

**SAINT MATTHEW
CATHOLIC CHURCH
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**



**PARENT AND STUDENT
HANDBOOK
2016-2017**

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Dear Parents and Students,

September 2016

I am thankful for your prayers and support of the Religious Education Program; it is a pleasure serving you. I look forward to working very closely with all of our families as we grow in the love of Jesus Christ.

We will continue to use the Ignatius Press *Faith and Life* series. With you, the parents, who have the primary duty and responsibility of educating your children, we will strive towards the goal of the children knowing and remembering the very basic Truths of our Catholic Faith. Together we will increase our knowledge, love, and service to God and our parish family.

This handbook is designed to provide an explanation of the curriculum, philosophy, and expectations of the St. Matthew's Religious Education Program. Your parent folder also contains a calendar for the academic year.

Please join us for Adoration and the Rosary led by the children 10 minutes prior to class followed by Benediction for the first 10 minutes of class. After Benediction, the students will report to their classrooms with the catechist. You are welcome to stay in the church and pray (please include a prayer for the RE Program).

If you need to contact me for any reason, please feel free to do so at 540-582-5575 or stmatthewre@comcast.net. Again, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to you. It is my pleasure to work with you in this new academic year.

Peace of Jesus Christ,

Joanne L. Warren
Director, Religious Education

SAINT MATTHEW RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Religious Education Program at St. Matthew Catholic Church is to look upon each child as created in the image and likeness of God and as a reflection of His goodness. Being a living witness to the Gospel will be central to the development of each student. Therefore, at Saint Matthew's, learning about Jesus and His message is essential to knowing Him, loving Him, and serving Him always. The core elements listed below form the foundation and strength of St. Matthew's Religious Education Program.

- † **It is Christ, The Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught—everything else is taught with reference to Him—and it is Christ alone who teaches. (*Catechesi Tradendae* #6)**
- † **The dignity of the individual, as a unique child of God, is nurtured and developed.**
- † **Parents are recognized as the primary educators of their children.**
- † **The doctrine of the Catholic Faith is presented in its fullness and entirety as both knowledge to be *learned* and a life to be *lived*.**
- † **By His life and teaching, Jesus attested to the importance of keeping the Ten Commandments. The gift of the Commandments is the gift of God Himself and His holy will. (*CCC#2059*)**
- † **Life in the Sacraments is central in developing the Catholic Faith.**
- † **The *Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* and the *Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist* is the center of our Faith.**
- † **Weekly attendance at Mass and regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance are essential.**
- † **Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition form the Deposit of Faith and are the basis of class lessons.**
- † **Prayer is a source for growth in the spiritual life and students will participate in Adoration, Benediction, and the Rosary.**
- † **Our Blessed Mother is the first disciple of Jesus and a model of holiness that the faithful should strive to imitate.**
- † **The lives of the saints will be studied as an example of holiness for us.**

III. Parents' Rights & Responsibilities

Parents are the primary religious educators of their children. The home is the domestic Church and the place where a child first experiences the Catholic Faith. You teach primarily by the example you set. It is extremely crucial for children to experience the love of God in their homes. The Religious Education Office works in partnership with parents in order to assist them in living their vocations as educators of their children. This program should merely complement, **not replace**, the catechesis children receive in the home.

The Religious Education Program assists parents in their God-given role as educators of the Faith by:

- † Providing the truth of the Roman Catholic Faith as handed down by Jesus Christ through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church, and the Church Fathers.
- † Providing weekly religious education classes for children in a classroom setting.
- † Providing weekly homework that students and parents should work on together.

All Christian education finds its source within the sacramental life of the Church. Therefore, parents should assist their children by:

- † Recognizing that it is of **utmost importance** that children are given the opportunity for weekly Sunday attendance at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and regular participation in the Sacrament of Confession.
- † Understanding that Knowledge of the Catholic Faith that is not upheld by the practice of the sacramental life is empty knowledge.
- † Ensuring that your child participates in Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- † Making every effort to have your child attend class regularly and arrive at Adoration and Benediction on time. Your child should not miss this wonderful opportunity to grow closer to Jesus.

IV. Students' Responsibilities

Students are expected to be punctual and prepared for class. *Each week, students should bring their books, writing utensils, and completed homework assignments.* Students should conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to a classroom environment.

Student Decorum

- ✠ All students are expected to be reverent during our period of Adoration.
- ✠ No student is to ever be alone in the church, hallways, classroom, or grounds of the church.
- ✠ All students must have a parent or guardian escort them to the church and pick them up at the classrooms.
- ✠ Gum is not permitted. No food or drink should be brought to class.
- ✠ Items that could in any way cause injury to a student or others are not permitted in the building.
- ✠ Cell phones, ipods, tablets and other electronic devices should not be used during class times.
- ✠ Every student has the right and privilege to learn in a classroom where students are well behaved. Similarly, every catechist and assistant has the right to teach in such an environment. Students will exhibit proper behavior and respect authority in the classroom and on the premises.

