

St. Mary's Catholic Church
Parish School of Religion



St. MARY'S
CATHOLIC PARISH

Parent & Student Handbook
2011-2012

ST. MARY'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE STAFF

Father George Vrabel	Pastor	440-243-3877 ext. 14
Father Christopher Weber	Parochial Vicar	440-243-3877 ext. 17
Sr. Meribeth Rome, SND	Director of Religious Education	440-243-8221 ext. 22
Larry Roetzer	REO Administrator	440-243-8221 ext. 23

Office Hours – when PSR is in session

Monday through Thursday 9:00am – 3:00pm

Friday 8:30am – 12:30pm

The Religious Education Office is also open during PSR sessions (Sunday morning & Monday evening).

Other times are available upon appointment.

Office Hours – when PSR is not in session

Monday through Friday 9:30am – 2:30pm

Welcome to 2011-2012!

Every year the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops defines a theme for the Catechetical Year that provides a focus for both Catholic day schools and Religious Education Programs. This year's theme is

"Do This in Memory of Me."

Throughout the year we hope to weave different aspects of this theme into our celebrations and lessons. The precious gift of children to a married couple as well as to our church should be protected. The weekly readings at Mass give definition and support to the hearts of these little ones as well as their parents. The call to stewardship is a response to the word we have heard at Mass. With this in mind, the Religious Education Program is concentrating on three major efforts.

Called to Protect

Bishop Lennon has approved the implementation of the Called to Protect program, a four-part multi-media training program created by Praesidium, a national leader in abuse risk management. Called to Protect is a designed to present comprehensive and current abuse prevention information to parents, children, youth and young adults. St. Mary's will implement this training program in the 2nd semester of our year.

Lectionary Based Catechesis

We presently use a Lectionary based program where the Sunday Gospel readings teach the weekly lesson of God's love for us. Every lesson is in a convenient booklet format that will involve parents as well as the student and will hopefully foster attendance at Sunday Mass, for the whole family. We aren't doing away with the doctrine though. Each weekly lesson will be supported with a handbook of the catechism, providing each child with the "best" learning experience.

Stewardship

We will continue this program of stewardship, to help PSR students become aware of their responsibility to "be Christ" in their everyday world. In the past, classes have committed themselves to projects such as, the Parish Giving Tree, visiting the Eldercare Facility, serving at the Diocesan Refugee Christmas Dinner, donating to the Foreign Missions through the Diocesan Mission Office collections. We hope that each of these initiatives will help the families of St. Mary's PSR unpack the Bishops' theme in an effective way.

Catechetical Sunday, September 18, 2011, at 9 am Mass will focus on the bishops' theme. Our catechists will be commissioned for their ministry and it is an opportunity for all of us to rededicate ourselves to this mission as a community of faith. Please come to the 9:00 Mass that day and support our generous catechists.

Sincerely in Memory of the work of Jesus,
Sister Meribeth Rome, SND

ST. MARY'S PSR PROGRAM

The PSR Program

The Faith Formation Program.

St. Mary's PSR sessions are held at St. Mary's School, 265 Baker Street (one block north of St. Mary's Church.)

Sunday morning students are Preschool (4 years old), Kindergarten and Elementary grades 1-3. They meet on Sunday mornings from 10:30-11:45 AM. Sunday morning students enter through the 2nd set of side doors at the back of the school. For security reasons, these doors will be opened by 10:15 am and locked 10 minutes after the sessions begin. The doors will be reopened by 11:30 am for student dismissal.

Monday Evening Students are grades 4-9. They meet on Monday evenings from 6:45-8:00 PM. Monday evening students enter through the 1st set of side doors at the back of the school. All other doors will be locked from the outside. For security reasons, these side doors will be locked 10 minutes after the evening sessions begin. The doors will reopen by 7:45 pm for student dismissal.

Students trying to enter the building after these times are asked to enter by the Religious Education Office (REO, front of the school, by the Media Center). This way attendance records will be updated properly.

We request that ALL Parents/Guardians be prompt in bringing their children to our Program.

