

*Saint James Catholic Church
Religious Education Program
Falls Church, VA*



*Parent Handbook
2019 – 2020*

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Neither the one who plants, nor the one who waters, is anything but only God who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. For we are God’s co-workers; you are God’s field and God’s building.”

1Cor. 3:6-10

Pastor: *Very Rev. Paul D. Scalia*
703-532-8815

DRE: *Sister Regina Rosarii McLallen, IHM*
703-533-1182 x 103
dre@saintjamesschool.org

Office Assistants: *Mrs. Pam Heid*
 Mrs. Frances Wilson
 703-533-1182 x104
 religioused@saintjamesschool.org

MISSION STATEMENT

St. James **Parish Religious Education Programs** (PREP) share in the mission of the Catholic Church in the following ways:

To promote worship of God in Spirit and Truth particularly through the celebration of the sacraments with particular emphasis on the Eucharist.

To create and nourish Christian Community in the family, in the life of the parish, and in society as a whole.

To proclaim in word and deed the Good News of Jesus Christ to all persons, inviting those in our community to share our faith and our mission.

To teach the saving message of Christ so that all believers may come to a deeper understanding, conversion, and personal witness to Christ.

To serve our brothers and sisters, particularly the poor and needy, by generous acts of charity while promoting issues of peace and justice.

PRINCIPLES FOR RECEIVING THE GREATEST BENEFITS FOR YOUR CHILDREN

1. In order to derive the maximum benefit from classroom activities and instruction, students **should strive for punctual and consistent attendance.**
2. Time is one of the most valuable commodities we possess. There never seems to be enough time in one day to do all we want to accomplish. Therefore, we try to create priorities where our time will reap the greatest rewards. In religious education we ask that as we prepare to offer our best to your child, you make attendance in our weekly classes a top priority in your child's life. **Sports and other extracurricular activities should not interfere with religious education classes on a regular basis.**
3. Every Catholic household is a household of faith. It is the center where the Catholic faith is lived every day. Eucharist extends to the home, reconciliation is practiced at home, and even initiation becomes a part of home life. Marriage is already there but healing and prayer are home-based, too. Home is where faith is lived and shared by grandparents, parents, children, youth, and single adults in households of all kinds. The practice of the faith at home, which flows from the Sunday liturgy where the parish community gathers to celebrate our identity as St. James Catholic Church, is essential to the success of any religious education program.
4. Catechesis is a process that is life-long. These formative years in your child's religious development are strengthened through a curriculum which provides a different essential element of faith each year. **Therefore, attendance in Levels K through 12 is seen as necessary to allow for the completion of a foundational course in religious instruction.**

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Classes

Classes are scheduled to meet on Tuesday. Levels K – 8 meet Tuesday afternoon beginning at 4:45pm and ending at 6:00pm. Levels 1 – 12 and Special Sacraments meet Tuesday evening beginning at 7:00pm and ending at 8:15pm.

Communications

The catechists will primarily communicate with families weekly through the use of e-mail. Communications may continue to be sent home through students as well. Each student will receive a two-pocket folder. This folder will still be a viable means of communication. Please check the folder weekly. It is the student's responsibility to replace the folder if it is lost or destroyed.

Assignments

Home assignments will be given on a weekly basis. Assignments will be communicated by e-mail, if possible. Sharing faith, study, memorization, and project work may be required throughout the year.

Books

Parental assistance is needed to insure that students come weekly with books and materials needed for class, as well as with completed assignments. **Lost books will be replaced, but at the student's expense.**

Absences / Attendance

Attendance is important to each child's education. **We request an absentee note when the child returns to class.** All missed assignments must be completed at home. Please expect a phone call if an absence occurs and the Office has not been informed. Excessive absence may result in a student failing to advance to the next level. Children with faithful attendance (3 or less absences) in Levels 4 through 8 will be honored each year.

Lateness

Students are considered late if they arrive after the classroom prayers have already begun. Chronic lateness will require parental consultation.

Progress Reports

Catechists will provide parents with feedback on student progress at least twice during the year: once in January and again at the end of the year. The form will be the catechists' choice.

Early Dismissal

If it is necessary for a student to be dismissed from class before the regular dismissal, a note must be presented to the catechist before class and a parent must come into the building (Door 16) to meet the student at the Office. The parent must sign out the student. An early dismissal should only be for exceptional circumstances.

