



# **Religious Education Program**

## **Parent-Student Handbook**

2011-2012

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement and Parental Expectations.....	3
Registration.....	4
Tuition and Fees.....	4
Normal Schedule.....	4
Classes/Sessions for Parents and Children: Generations of Faith.....	4
Attendance Policy.....	5
Required Weekly Attendance at Church on Sundays.....	5
Stewardship and Sunday Envelopes.....	5
Scope of our RE Program and Continuity.....	5
Code of Conduct.....	5-6
Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices.....	6
Food and Drink Policy.....	6
Required Materials for Class.....	6
Dress Code.....	6
Report Cards.....	6
Parking and Drop-off.....	7
Punctuality.....	7
Dismissal.....	7
Emergency School Closings.....	7
Lost Books.....	8
Special Needs.....	8
Sacramental Preparation in General.....	8
First Communion and First Penance.....	8
Confirmation.....	8

## **MISSION OF CATECHESIS AT HOME AND IN THE CLASSROOM**

1. **To proclaim the message of Jesus Christ ... to teach by word and example what we believe.**
  - We believe in the mystery of the one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Blessed Trinity.
  - We believe in God, our Father who created us and all things.
  - We believe in Jesus Christ, who became man to redeem us from sin.
  - We believe in the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us.
  - We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
  - Our teaching must also include the Sacraments, the life of Grace, the moral life, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints, and the last things every human person experiences (death, judgment, and eternity — Heaven or Hell).
  
2. **To provide opportunities for worship and the reception of the Sacraments.**
  - Parents must participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with their children every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.
  - Families and classes should celebrate the seasons of the liturgical year.
  - Parents and catechists (teachers) should assist children in understanding and remembering the common prayers of the Church, the 10 Commandments, the laws of the Church, the Seven Sacraments, and other assigned memorization work.
  - Opportunities for frequent reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion should be made available to the children as often as possible, especially during the seasons of Lent and Advent.
  
3. **To foster Christian community.**
  - Children should have opportunities to share their faith with others (older children could help parents practice prayers with younger children).
  - Children should be given help and example in understanding the principles of Christian morality and living out God's law in daily life.
  
4. **To guide children in Christian service.**
  - We serve because we follow Jesus who served.
  - Prayer and service should be fostered in response to God's many gifts.
  - Children should be encouraged to serve those who are suffering or less fortunate.
  - Children should be encouraged to pray and discern what vocation God is calling them to: the religious life? the priesthood? the holy state of Matrimony? single for Christ?

### **Parental Expectations**

Parents are responsible to see that...

- Their children go to Mass every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Their children know and say their required prayers.
- All homework is completed.
- Textbooks and handouts are brought every Monday to class.
- The RE office is notified by phone when your child will be absent. (815) 726-4073.
- All communications sent home are read and response is made promptly when necessary.

## **Registration**

Our normal registration period begins in May and ends on August 15th. For previously enrolled families, all registrations after Aug. 15th are assessed a late fee of \$40. All registrations taken after the school year begins, including new registrations, are also assessed the same late fee.

Parents must provide Baptismal (and First Communion if applicable) certificates at the time of registration. If students received their sacraments here, this must be verified.

Students who transfer into our program must get an official transcript or report card from their previous parish and give us copies of all sacramental records (certificates) when registering.

The school office hours are 8:30-4:00pm Monday through Friday. Please note that the school office might have different summer hours. You may call (815) 722-8518 to set up a time.

## **Tuition and Fees**

The tuition fee for religious education classes at St. Mary Nativity is \$150.00 per child, and \$25 for each additional child. All checks are to be made payable to St. Mary Nativity Church.

The tuition covers books, instructional materials and supplies for each student. This also includes music, audio-visual materials, and operational office expenses. Tuition is subject to change from year to year. Registration is considered incomplete if tuition expenses are not met.

- Late Registration fee (after Aug. 15): an additional \$40
- Book replacement fee: \$20
- Sacrament Fees (paid separately at meetings): 1st Communion \$25, Confirmation \$50.

## **Normal Schedule**

Religious Education classes are conducted on Mondays from 6:00 to 7:30 PM. There will be no supervision provided either before or after these times. Classes normally begin in mid-September and end in mid-May. Please check the calendar for exact dates.

## **Classes and Sessions for Parents and Children: Generations of Faith**

Each school year we offer 3 family sessions for both parents and children to attend. As a parent, you understand the importance of your children learning about their faith, but at times you might forget about the importance for *you* to grow in your faith.