The PSR Staff

St. Mary's PSR program is staffed by a dedicated and talented group of volunteer catechists who wish to share the Good News of Jesus with the children of the parish. These catechists take advantage of a variety of in-service sessions and diocesan training and certification opportunities to assure they are knowledgeable and up-to-date in Church teaching and classroom methods.

The program is overseen by a professional Director of Religious Education and an administrator, responsible for the office operations.

The Religious Education Office is located in St. Mary's School. It is staffed during the school year Monday through Friday at various times (usually 9:00am-3:00pm). During the PSR Year they are also available during the PSR session days/times. The phone number is (440) 243-8221.

ST. MARY'S PSR PROGRAM – cont.

PSR Registration / Fees

Each year all students who are part of the Religious Education Program are required to register with the REO. The information provided is for the use of the REO and will never be provided to any 3rd party unless specifically approved by the student's parent a/or guardian.

Proof of Baptism must be submitted with all **new** registrations. If the student has been baptized at St. Mary Parish, that information should be indicated and the REO will check the Parish records for verification.

Any child registering on the first day of class **will not** be assigned a class on that first day. Parents will be notified of class assignment once all registration documents are processed.

The fee schedule applies to the all children in the Religious Education Program. Our schedule for 2011-12 is as follows:

Fee Schedule from May 10 through September 9

1 Child	\$ 65.00
2 Children	\$ 55.00 / child
3 or more	\$ 50.00 / child
(family maximum \$200)	

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT! \$10.00 per child can be deducted from the fees if all accurate documents are received before May 9th.

LATE FEE! \$10.00 per child. Students whose registrations arrive in our office after September 12:

A SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION FEE of \$20.00 per child for those planning to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation/ Eucharist or Confirmation. (Early/Late fees do not apply to Sacramental fees.)

It is the policy of St. Mary's Church that no child is refused instruction on the basis of need. Anyone who cannot pay the full fee at this time should contact Sister Meribeth to discuss options. (440-243-8221 or sister.meribeth@gmail.com).

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

Student Etiquette/Behavior

1. All adult personnel are to be addressed in a polite, respectful manner, preferably as “Miss, Ms., Mrs., or Mr.”.
2. Radios, toys, snacks, candies, general reading materials and skateboards, etc. are not to be brought into class without the expressed approval of the PSR Administrator & the Catechist. Without such approval, eating, drinking, or chewing gum will not be tolerated in class.
3. Students should not wear inappropriate T-shirts, clothing or accessories to PSR sessions. Inappropriate includes, but is not limited to, clothing referencing alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, weapons or themes inconsistent with Christian belief and practice.
4. Students’ personal needs should be taken care of before class time. There is not a recess break for this purpose. Individual consideration will be shown with parental notification.
5. Students will have assigned seats each week. If desks or their contents are damaged, parents/guardians will be notified and assessed an appropriate replacement value.
6. Homework assignments are to be completed on schedule.

Students who do not obey these policies will be subject to disciplinary action.

Curriculum

Weekly participation in Saturday (evening) or Sunday Eucharist (Mass) is the most essential part of each child’s ongoing faith development. Not only is participation in the Eucharist expected of every baptized Catholic, but it is the center of our faith life. The staff of St. Mary’s Parish cannot place enough stress on the importance of making regular Mass attendance a priority.

St. Mary’s PSR program uses the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* Faith Formation Program. This is an exciting approach to children’s catechesis for preschool through junior high. Each student receives a handbook, or catechism, *What the Church Believes and Teaches*, plus 32 weekly lessons based on the Sunday lectionary. The handbook guides children to understand the basics of the Catholic faith, the weekly lessons inspire them to seek out ways to practice their faith in their daily lives. *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies: What the Church Believes and Teaches*, is in accordance with the diocesan religion curriculum and approved by the U.S. Bishops committee for Catechesis.

Are there any other books we are going to use?

Additional books are used for sacramental years. Our 1st and 2nd grade will use Sadlier’s *We Believe* to support their preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES – cont.

Classroom Discipline

Respect and courtesy are expected of every PSR student. Catechists will clearly state classroom rules and procedures during the first session of PSR year.