Cancellation of Classes

In the event of an early cancellation of the public schools due to inclement weather, each family will be notified through the "School Messenger Program". Phone numbers for this program will be requested each school year. **This is an immediate contact service and will be used only in the case of an unscheduled closing.** If you do not receive a phone call and are unsure, please call the Religious Education Office (703-533-1182 x104) concerning the cancellation of classes. There will be a message left on the tape. Please **do not** call the rectory or the convent. **We follow the Falls Church City Public School closing policy.**

Parking Lot Safety at Dismissal

Extreme care must be used in our busy parking lot. For the safety of our children we have a pick-up procedure in place at the end of each session. Please refer to the diagram distributed to each family. All children will be dismissed in an orderly and timely manner in Parking Lot A. **For their own protection children are not permitted to cross the parking lot to their car. PLEASE USE THE SIDEWALKS.**

In the case of inclement weather, Parking Lot B will be used for dismissal. Parents should still gather in Lot A. From there, they will be instructed to move into Lot B.

Student Safety

To insure the safety of all of our students, every door in the parish school will remain locked while the students are in class. Door 12 and Door 16 will be open before classes but will be locked once classes have begun. **During class the only door that will be used to access the building will be Door 16. Please ring the doorbell at Door 16 for access to the Office.**

Christian Behavior

Christian behavior is encouraged and fostered at all times. Any display of inappropriate classroom behavior i.e. that which disrupts the classroom or interferes with the flow of teaching, will not be tolerated. The student displaying such behavior will be detained after class while the parents are being informed. If the behavior does not improve there will be a meeting with the student, catechist, parent, and DRE.

Any student found bringing a questionable item into school and using said item in an inappropriate or threatening manner will be immediately dismissed.

School Property

Students may not use or borrow any items from the desk in which they sit during classes. These items are the personal property of the students who are attending St. James Catholic School. Only the desks are parish property. Therefore, we expect students to be respectful of what belongs to another. Any damage that occurs while students are in class must be reported to the catechist. At **NO** time will **GUM CHEWING** be permitted within St. James School building. This is a regulation of St. James School for the good maintenance of the property and for the protection of student property.

Re-registration Requirements

Students currently enrolled in the program are required to re-register for the next year's classes. Forms will be mailed to each family at the end of our school year. Please complete the forms and return them to the Office as soon as possible so we can update our records for the next year. **Registration in St. James Parish is required for attendance in Religious Education classes.** Please write your parish registration number at the top of the registration form. The deadline for re-registration is August 31(July 1 in order to be assured of your choice of session). We ask that

the tuition be paid at the time of re-registration. Any student who is not re-registered will not be admitted to his/her class in September.

If you need to register in the parish, please contact St. James Rectory Office at 703-532-8815 or www.stjamescatholic.org.

Change of Address or Telephone Number

It is important that records be kept up to date. Therefore, the Religious Education Office requests that you notify us as soon as possible of any change in address or telephone number.

Health Information

Parents are requested to write on the registration form (which is confidential) all health problems of the child attending our program so we can ensure his/her safety. Informing the Office of any learning difficulties your child may have would also help us provide the best possible learning situation for your child.

Registration of New Students

Registration for new students takes place in May, June, July, and August, usually through appointment. Registration in St. James Parish is required for the Catholic parent(s)/guardian(s) of the children to be enrolled in the Religious Education Program. We admit all public school students whose families are registered in our parish. Students transferring from another parish Catholic School or Religious Education Program for the first time are accepted into Levels 1 through 8 after the receipt of pertinent official parish records: baptismal certificate, parish registration number, report card, First Communion certificate, etc.

Baptismal certificates must be presented for students who were not baptized in St. James Parish before they can be admitted to the program.

Tuition

Tuition is determined by the pastor and finance board. Currently it is \$140(one child) and \$190(two or more children). Once classes have begun there will be no refund of tuition.

Class Structure

In an effort to keep class sizes manageable for our catechists, we will limit the number of students in our classes. **We will try to accommodate your needs but parents in Levels 3, 4, 5, and 6 may instruct their children in the home. They are required to complete the text at home and have their child report to the DRE before being promoted to the next level.**

Fire Drills

Students will be acquainted with fire exits in the first classes of the year. The younger children will be shown where to go and what to do.

Universal Precautions

The catechists have been familiarized with the guidelines for universal precautions and will be following them during the course of the year.

Emergency Drills

We will follow the directives found in the Crisis Management Handbook published by the Diocese of Arlington. Students will respond according to the circumstances:

- Go outside (used for fire and gas leaks)
- Stay inside the hallway (used for tornadoes)
- RUN, HIDE, FIGHT (used for intruders, active shooters)
- Shelter in Place (used for biochemical attacks)

If students need to evacuate the building, they will go to the Church and wait until the situation is assessed. If necessary, the students will move to the Community Recreation Center. When possible, the DRE will give notice over the PA for the specific emergency. Catechists will respond accordingly.