Dress Code

- Articles of clothing which depict drugs, alcohol, profanity, weapons, prejudice, discrimination, and sexual innuendo are forbidden. Hats, for gentlemen, must be removed upon entering the building.
- Tight-fitting clothing, halter tops, tank tops, midriff shirts, spaghetti straps, or clothing that may be considered immodest dress should not be worn.

V. Curriculum

The objective of our Religious Education Curriculum is to engage the children in a program of catechetical formation which:

- Provides a firm intellectual foundation and an opportunity for understanding and remembering the basic teachings of our Catholic Faith.
- Firmly and clearly forms in the minds and hearts a deep sense of the loving covenantal relationship with God established by Jesus Christ in and through His Church and Sacraments.

The Religious Education Program Curriculum follows the four-part arrangement used in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

- The Creed
- The Liturgy and the Seven Sacraments
- Faith and Morals
- Christian Prayer

Grade K Curriculum

Goal: To provide students with a basic introduction to God and Creation, the life of Jesus Christ, and the Commandments.

Themes:

- Who is God
- The Story of Creation
- Life of Christ and God's plan for Salvation
- Supplemental Lessons for the Liturgical Year

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters

1-3	Holy Trinity, Creation, God the Father
4-7	Commandments and Sin
8-12	Sacraments, Prayer, and the Mass
13-18	The Life of Jesus Christ

19-20	God Cares for us
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Grade 1 Curriculum

Goal: To give the first grade student a basic introduction to God, the life of Christ, and prayer.

Themes:

- Introduction to the Trinity
- God's plan of salvation and how the child fits into that plan - knowing, loving and serving God
- Mary, angels, saints
- Basic prayers

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lesson
1-8	Old Testament, God as Creator, Heaven as home, and the effect of Original Sin
9-21	The Incarnation, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus
22-28	The Holy Spirit, The Church, Mary

PLEASE TEACH THE CHILDREN HOW TO GENUFLECT USING THE RIGHT KNEE AND MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS USING THE RIGHT HAND.

Grade 2 Curriculum

Goal: To prepare second grade students for the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion and to help them appreciate God's love for them as manifested in these two sacraments.

Themes:

- Preparation for first reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion
- Divine law and salvation history
- God's mercy and love
- Ten Commandments, Creation, and Redemption
- Order of Mass and prayer

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lesson
1-16	God's law and obedience in love
17-23	Forgiveness of sins through Christ's sacrifice
24-34	Preparation for heaven by reception of Jesus in Holy Communion and through a life in the Church

Grade 3 Curriculum

Goal: To teach third grade students that they belong to God's Chosen People and that grace enables each child to be united with God and have an important role in God's family.

Themes:

- God's plan of salvation from Creation to the Incarnation and Redemption.
- The birth of the Church at Pentecost, and our life in the Church
- Importance of Confession, Holy Communion, and Mass
- Importance of prayer and love of God's Law

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lesson
1-7	Old Testament and the covenant with God's people
8-14	Obedience to God's Laws; Jesus' mercy in Confession
15-25	Life of Jesus Christ and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
26-30	Our Life in the Church

Grade 4 Curriculum

Goal: To help the fourth grade student understand their purpose in life and to come to an awareness of God's plan in history and society in order to lead all to Heaven, our true eternal home.

Themes:

- God's plan of salvation since Original Sin (salvation history)
- Our participation in God's plan and how God assists us through His Word, Law, and Church

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lesson
1-14	The Fall and the first murder. The sin and suffering of mankind. God chooses His people and their leaders.
15-30	History changes when Jesus the King comes. Through grace, especially in the Sacraments, we receive the strength to do good.

Grade 5 Curriculum

Goal: To help fifth grade students acquire a solid and specific knowledge of God and his Church through the understanding of the Creed we profess and distinguish the truths of our faith.

Themes:

- A thorough study of the articles of the Creed as the basic belief of our Catholic faith
- Emphasis on an understanding of definitions through the words of the Gospels, the prophets, and the prayers of the Church.

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lessons
1-10	God, the Father of all: The Old Testament and Man's participation in the loss of God's Grace
11-22	God, the Son and Redeemer: Jesus Christ as true God and true man and His fulfillment of God's Law
23-30	God, the Holy Spirit and Sanctifier: The universal call to holiness and witness in the Church

Grade 6 Curriculum

Goal: To help the sixth grade student learn to love God's Law as Christ did and to cherish and love the Mass as our best prayer to God, and especially to revere and adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Themes:

- God's law (especially the Ten Commandments) as the blueprint for a life of love
- Emphasis upon the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, especially in the Mass
- The interaction between God's law and His gifts of grace given to the faithful to fulfill His law

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lesson
1-16	Ten Commandments: Forming a moral conscience and intimacy with God
17-28	The Holy Mass: Emphasis upon the Real Presence, the sacrificial nature of the Mass and an explanation of each part of the Mass
29-31	The Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. Emphasis upon the great happiness of Heaven

Grade 7 Curriculum

Goal: To help the seventh grade student treasure the sacraments as indispensable to a full Christian life of love and truth. To understand how grace works in our soul and its relation to practicing the virtues and to appreciate our gifts of reason and faith.

