

St. Mary's Catholic Church
Parish School of Religion



St. MARY'S
CATHOLIC PARISH

STAFF HANDBOOK
2011-2012

St. Mary's Religious Education Office Staff

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Father Christopher Weber	Parochial Vicar	440-243-3877 ext. 17
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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

Parish Policies for Catechists

Catechist Formation

As part of your commitment to our program, all catechists are expected to work toward their diocesan catechist certification or renewal each year. Individuals will work out the details of this with the Religious Education Office (REO).

Requests for parish payment for workshops must be submitted and approved in advance of attending or signup.

Catechist profiles should be updated whenever a workshop or lecture is attended. Please contact the secretary in the Religious Education Office (REO).

Policy for the Protection of God's Children

All catechists and other PSR adult staff are required to read and agree to comply with the Diocese of Cleveland "Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse". Their agreement is confirmed by signing the Acknowledgement document (VI2003).

Virtus Training

The Religious Education Office, in compliance with the policy of the Diocese of Cleveland, require all adult volunteers in our program to complete the "Virtus: Protecting God's Children" training workshop. According to the policy, an Adult Volunteer is anyone over the age of 18 years "...who works with children more than (4) hours a month or who works with children more frequently than once a month". This training is not required for the occasional volunteer for individual activities.

Catechist Stipends

Catechists have the option of receiving a stipend for their efforts in PSR, and paying full price for the registration of their children, or having all registration fees waived and not receiving the parish offered stipend. Each year Catechists will be asked to select their preferred method of handling registration fees.

State of Ohio Law requires taxation on all stipends a/or gifts received. Taxes withheld will be reported by an annual W2.

Background Checks

Catechists are subject to Ohio Law requiring all persons responsible for the care, custody or control of a child to submit to fingerprinting and an Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCII) criminal records check.

Parish Policies for Catechists – cont.

Called to Protect

To enhance the ongoing efforts of St. Mary Parish to provide training for children in matters of protection from abuse and creation of safe environment, we will implement the *Called to Protect* program, in accordance with the current safe environment initiatives from the Diocese of Cleveland. *Called to Protect* is a multi-media training program created by Praesidium, a national leader in abuse risk management. The *Called to Protect* series presents current abuse prevention information for parents, children, youth and young adults. This program is designed specifically for Catholic elementary, middle and high school aged youth based on the latest child development research on how children and youth learn best.

All Catechists will be trained to facilitate this Program in the classroom. This training will occur during the year as part of the normal PSR curriculum.

Classroom Procedures

- All classroom visitors are **required** to obtain approval of the Religious Education Office (REO) **before** going into the classrooms. The Catechist is responsible for obtaining this approval from the REO.
- All PSR Grades begin in the classroom
- Each Catechist should be in their classroom at least **ten minutes** before the start of class. The REO is open at least one (1) hour before class begins.
- All PSR Grades go directly to their classrooms each week.
- When PSR classes do not begin in the classroom, parents will be notified by postal a/or electronic mail.
- Each Catechist will have an envelope containing student attendance sheets, schedules, lesson plans and any other correspondence. These envelopes will be in your classroom each week prior to class. This envelope should be returned to the REO at the completion of class.
- In the spirit of planning, communication, and cooperation catechists are **expected** to attend **all** meetings unless other arrangements are made.
- Please check with the REO before purchasing any supplies (arts, supplies, craft materials, etc) for your class. The cost of such items may be reimbursed.
- In the interest of safety, school doors will be locked 10 minutes after class begins (10:40am Sundays & 6:55pm Mondays). Students must enter from the front doors only (by the REO) after the normal entrance doors are locked.
- In case of an emergency in the building, Catechists are to walk students to the church. Parents will pick up their children there.

Classroom Procedures – cont.

In preparation for class:

- Note the emergency exit routes and exit procedure for your classroom.
- Locate your classroom PSR supply crate and always return it to the same location.
- Always allow time to check condition of your classroom before students arrive. Report any discrepancies in the classroom conditions as soon as possible. Note the discrepancy on the Weekly Attendance Report.
- It is recommended that after the first class the Catechist and/or students leave a note introducing themselves to their St. Mary's Day School counterparts who use the same room.

Be prepared. Be patient. Be prayerful.

Attendance:

- Please take attendance accurately each session.
- Students arriving late (after class attendance sheet is sent to the REO) are to be directed to the REO for check in, if not already done.
- Please return the attendance sheet to the REO within 15 minutes of the start of each class.
- In the case of students preparing for sacraments, excessive absences should be discussed with the DRE as early as possible.

Dismissal:

- Grades Pre-K - 3 parents/guardians are to meet students in the classrooms. Parents/Guardians will pick up their children at 11:30 AM.
- Students in grades 4-8, when released from class, will walk in an *orderly manner* to the exit doors (by the parking lot). Students are to remain on the sidewalk until their ride picks them up. Students should not be running through the parking lot

After each class:

- Check that the room is left in the same condition as before the class.
- Be certain that papers are removed from the floor.
- Return desks to the same order and configuration.
- Make sure windows are closed.
- Turn off lights and fans.
- Return your class envelope to the office. Make sure you have returned the attendance sheet and report any classroom issues to the REO.

