



St. Paul Parish Religious Education Program Handbook for Families

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE RELIGIOUS NATURE

Christ is the center of our faith. All we are and hope to be as a catechetical community is based on the gospel message of Jesus. Our mission as catechists (Catholic volunteer religious education teachers) is to create an atmosphere of faith, prayer, care, and concern in which each child realizes the uniqueness of his or her gifts and claims membership in God’s family.

1.2 THE SCOPE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education never ends; we are born, we live our lives and we die in the shadow of God’s wings, always discovering more about Him and His Beloved Son. With this thought, it is obvious that the entire body of Scripture, Tradition and Catholic doctrine is not conveyed in any single year; each year of religious education builds on those that preceded and leads to what follows. We spend our lives growing in knowledge and love and service to our God.

2 ESSENTIALS

2.1 LOCATION AND TIMES

PREP takes place in St. Paul Church and School Hall on Monday evenings from 6:30 – 8:00 pm. It begins with a 15-minute prayer service held in the church. After the service, classes are held in assigned areas of the School Hall. Parents drop off the children at the Church and pick them up at the Hall. See Section [Section 4.3 Arrival and Dismissal Procedures](#) for details and procedures.

2.2 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

The PREP school year calendar is found on the [Religious Education](#) section of the Saint Paul Parish web site.

2.3 PREP CLOSINGS

If township schools are closed due to an emergency weather situation, generally religious education classes will be cancelled. If inclement weather is predicted for late afternoon/evening, the CRE will, to the best of her ability, notify parents via email and text message to cell phones on file by noon on the day of the cancellation. If you have questions about cancellation, call the Rectory during the afternoon at 610-279-6725.

2.4 CATECHISTS AND AIDES

Class Level	Catechists	Aide
First Year	Meghan Lass	Rocio Tecpoyotl
Reconciliation & First Eucharist	Susan Watkins Mary Russo	
Third Year	Leanne Milletics	
Pre-Confirmation	Maria Falzone	Phillip Werner
Confirmation	Eric Pilacik Joseph Granese	
Special Needs	Patricia Orner Susan Watkins Lucy Boardway	

Catechists will provide their contact information to parents.

3 CURRICULUM

The Curriculum of the St. Paul Religious Education Program follows the Religion Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

3.1 THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents are the primary educators of their children. You are encouraged to:

- Keep in touch with your child/ren's catechist(s) to follow your child/ren's progress.
- Provide a good example at home, by praying with your child/ren before and after meals, in the morning and at bedtime.
- Faithfully attend weekly Mass and Holy Days of Obligation with your child/ren.
- Attend PREP and Sacrament Meetings for Parents.
- Check your Child/ren's PREP Religion Book and Folder every week.
- Find parent materials on textbook web sites, listed in the [3.2 Textbooks](#) table below.

3.2 TEXTBOOKS

Class Level	Publisher	Textbook / Series	Web site
Years 1 and 3	RCL Benziger	Faith & Word Edition 'Blest Are We'	www.blestarewe.com
Reconciliation & First Eucharist (Year 2)		Reconciliation; Eucharist	www.rclbsacraments.com
Pre-Confirmation (Year 5)		Faith & Word Edition "Blest Are We"	www.blestarewe.com
Confirmation	Loyola Press	Confirmed in the Spirit	Loyola Press confirmation program

Special Needs catechists will use texts and other materials appropriate to the student.

3.3 HOME ASSIGNMENTS

Monday PREP Home Assignments are given by each catechist to reinforce weekly class work. Each child has the responsibility to see that all assignments are completed. A child's catechist will notify the parents if he/she consistently fails to complete these assignments.

4 REGULATIONS

4.1 ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

4.1.1 All Students

- First year PREP students must be at least 6 years of age by September 1st.

4.1.2 Parishioners

- Parents must be registered members of St. Paul Parish. For children baptized in another parish, the parents must present a baptismal certificate at the time of registration.

4.1.3 Non-Parishioners

- Non-parishioners' children will be admitted to the program if classroom space, textbooks, and materials are available.
- Non-parishioner parents are required to have a letter of permission from their pastor, so that their child/ren may attend catechetical and sacramental preparation classes at St. Paul Parish.
- The requirements for Sacramental Preparation and Reception (Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation) are found in the [Section 4.2 Sacramental Preparation and Reception](#).