Themes:

- Grace as our link with God and His gift to bring us to eternal life with Him
- Grace through the seven sacraments
- Grace through revelation (prophets, the Incarnation, the Church)
- Grace and the life of virtue

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lesson
1-6	God's revelation through creation, the prophets, and His chosen people
7-12	The Incarnation - Jesus Christ as True God and True Man, Priest, and Sacrificial Victim
13-31	The role of grace in our lives and the development of the virtues through the sacraments

Grade 8 Curriculum

Goal: To help the eighth grade student know and love the Church as Christ's Body and the Magisterium as the sure voice of Jesus, so that the young person may be strengthened through his life in the Church to face the confusion and secularism of modern-day society.

To help the eighth grade student prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Themes:

- Church history - from its founding by Christ and its birth in the Holy Spirit
- The four marks of the Church - one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
- Church Fathers, Doctors of the Church, the saints
- The structure of the Church - hierarchy, the role of the Magisterium, vocations.
- Sacrament of Confirmation and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Sequence of lessons:

Chapters	Lesson
1-13	The Church and Christ's plan for its structure, necessary attributes, and teaching authority.
14-22	Christians in the World
23-26	Call to Holiness, Prayers, and Sacraments
Confirmation	Review the Matter, Form, and Effect of Confirmation. Memorize the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they help us.

Prayers by Grade Level

Each class should begin and end with a prayer. Each student is expected to learn the prayers at their grade level in addition to knowing the prayers learned in previous years.

Grade	Prayers
K	Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, and know how to genuflect
1	Previous Grade requirements plus Glory Be and Guardian Angel Prayer
2	Previous Grade requirements plus Act of Contrition
3	Previous Grade requirements plus Apostles' Creed
4	Previous Grade requirements plus Act of Faith and Hail Holy Queen
5	Previous Grade requirements plus Act of Hope and Saint Michael Prayer
6	Previous Grade requirements plus Act of Love
7	Previous Grade requirements plus Come Holy Spirit Prayer
8	Previous Grade requirements plus Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

VI. General Information

Class Arrival and Departure

Parents are asked to escort their children into the church and not drop them off at the curb. All students **MUST** have a parent or guardian come to the classroom to pick up students at the end of class time. Siblings younger than high school age are not permitted to pick up students. **No student should ever be alone in the parking lot.**

Class times

Grades K-1 Tuesday 5:00-6:15 p.m.

Grades 2-6 Tuesday 5:00-6:15 p.m. or Wednesday 6:00-7:15 p.m.

Grades 7-8 Wednesday 6:00-7:15 p.m.

Rosary, Adoration and Benediction

Ten minutes prior to the beginning of class the Rosary will be prayed. While this is not part of class, students are encouraged to come as this presents a wonderful opportunity for them to learn the Rosary.

ALL STUDENTS will take part in Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction for the first 10 minutes of their class. Students will be escorted into the church by their parents. Each class will have assigned seating and students will sit with their class. Parents may sit behind the last row of students. Students who arrive late will remain in the vestibule of the church with the Director of Religious Education and will join their class as students leave from the church.

After Benediction, the students will report to their classrooms with the catechist. Students will be dismissed from the classrooms at the end of class.

Class Time	Rosary	Adoration/Benediction	Class Ends
Tuesday 5:00	4:50	5:00-5:10	6:15
Wednesday 6:00	5:50	6:00-6:10	7:15

Class Cancellations

Please note that Religious Education Classes follow the Spotsylvania County School closings *for inclement weather*.

Spotsylvania County Schools Closed
Due to inclement weather

Religious Education Classes
Cancelled

Spotsylvania County Schools Early
Dismissal due to inclement weather

Religious Education Classes
Cancelled

Spotsylvania County Schools Indoor
Activities cancelled due to inclement
weather

Religious Education Classes
Cancelled

Spotsylvania County Schools Closed
Due to school holiday

Religious Education Classes
are usually held (consult calendar)

Cancellations can be found on the Spotsylvania County School website at www.spotsylvania.k12.va.us. When in doubt, contact the Religious Education Office (540-582-5575 or www.stmatthewspotsylvania.org). Notifications of class cancellations will always be posted on the telephone recording.