Classroom Management

Classroom Behavior

1. Classroom expectations and standards of behavior should be discussed during the first class session. The following policies are in effect for all classes:
 - Respect is shown to all people.
 - Radios, toys, hand-held video games, candles, etc. are not to be brought into classroom.
 - Snacks, candy, or refreshments should not be served in the classrooms without the prior approval of the Religious Education Office.
 - Eating candy and chewing gum in class is **not permitted**.
 - Students are **never** to open a student's desk under any circumstances.
2. Catechists are **never** to strike, shake, slap or touch a child in any way.
3. Catechists should always show respect to the children. Insulting, abusive or sarcastic language is not respectful.
4. No child should be put in the hall for discipline. (See "Classroom Discipline" for further information.)

Classroom Discipline

Catechists should be proactive in addressing discipline. Do not wait for a problem to discuss the expectation that respect and courtesy will be shown by all persons, to all persons. In the event a student's behavior disrupts learning, Catechists are asked to do the following:

1. Routine discipline matters within the classroom will be taken care of by the Catechist, who will request cooperation, and if necessary, issue a warning.
2. If the behavior continues or escalates, the student(s) will be sent to the office with a note describing the situation.
3. The PSR Administrator, DRE or other staff member, will hold the disruptive student for a "time out"; during which time the student will be engaged in self-reflection of their actions. This reflection will include the student documenting their understanding of the situation. This document will be reviewed and signed by the Catechist, the Parents of the student and the DRE. The document will then be placed in the student's file. Should the student continue to be disruptive, the parents will be contacted for a meeting with the DRE.
4. Students who are consistently uncooperative will be called before the Review Board for appropriate action which may include removal from PSR.

Teaching Procedures

Curriculum

1. Unit Plans are recommended. These plans should indicate the topics to be covered, by week, in order to complete the particular Unit. Also, any assessment (quizzes, tests, etc.) or teaching aides (videos, handouts, etc.) you intend to use should be noted. Copies of your Unit Plan (where appropriate) should be turned into the REO for class record.
2. Catechists are expected to follow the course of study for each grade level. This course of study is available for each grade as well as weekly lesson plans. Notation of completion should be made each class to aid both the REO and in case a substitute is required to help.
3. Any changes or substitutions to this plan should be reviewed and approved by the DRE.

Learning Materials and Equipment

1. The REO has Audio-Visual material available for your use. A reservation policy is to be observed when borrowing materials that you need.
2. Any materials brought from home or from the public libraries should be reviewed with the REO prior to use.
3. Any work that needs to be typed or copied should be given to the REO with ample time to complete your request.

Catechist Absence

1. The REO will arrange for all Catechist substitutes.
2. The REO must be notified as early as possible of a catechist's absence.
3. The list of available substitutes will be reviewed with the Catechist for best fit with the classroom a/or other potential suggestions.
4. The Director of Religious Education (DRE) must approve any person not on the substitute list. Unauthorized substitutes will not be permitted to conduct a class.
5. Catechist manuals and other teaching materials should be given to the REO a/or directly to the substitute catechist.
6. If no substitute is available, classes may be combined with another Catechist.

Teaching Procedures – cont.

Visitor Policy

- No one except the priests, DRE, or REO staff is permitted to enter any classroom after classes have started.
- Visitors are not permitted in the classrooms unless special arrangements have been made with the office prior to the visit.
- Parents who wish to visit their child's class should notify the Catechist and the REO first.
- 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.
- The practice of bringing guests to class will be monitored

Guest Speakers

- The DRE must approve guest speakers in the classroom at least one week prior to the class.
- When the guest speaker arrives, they must notify the REO.

Communication with Parents

- Any form letter to parents **must** have the approval of the DRE **before** it is sent home. A copy is to be filed in the Office.
- Parents who wish to meet with catechists are to notify the REO. Such meetings are not to take place during class time.
- By the end of the first semester, parents of students with poor evaluation forms should be contacted to work out a solution to the student's difficulty.
- If sufficient progress is not made in the second semester, the Review Board will convene to render a decision on the matter.

The Review Board consists of:

The Parish Pastor
Director of Religious Education
PSR Administrator
Catechist of the student

Student Evaluation Forms

- Parents of students in grades 1 - 7 will receive an evaluation form twice a year. This Evaluation is intended to provide an insight to parents/guardians of their child's progress toward achieving the faith formation goals set at the beginning of the year.
- Evaluation forms are to be completed and given to the parents/guardians by the last class before Christmas Break, for first semester, and by the last night of classes at year's end.
- The Catechist of any student with a poor evaluation form at the end of the first semester should contact the student's parents (see Communication With Parents).

Weapons Policy

Saint Mary's Church School of Religion 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.

Sexual Harassment & Sexual Violence Policy

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.

Sexual Harassment & Sexual Violence Policy (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.

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