Routine discipline matters within the classroom will be handled by the Catechist. If the behavior continues or escalates, the Catechist may request support and/or assistance from the office. The PSR Administrator or Assistant member of the office support staff will come to the classroom to escort the disruptive student to the office. During this time, the student will be assigned tasks by the PSR Administrator or the DRE. These assignments will be documented and sent to the parent/guardian for review, signature and return to the DRE.

Parents/guardians will be called should a second visit to the office be necessary. If the disciplinary problem is not resolved, despite the best efforts of the catechists, the Review Board will convene to decide the best resolution to the problem. Their decision will be documented and discussed with the student's parent/guardian before any action is taken.

The Review Board consists of:

The Parish Pastor
Director of Religious Education
PSR Administrator
Student's catechist

Students should always remember that when they gather they represent St. Mary's and always act accordingly.

Student Evaluation Forms

Parents/guardians of students in grades 1-7 will receive an evaluation form twice a year. The preferred method of communication for these evaluations is via electronic mail. If this method of communication is not possible, the evaluation will be sent via postal mail.

Evaluation forms will be completed and sent to the parents/guardians of our students during the Christmas break, for the first semester, and within a week of the last class of the year.

The Catechist will contact the parent/guardian of any student with a poor first semester evaluation at or before the end of the first semester to discuss ways to help the student.

If sufficient progress is not made in the second semester the Review Board will convene to discuss the matter.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES – cont

Snow Days

When PSR sessions are cancelled, due to heavy snow fall or other inclement conditions, students will be notified by their Catechist. This information will also be reported on the following radio/TV stations: iAlert (Channel 3 & WTAM 1100AM) & NewsChannel 5's School Closing Network. Please do not call the rectory. If conditions are hazardous, parents/guardians should use their good judgment concerning coming to class.

Visitors Policy

No one is permitted to enter any classroom, after classes have started, without permission from the Religious Education Office.

Visitors are not permitted in the classrooms unless special arrangements have been made with the office prior to the visit.

Should a student bring a visitor to class, he or she **must** have permission from the catechist. The student **must** check in at the office with his or her visitor.

Recognizing that parents are the primary religious educators of their children, parents/guardians are encouraged to visit PSR classes. However parents are expected to notify the REO and make arrangements with the individual catechist before visiting classes. Please remember that the catechist has a lesson plan and is teaching the entire class, therefore any visitor to the classroom should not disrupt normal activities.

Protecting God's Children

Saint Mary's Church is firmly committed to providing a safe, positive learning and working environment for everyone in the Religious Education Program. For this reason, and in keeping with the goals and objectives of Catholic education, Saint Mary's Religious Education Program expressly prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence in the school environment. This policy re-emphasizes the personal dignity of the individual and fosters positive sexual attitudes and respect for others.

For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment includes the following specific instances:

- Verbal sexual abuse
- Disseminating obscene or sexually explicit material, whether in the form of music, written lyrics, pornographic pictures, or other literature
- Having such materials in one's possession in the school, on school grounds, or at school-sponsored activities
- Obscene or sexually explicit graffiti anywhere in the school or on the school/parish grounds
- Continuing and unwanted written or oral communication directed to another of a sexual nature
- Spreading sexual rumors/innuendoes
- Obscene or sexually explicit gestures
- Any other inappropriate behavior of a sexually explicit or obscene nature that demeans or offends the recipient.

The above list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but is intended to provide guidance as to what may constitute sexual harassment.

Some acts of sexual harassment may also be criminal. Criminal acts of sexual harassment are defined as an act where the recipient is physically touched without his/her consent in a sexual manner; is expressly threatened or perceives a threat of physical harm for purposes of the offender's sexual gratification; or is the victim of sex offenses under Ohio law, including Gross Sexual Imposition (O.R.C. 2907.05), Sexual Battery (O.R.C.2907.03), Rape (O.R.C. 2907.02), Importuning (O.R.C.2907.07), Voyeurism (O.R.C. 2907.08), Public Indecency (O.R.C. 2907.09) or Felonious Sexual Penetration (O.R.C. 2907.12) as examples.

In each of the above examples, the Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately.

Isolated, trivial incidents are not sufficient to constitute harassment and will be handled according to the student behavior code.