Safe Environment

A safe environment is provided for your child through the proper screening of all catechists and assistants as prescribed by the state of Virginia and the Diocese of Arlington. Criminal background checks and child abuse checks are obtained for each catechist and assistant. Special training is given to the entire staff to help everyone to be vigilant for the protection of your child(ren).

CURRICULUM

We Believe: Catholic Identity is the Sadlier textbook series used for Levels K through 6. Each level draws upon doctrine, scripture, liturgy, and the traditions of the Catholic Church. These are presented in an age-appropriate context for the learner.

This is a summary of the doctrine presented and the prayers required at each level:

Level 1: God Loves Us introduces the concept of Trinity and the roles of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is seen as a member of a family. We learn about our parish family. Learned prayers are: **The Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father.**

Level 2: Jesus Shares God's Life focuses on the sacraments of Penance (Reconciliation) and Holy Eucharist. The celebration of Mass and devotion to Mary are also presented. Learned prayers are: **Act of Contrition, Form for Confession, and Mass Responses.**

Level 3: We Are the Church deepens understanding of the Church and its role in the Catholic life. The ministries in the church are presented as well as its mission on earth. There is a review of the Mass. Learned prayers are: **Apostles' Creed**

Level 4: God's Law Guides Us strengthens the understanding of the Ten Commandments as laws of love and life. Children are introduced to the communion of saints and the general parts of the Bible. Learned material includes the **Ten Commandments**.

Level 5: We Meet Jesus in the Sacraments covers the seven sacraments with particular attention to the sacraments of initiation. Learned material includes the **Seven Sacraments**.

Level 6: We Are God's People focuses on the Old Testament in the Bible or the Hebrew Scriptures. Learned material is a **general understanding of the Old Testament and the Hail, Holy Queen**.

Levels 7 and 8: We Live Our Faith

Level 7: As Disciples of Jesus New Testament study of Jesus Christ and beginning Confirmation. This year aims at deepening the relationship that was formed with Christ in a practical way. It also opens the discussion on the sacrament of Confirmation. Learned material includes the **Mysteries of the Rosary**.

Level 8: Confirmation: Inspired by the Spirit/Chosen Confirmation is covered in depth in preparation for reception of the sacrament. Learned material includes the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children . . . Their participation in the life of the parish, above all, in the Sunday Eucharist – their participation in sacramental preparation for their children helps nourish their faith as well as that of their children. (*National Directory for Catechesis*)

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Parish policy stipulates a two-year process for the preparation of Penance/Eucharist and for Confirmation. Therefore, candidates for Penance/First Eucharist must have completed one full year of instruction before entering the sacramental programs in Level 2. The sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) is celebrated in Level 2 and is a pre-requisite for First Eucharist which is also celebrated in Level 2. Candidates for Confirmation begin remote preparation in Level 7 and immediate preparation in Level 8. Confirmation is celebrated in Level 8.

FIRST PENANCE

Parent Meeting / Sacramental Preparation Information

Thursday, November 14, 2019

7:30 pm Heller Hall

Celebration of First Penance – GROUP A

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

7:00 pm St. James Church

Celebration of First Penance – GROUP B

Wednesday, February 5, 2020

7:00 pm St. James Church

FIRST EUCHARIST

Parent Meeting / Sacramental Preparation Information

Thursday, February 13, 2020

7:30 pm Heller Hall

Presentation of candidates who will receive First Eucharist

Candidates and families

Sunday, February 23, 2020

9:00 am Mass GROUP A

10:30 am Mass GROUP B

St. James Church

Celebration of First Eucharist – GROUP A

Saturday, May 2, 2020

10:00 am St. James Church

Celebration of First Eucharist – GROUP B

Saturday, May 9, 2020

10:00 am St. James Church

CONFIRMATION

Parent Meeting/Sacramental Preparation Information

Parent and candidate must attend.

Thursday, October 10, 2019

7:30 pm Heller Hall

Sunday, October 20, 2019

Presentation Mass for 2020 Confirmation candidates

Candidates and families

9:00 am Mass Last Names A - L

10:30 am Mass Last Names M - Z

St. James Church

Boys' Retreat – Saturday

November 23, 2019

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Girls' Retreat – Saturday

February 1, 2020

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Celebration of Confirmation

Saturday, March 21, 2020 – 10:00am – Group A

Saturday, March 21, 2020 – 2:00pm – Group B