Absences

Faithful attendance at class is vital for a well-grounded understanding of the information provided. Absenteeism also harms the individual student and the morale of the class as a whole. Parents of students in the program in the past have set a fine example for their children by making class a priority.

Please keep your sick child home. They should be fever and symptom free for 24 hours prior to attending Religious Education. To promote a well environment, we will not have an award based on perfect attendance.

STUDENTS WHO MISS FIVE OR MORE OF THE SCHEDULED CLASSES, MAY BE REQUIRED TO RETAKE THE COURSE WORK FOR THAT YEAR IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR'S PROGRAM. THIS POLICY INCLUDES SACRAMENTAL STUDENTS.

Tardiness

Tardiness can be a serious disruption to the class. There is limited time allotted each week for classes, so please help us to help you by getting your child(ren) to class ON

TIME each week. If a student arrives after opening prayers have begun, please have them remain in the vestibule with the Director of Religious Education or Assistant. If you arrive late and the classes are still in the church, please bring your child to the church. **Never leave your child alone in the classroom.**

Classroom Discipline

Every student has the right to learn in a classroom where students are well behaved. Similarly, every catechist and assistant has the right to teach in such an environment. Students will exhibit proper behavior and respect authority in the classroom and on the premises. In the event that a student finds it difficult to exhibit proper behavior, the following course of correction will take place:

- † The catechist will speak to the child and encourage a change in behavior.
- † If the disruption persists, the catechist will call upon the Religious Education Director to speak privately with the child in order to integrate the child back into the classroom.
- † If this is unsuccessful, the Religious Education Director will contact the parents and ask them to work with the child.
- † If this process fails, a parent **MUST** accompany the child to class and sit with him/her until the student demonstrates that he/she is able to behave in a manner suitable for classroom instruction.
- † If this attempt is not successful, parents may be required to home school for the remainder of the year.

In all cases, the parents will be notified of any correction by the catechist or Director of Religious Education.

Learning Disabilities/Health-Related Problems

If your child has a learning disability or health-related problem that would necessitate special consideration while attending religious education classes, please notify the Religious Education Office in writing or by entering the information on the registration form. All information will remain confidential but may be passed on to the catechist or assistant to assist them in teaching your child.

Textbooks

We will use Sacred Scripture and the Ignatius Press *Faith and Life* Series. Each student will receive a textbook and an activity book. Catechists may assign homework from the activity book.

Formation in Christian Chastity

This year we will continue the Diocesan program called ***Formation in Christian Chastity*** for Grades 1-8. This program recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children and even though they are entrusted to Religious Education Programs, you retain the primary duty to form and inform your children in the teachings of our Catholic Faith. This program is intended to **assist** parents in the formation of their children in the Virtue of Chastity.

Parents with students in grades 1-4 will be given a lesson plan for your use. When, how and if you teach the lesson is entirely up to you. Students in grades 5-8 will have a home lesson as well as a lesson that will be taught during their regular religious education class. Each parent will receive the home lesson plan as well as the class lesson plan. All classes will be taught as presented in the lesson plan but no homework will be assigned. The two lessons will be combined into one and taught by the Director of Religious Education on the date indicated below.

Fifth Grade:	October 11 or 12, 2016
Sixth Grade:	October 11 or 12, 2016
Seventh Grade:	October 19, 2016
Eighth Grade:	October 19, 2016

Home School Students

All children who participate in a home school religion curriculum are expected to register with the Religious Education Program and utilize the *Faith and Life* Curriculum. In addition the Religious Education Office will monitor student progress in the following ways:

- Students will be expected to complete the grade level quizzes throughout the year. These tests will be mailed to you and upon completion mailed back for grading.
- Students will be expected to follow the Religious Education schedule of chapters. This will be provided in the parent packet.
- Any student in a sacramental year (2nd and 8th grade) is expected to participate in all sacrament-related meetings and events.
- Students in the eighth grade preparing for Confirmation will be given the Seton Hall Confirmation Book to read and complete the quizzes in the back of the book.

Safety Monitors

For the safety of our students, we will have two adult volunteers this year to monitor our parking lot and Parish Hall. **Please remember their goal is to keep your children safe and we ask that you cooperate with their requests.**

The safety monitors will be positioned in the parking lot and hallways of the building. They will enforce the following rules:

No child should ever be alone in the parking lot. This includes children of catechists. Do not send your child out to the car for a forgotten item.

No child should ever be alone in the hallway. The safety monitor will walk the child to the restroom door and then escort the child back to the classroom.

The monitors will also ensure that children are brought into the church and not dropped at the curb. Upon class dismissal, no child will be released to the parking lot without a parent or guardian.

Entrance and exit from the building will be via the front door only, unless an emergency situation requires exit by the nearest door.

Exterior doors will be locked once classes have begun, and will be opened within by the safety monitors for those who need to enter the building.