Allegations of sexual harassment, as defined above, are to be reported to the Catechist, the DRE and the PSR Administrator. Parents of both the offender and the victim will be informed of the allegations. The matter is to be kept confidential by all parties involved, and every effort will be made to protect the alleged victim from retaliation. The parents of both the offender and the alleged victim are obligated to cooperate in remedying the situation.

Protecting God's Children –cont.

If the allegations are substantiated, disciplinary actions will be taken. These actions will depend on the nature, frequency and severity of the action, the ages of the offender and victim, the history of similar actions by this individual, and the circumstances in which the harassment occurred. Possible disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, any or all of the following:

- Verbal warning/reprimand and apology to the victim,
- A parent/student/DRE/Administrator conference,
- Written warning/reprimand and parent notification,
- Detention or removal from selected school or program activities,
- Behavior/probation contracts, possibly requiring professional intervention,
- Suspension,
- Expulsion.

Sexual violence is handled separately because of its potentially criminal nature. If an incident of sexual violence occurs, the Pastor, Deacon or other school authority or Religious Education Program personnel are required under state law to report the incident (Ohio Revised Code 2151.421). Ohio Revised Code Section 2921.22 also requires any person who knows that a felony has been or is being committed shall report such information to law enforcement officials. The Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately if there is any "reason to believe" (Ohio Revision Code 2151.421) that sexual abuse has or violence has occurred involving a child less than eighteen years of age. The Diocesan Legal Office will be contacted immediately in these situations.

All staff members and volunteers have agreed to be in compliance with *The Diocese of Cleveland: Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse*. This policy is available online at http://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/virtus/virtus_index.htm. A printed copy is available from the Religious Education Office upon request.

This policy includes, but is not limited to each person with access to children completing the *Virtus: Protecting God's Children* educational program as well as undergoing a background check with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

How to Report Suspected Abuse

We encourage people to report any suspected inappropriate behavior to the Diocesan Response Office, which is staffed by trained counselors and was established to respond to all allegations.

response_services@dioceseofcleveland.org or (216)334-2999

Prayer for Healing for Victims of Abuse

Praise to you, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
source of all consolation and hope.

By your Son's dying and rising
He remains our light in every darkness,
our strength in every weakness.

Be the refuge and guardian
of all who suffer from abuse and violence.
Comfort them and send healing
for their wounds of body, soul and spirit.
Rescue them from bitterness and shame
and refresh them with your love.
Heal the brokenness in all victims of abuse
and revive the spirits of all who lament this sin.

Help us to follow Jesus
in drawing good from evil, life from death.
Make us one with you in your love for justice
as we deepen our respect
for the dignity of every human life.

Giver of peace,
make us one in celebrating your praise,
both now and for ever. Amen.

+ John F. Kinney
Bishop of Saint Cloud, MN
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Protecting God's Children – cont.

WEAPONS POLICY

Saint Mary's PSR follows the proposed policy of the Diocese of Cleveland. This policy expressly prohibits the use, possession, sales, or discharge of any weapons or explosive devices in the school/parish, on school/parish grounds. This policy shall apply to all students, participants in parish programs, catechists, administrators, and other personnel in the school or parish.

This policy includes, but is not limited to:

- Any firearm
- Knife
- Deadly weapon
- Explosive or incendiary device

As defined by state law, a deadly weapon is "any instrument, device, or thing capable of inflicting death, and designed or specifically adapted for use as a weapon, or possessed, carried or used as a weapon." (Ohio Revised code 2923.11A) Firearms shall include any loaded or unloaded gun of any caliber or type. This prohibition also includes any pistol, rifle, or other device that uses air or gas propelled projectiles.

Violations of this policy will warrant:

- Notification of the police

Or may warrant:

- Immediate suspension
- Exclusion from a parish program

Signing by parents and student of a probation contract that includes all the conditions of the student's retention in the program.

St. Mary's Religious Education Office

265 Baker Street

Berea, Ohio 44017

Telephone: (440) 243-8221

Fax: (440) 243-8411

Sr. Meribeth Rome, SND,
Director of Religious Education

Larry Roetzer,
REO Administrator



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