respective teacher. After a second infraction the student will be sent to speak with the DRE. If there are additional violations of these rules, the child's parents will be called to speak with the teacher and DRE to determine if the child should continue in the religious education program. At the end of each class, all teachers and students are expected to clean up any trash or craft materials and return the student desks to their school configuration.

Homework: RE students are expected to complete all homework assignments. Normally students are given homework every week. As in all other subjects, the purpose of homework is to reinforce the material taught and to prepare the student for the upcoming lesson. Making sure that all assignments are completed and even helping your students learn their material is one way of fulfilling your obligation as parents to pass the Faith on to your children. These homework assignments, quizzes and tests are also used to assess the knowledge of the student to ensure that they understand the material and are ready for promotion to the next grade. When homework assignments are given, parents are expected to assist as well as supervise these assignments. Absence does not excuse anyone from homework. Please check with your child regularly for assignments, notices and calendar updates. It is expected that parents assist their children in remembering to bring their completed assignments, books and needed materials to class each week. If texts or materials become lost, the student will be required to purchase replacements.

Religious Observance: The objective of our religious education program is not only to deepen one's knowledge about the Catholic Faith, but to inspire our students to live their lives a certain way. In particular, the ultimate aim is to encourage our students to PRACTICE their faith. Jesus tells his disciples very clearly in the gospel, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The third commandment obliges us to keep the Christian Sabbath day holy. This means that parents and students are REQUIRED to attend Sunday Mass every week; only serious illness or an inability to

be physically present where Mass is being celebrated serve as adequate excuses. Since God gives us 168 hours every week, certainly we can give one hour in return. This is extremely important as it serves as an example and encourages our children to practice their faith and to grow into adults with a mature Catholic faith.

Sacramental Preparation: Grades 1 and 2 prepare a child to receive the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. Grade 8 prepares our young people to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. These sacramental years are extremely important for a child's formation in the Catholic faith. Students are expected to faithfully attend weekly classes and complete all assignments and special requirements. Parents of students who habitually miss RE classes without a valid excuse (three consecutive absences) will be required to meet with the DRE to determine if their child is ready to receive the respective sacrament that year or if they should be deferred to the following year. If your child must miss class, please send a note to the child's teacher explaining his or her absence. Soccer games or other sporting events are not valid excuses. An absence due to seriously inclement weather is always a valid excuse and should not be a source of concern. There is an additional fee for students during these sacramental years to defray the costs associated with special materials and class retreats.

Confirmation Requirements: Confirmation at St. John the Evangelist Parish takes place in either the Spring of 8th grade or the Fall of 9th grade. The date for Confirmation will be announced as soon as the Diocese of Arlington assigns us a date. There are a number of special requirements each student must fulfill before they can receive the sacrament of Confirmation. These requirements are explained at the beginning of the 8th grade year. We encourage parents to allow their children to decide for themselves if they truly want to receive the sacrament, as it is a commitment to practice one's faith later in life. The preparation for the sacrament is a lot of work and should be undertaken for sincere reasons. Nobody should be confirmed simply because it is expected by the family.

In addition, students and their parents should not see Confirmation as a type of "graduation". Rather, reception of the sacrament should be understood as a transition leading to one's own maturation in the faith. This maturation of the faith should be evidenced by a desire to witness to the Catholic faith through one's words and actions. The young adult should understand the implications of this kind of witness in our increasing secular world. Once again, the decision to receive the sacrament of Confirmation should be freely made by each young person.

Child Safety Program: The Diocese of Arlington and St. John the Evangelist parish wishes to ensure a safe environment for the education and protection of your children. For this reason, only RE volunteers are allowed in the hallways during class times. In addition, the Diocese of Arlington requires that all RE volunteers undergo background checks and take part in an Abuse-Awareness Training Seminar. These are

requirements of the diocese and will be ***strictly*** enforced. ***All RE volunteers MUST participate in a VIRTUS training seminar and submit the necessary paperwork for a background check before they can participate.*** For more information about these requirements, please visit the RE Office web site at: <http://www.stjohntheevangelist.org/religioused.html> or contact the RE Office by telephone or email.

Formation in Christian Chastity: The Diocese of Arlington requires all schools and religious education programs to include lessons that are geared toward helping our children understand the importance of the virtue of chastity. In particular, the curriculum aims to teach the great sanctity and dignity of all human beings and what that means for our relationships with others. This program is designed to involve parents and includes parent resources at every grade level. At St. John the Evangelist parish, chastity formation lessons are incorporated into lesson plans shortly after the Christmas Holiday.

Prayer Support: Although it may seem extremely difficult to inspire today's young people to know and practice their faith, we recognize the importance of entreating Our Lord that our endeavors may be successful. Therefore we seek your continued prayerful support. In particular, we pray that the efforts of our volunteers and staff may bear spiritual fruit in the lives of our young people and their families. Although there are many powerful forces in the world working against us, we know that with God all things are possible.



St. John the Evangelist, pray for us!