4.2 SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION AND RECEPTION

4.2.1 Requirements for First Reception of Reconciliation and Eucharist

4.2.1.1 *All Students*

- Baptized Catholic.
- At least seven years of age by September 1st. (i.e., Year 2 or above)
- Must have attended a Catholic school or PREP for **two consecutive years with no more than three absences each of these years**. At least 30 hours of religious instruction are required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Office of Catholic Education. It is further recommended that a child repeat the level if frequent absences occur (more than 10%).

4.2.1.2 *Parishioners*

- Parents are registered members of St. Paul Parish.

4.2.1.3 *Non-Parishioners*

- Non-parishioner families must be registered in their own parish. They must meet with their own pastor and have his permission for child/ren to attend classes outside parish. St. Paul's Pastor or Coordinator of Religious Education must approve the arrangement.
- Non-parish children are to receive First Eucharist in the parish in which their family is registered.
 - *Exception: Special Needs students may receive at St. Paul's with the written permission of the home parish pastor.*

4.2.2 Requirements for Reception of Confirmation

4.2.2.1 *All Students*

- Baptized Catholic.
- Must have attended a Catholic School or PREP for three consecutive years after Reconciliation and First Eucharist with **no more than three absences each of these years**.

4.2.2.2 *Parishioners*

- Parents are registered members of St. Paul Parish.

4.2.2.3 *Non-Parishioners*

- Non-parishioner families must be registered in their own parish. They must meet with their own pastor and have his permission for child/ren to attend classes outside parish. St. Paul's Pastor or Coordinator of Religious Education must approve the arrangement.
 - *Exception: Special Needs students may receive at St. Paul's with the written permission of the home parish pastor.*

4.3 ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

4.3.1 Arrival

- Driver speed limit on parish parking lot is **below 15 MPH**.
- All children are to be dropped off **at the church door** at 6:30 pm. The catechetical staff is **not** responsible for children arriving before 6:30 pm.
- The School Hall doors will be locked until the prayer service in the church is complete. Children arriving after 6:45 pm must come to the School Hall middle door and ring the bell. They must report to their catechist in the assigned teaching area.
- Children arriving after 6:45 pm will be considered late.

4.3.2 Dismissal

- Driver speed limit on parish parking lot is **below 15 MPH**.
- The center doors facing the parking lot of the School Hall are opened at 7:50 pm for parents.
- **A parent or designated adult (parent letter required) must come into the School Hall.** Children will not be released otherwise.
- Please be prompt. Children become anxious and fearful if you are not on time.
- Call or text 610-246-5535 if you find you will be a few minutes late. We will assure your child that you are coming.

4.4 ABSENCES

Consistent class attendance is a very important factor in deepening your child's understanding of our triune God through the study of Scripture, prayer, Church teaching and community.

If absent, a child is responsible for completing missed class and home assignments. Said assignments are to be completed and signed by a parent before the child returns to class.

If child must miss class, a parent is required to call Religious Education Office in the Rectory: 610-279-6725 from 9:00 A.M. through 3:00 P.M. on the day that PREP is scheduled. This rule is for the protection and safety of the student. Your child's catechist will contact you with class assignments following class.

When the child returns, the parents must provide an absence note to the assigned catechist with the child's name, grade, and reason for his/her absence. If a child is absent for three or more classes due to illness, a doctor's note is required upon child's return, in addition to parent's note.

4.5 MESSAGES

A written note and a phone call to the Coordinator of Religious Education (610-279-6725) are required in the following circumstances:

- Absence, lateness, or request for early dismissal.

- Special situations (i.e., serious illness or death of family member, child/ren going home with another family or family member other than parent, non-custodial parent coming for child/ren with custodial parent's permission, child taking medication or cough drops; child has special activity or event at his/her public school.)

4.6 VISITORS

During PREP class time, parents and visitors should knock at the middle door of the School Hall.

Visitors/parents may not go directly to any classroom during class time. By law, a catechist may never release a child from a class area during class - even to a parent or other adult. The catechist will make sure the child goes directly to the CRE at the designated time, as outlined in the section [Section 4.3.2 Dismissal](#).

4.7 CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER

Please advise the Religious Education Office (610-279-6725) of any change in your address, telephone number or e-mail. If your family has an unlisted telephone number, let us know. If you move within or out of the parish, please advise us so that we may give this information to the rectory office.

4.8 STUDENT USE OF TELEPHONES

Student use of cell phones or pagers is not permitted. In emergency situations, (i.e. child not picked up on time, illness, etc.) the CRE or a catechist will call the parent.