For this reason, we have developed a program called Generations of Faith. Both parents and their children are required to attend these sessions, which usually last 2 hours, from 6-8pm.

Families not in attendance are marked absent, just like missing a normal class. Children who attend without their parents are also considered absent, since the family is not present. Those families who miss these sessions are required to make them up with a take-home packet of activities, which must be all completed for the school year to be valid.

## **Attendance Policy**

The Diocese of Joliet requires that students receive at least 30 hours of religious instruction. That is why our students cannot miss more than 7 classes during the school year. Those students who have missed too many classes will be required to make-up those missed classes. They will have to complete a 30 page activity booklet or they will have to option to attend Vacation Bible School here at St. Mary Nativity during the summer.

Parents need to call the Religious Education Office whenever their child will not be in class. Call (815) 726-4073. You may also email the Director at dre.stmarynativity@yahoo.com. Phone calls will be made to your homes when we are not notified.

## **Required Weekly Attendance at Church**

We all know that the 3rd Commandment tells us how God requests our praise and worship every Sunday at Mass and we obviously teach this to all our students. The Sunday Mass is one of the most important aspects of our faith and we would like to make sure that all our students know that from the first day of class.

Our RE program will use your family's weekly participation at mass as a focal point of our weekly instruction. During each class, your child will be asked to share what they experienced and learned from the Mass on Sunday. They will be asked about the readings, the color of the vestments, the name of the priest, the name of the church, what did they learn, and more. Teachers might pass out an activity sheet in advance for their students to complete during or after the Mass. Students will be graded on their answers and this will be included on their report cards.

## **Stewardship and Sunday Envelopes (for St. Mary Nativity parishioners)**

Stewardship entails using your time, talent and treasure in the care of God's creation and in the building up of His Kingdom. All our parishioners will receive weekly envelopes at the start of each year. Using these envelopes each Sunday at mass is a great way to teach your children about responsibility in supporting your parish's needs and the needs of others, especially those who are less fortunate.

## **Scope of our RE Program and Continuity**

Although our Religious Education program begins in Kindergarten and continues to 8th grade, we all know that our instruction in the faith should never end there. Our parish has a Youth Ministry program for teens and young adults who understand the importance of their faith and would like to learn more. We expect all parents to understand this responsibility and show their interest by promoting this growth in knowledge and attending our Generations of Faith sessions.

## **Code of Conduct**

The time students have for religious education is a precious commodity. Therefore, we request that parents make their children aware that good moral conduct and courteous behavior is expected toward their teachers, fellow students, and themselves. St. Mary Nativity day school materials, especially belongings inside desks, must be respected by our students at all times.

Procedures for conduct problems:

- 1<sup>st</sup> offense: Catechist (teacher) speaks privately with the student.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> offense: Catechist contacts director of religious education and parent.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> offense: Director, catechist, parent and student have a conference.

Disrespect to catechists (teachers), fellow students and school property will not be tolerated. Repeated lack of respect will require that the parent sit in class and monitor the child.

### **Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices**

We understand the importance technology plays in the lives of our students and families, but students are not allowed to use their cell phones, music players or portable game consoles anywhere inside the school building. Students who do not comply with this policy will lose their phone or electronic device for the duration of the class session and be suspended automatically for 1 class. Parents will be notified immediately.

### **Food Policy**

Food or drinks are not allowed in the classrooms, especially gum, candy and soft drinks. Students who bring food to share must have permission from their teachers and the Director.

### **Required Materials for Class**

All students should bring the following to every class session: their text book (or weekly handout), a notebook, a homework folder and either a pen or pencil. Students who are missing materials will have to call their parents so that they can bring the missing items.

### **Dress Code**

Children should dress as for church or school. Appearance should be clean and neat. The following are NOT allowed:

- bare feet, thighs, midriffs, backs or shoulders
- spaghetti straps and mini-skirts
- coats, jackets and hats may not be worn in class
- t-shirts with un-Christian messages
- jeans or belts with studs/spikes (they scrape the classroom chairs)
- gang related clothing

### **Report Cards**

Report cards are issued twice during the school year. Students will be graded on their knowledge of the mass, required prayers, homework, testing, conduct, and class participation. You will also see their attendance status for each semester.

## **Parking and Drop-off**

Please park across the street from the school—do not park by the gym doors. Cars moving by the front doors can be dangerous. After you park across the street, you may cross the street with your children at the cross walk. *Under no circumstance* should you stop your vehicle in the street and let your children out or into the car. The police can issue you a ticket in these cases.