4.9 PROHIBITED ITEMS

The following items are not permitted in class: Toys, all electronic games, balls, radios, TVs, cell phones, beepers, skateboards, roller skates/blades, food, beverages, candy or gum. These items will be confiscated and returned to parents/guardians after discussion with the catechist and CRE. These items may not be returned if the infraction is repeated.

*Please note: If your child's physical needs require that he/she consume food during class time, we request a written note with specific dietetic information (especially for diabetic students). The student will be escorted to the Religious Education area while they eat their snack, then returned to class.

5 DISCIPLINE

5.1 OVERVIEW

The purpose of discipline is to establish an atmosphere where a child can both learn and practice the basic principles of mature and responsible membership in society. **Respect for God, self, others, and the environment is the basis of self-discipline.**

The responsibilities of students in our religious education program include:

- Accept responsibility for his/her actions.

- Respect the rights of others, and being courteous in his/her relationships with others (i.e. other children, teachers, aides, parents).
- Make every effort to attend religious education classes on a regular basis, always being punctual.
- Maintain habits of personal cleanliness.
- Respect personal, church, and school property; keeping it free from damage.
- Always try to do his/her best work.
- Maintain an atmosphere that generates mutual respect and dignity.
- Obey PREP regulations and policies issued by the pastor and the catechetical staff.

If a child's behavior disrupts the learning process for him or herself or for others, the steps listed below will be followed to ensure that class participation may continue:

1. At the first incident, the child will be reminded of expected behavior and the consequences of misbehavior.
2. After the second incident, the child will be sent to the office for a discussion with the CRE about appropriate behavior.
3. After returning to class, if inappropriate behavior continues, the child will be sent to the office to do his or her religious education assignment. The child's parents will be contacted.

5.2 MINOR INFRACTIONS

Minor infractions lead to some deprivation, conduct referral, and/or parental conference.

- Running, pushing, or throwing objects.
- Lack of preparation for class; incomplete homework or makeup assignments.
- Dishonesty; inappropriate language.
- Misuse of the hall, cafeteria, corridors, or lavatories.
- Gum chewing or food in the classroom or hall.
- Using phones without permission of a teacher or the CRE.
- Leaving the school building at dismissal without permission.

Repeated and/or flagrant repetition of any minor infraction will be reflected on the child's Progress Report.

5.3 MORE SERIOUS INFRACTIONS

More serious infractions lead to detention, suspension, an unsatisfactory Progress Report, and/or expulsion from parish program.

- Repeated disregard for PREP regulations or catechetical staff.
- Disrespectful behavior of any kind toward staff, students, or a parent.
- Fighting.
- Insubordination; defiance; insolence.
- Lying; stealing, cheating; plagiarism.
- Offensive language, behavior, or literature.
- Smoking; vandalism.

- Leaving school building or parish grounds without permission.

5.4 MAJOR INFRACTION

A major infraction leads to suspension or expulsion.

- Bomb scares or triggering other false alarms.
- The use, selling and/or distribution of controlled substances.
- Arson.
- Possession of objects deemed weapons.
- Bullying, taunting, intimidation, harassment, or threats of any kind (written or verbal).

6 SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is committed to the implementation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Office of Child and Youth Protection assists parishes in the on-going development of safe environment programs in our religious education programs and in all parish ministries that involve children.

The Safe Environment Program includes but is not limited to:

- Obtaining the background checks of all archdiocesan personnel, including clergy, religious and laity, as well as volunteers who regularly come in contact with children.
- Providing educational programs for students who attend our religious education programs.
- Providing training to clergy, parish personnel, catechists/volunteers regarding their responsibility, under civil law, as mandated reporters.

The Parish Religious Education Program is required to teach one personal age-specific safety lesson annually. The Parish Religious Education personal safety lessons from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia are titled *Kid Talk*. Our lessons are taught in February. Children will learn of our concern for their safety and know what to do in unsafe situations. Links to the lessons and support materials are found at [Lessons – phillyocf.org](https://www.phillyocf.org/lessons).

7 UPDATE HISTORY

Date	Description	By
10/2/2023	2.4 Catechists & Aides updated	L Boardway

8 PREP HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

2023-24 School Year

- I have read the Family Handbook and agree to the requirements and expectations of the Saint Paul Parish Religious Education Program.
- I am aware of the regulations of the PREP.
- I am aware of the responsibilities of parents and students.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Student Signature(s) _____

Date _____

*Please sign and return this form by **September 25, 2023**. Thank you.*