Doors open at 5:40pm for all families. Students will wait in the gymnasium or cafeteria as a group until their teacher arrives and 6:00pm bell rings. Students will then go to their classrooms as a group.

## **Punctuality**

Class time is a very precious commodity in a religious education program. Therefore, it is not only necessary that students attend each class, but it is also equally important that they be on time for class. **The front doors will be locked after the 6:00pm bell.** Students who arrive late can enter through the school office, where they will be marked as late. Every 3 tardies count as a missed class.

## **Dismissal**

To avoid traffic in the hallways and stairwells, please note that there are two dismissal bells.

- The first bell at **7:27pm** is for grades 3-8 (the top floor). They will be brought down to the gym lobby one class at a time. We ask that you stand outside the doors and your children will be released to you and only you. No students are allowed to leave unless you are standing there outside. For the safety of the children, we cannot allow them to wander alone through the parking lot or across the street, especially when it is dark outside. Please show your concern for safety and use the crosswalk.
- The second bell is at **7:30pm**. This is for Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades (the first floor). Because of their age, we ask that you go to the classroom to get them. If you have a child who is dismissed earlier, you may have them wait for the second bell outside the classroom and bring their younger brother/sister down with them to you as long as you are waiting outside for them.
- Please be punctual for arrival and dismissal. We **DO NOT** offer day care or should be expected to baby sit your children. If in any case of an emergency, you should call the religious education office at 726-4073 to let us know your predicament.

## **Emergency School Closings**

If it necessary to cancel RE classes because of bad weather conditions or other emergencies, the announcement will be made over the Joliet weather station WJOL 1340 AM and our parish Religious Education webpage [www.stmarynativity.com](http://www.stmarynativity.com).

If it is announced that the Joliet Public Schools (District 86) are closed due to hazardous weather conditions, our school is also closed. If you call the Religious Education office, you will hear a recorded message with updated information. Cancelled classes are made up at the end of the year.

## **Lost Books and Replacement Fees**

Each student receives a religion textbook to keep and use both in class and at home. Parents have the responsibility of making sure their children bring this textbook and any handouts to class every Monday. The book replacement fee is \$20.

Students also receive a prayer book when they register here at St. Mary Nativity. This book includes common Catholic prayers they are required to memorize during the course of each grade. The replacement cost for these prayer books is \$1.

## **Special Needs**

- **Learning disabilities:** If your child has a special condition, we might be able to direct you to a more specialized program or work with you to create one. This will be based on each student's condition, age and learning environment. In some cases, parents will have to be present in the classroom with their child for additional support.
- **Custody Issues:** If parents are divorced or separated, the religious education program presumes that both parents have access to their children, unless one parent can provide documentation that he or she has sole custody.
- **Medication:** If a child is usually on a certain medication during the school week, they should continue to receive that medication if his/her behavior will be affected by missing it. The religious education program or personnel will not maintain, supervise the taking of, or administer medication. Parents must administer the medication prior to class or, if absolutely necessary, come to class to dispense it themselves.

## **Sacramental Preparation in General**

The Diocese of Joliet requires ALL students to receive a minimum of two years of sacramental preparation before they receive their First Communion or their Confirmation. Parents must attend the meeting for these sacraments in order to be in the program. So please mark your calendars.

## **First Communion and First Penance**

There are 2 programs for First Communion and First Penance:

- The first and larger of these groups is the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class.
- The other group is much smaller and designated only for the older students, ranging from grades 4-8. They attend classes with their assigned grade, yet they break away from these classes for a number of specialized classes that will focus on sacramental preparation.

## **Confirmation (Grades 7-8)**

Confirmation is conferred in 7th grade. As a general rule, if a student was enrolled and has completed 6th grade here, they will be confirmed in the 7th grade. All others will be confirmed in 8th grade. Upon completion of the 8th grade, all students will receive their Confirmation certificates and transcripts.

We also have an Adult Confirmation program for high school students and young adults. Call 815-726-4031 and ask for our pastoral associate.

*St. Mary Nativity RE Program*  
**Parent-Student Handbook Receipt and Photography Release Form**

The signature below attests that the \_\_\_\_\_ Family has received the St. Mary Nativity Religious Education Program Handbook and we will read all the contents so as to abide by the policies and procedures contained in it.

Video/Photography release

Video and still photographs may be taken during the course of the school year. This signed document also serves as authorization for my child's participation in videotaped recordings and/or still photographs, which may be used for future promotional efforts, including the St. Mary Nativity website.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_