

# ST. JEAN BAPTISTE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

PARENT HANDBOOK - 2016-2017

Fr. John Kamas, SSS - Pastor and Moderator  
Ms. Joan G. Prenty, Coordinator of Religious Education

## **PHILOSOPHY**

“Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you.”

Matt. 28: 18-20

Catechesis, or Religious Education, is the process of communicating the beliefs, values and practices which make people Catholic Christians. It is the work of handing on, from one generation to the next, the faith that has come down to us from the apostles, and the way of life to which that faith calls us.

### **The goal of Catechesis in Grades 1 through 8th is:**

- To teach students what a Catholic believes and how a Catholic ought to live.
- To involve students in the life of the parish, i.e. in worship, service and community.
- To assist parents in imparting the Catholic Faith to their children and to encourage parents to continue their own religious development.

## **THE ROLE OF PARENTS**

**PRIEST:** “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

**PARENTS:** “We do.”  
(Excerpt from the Rite of Baptism of an Infant)

The Catechetical Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their child in the Faith. It can never replace the parents in the carrying out of their responsibility.

It is essential to the child’s growth and development in the Catholic Faith, that the parents live the life of faith in the home. The effectiveness of the catechetical process radically depends upon this.

The Pastor has responsibility for the Catechetical Program and usually entrusts the administration of the Catechetical Program to a parish Director or Coordinator of Religious Education. The pastor has delegated his authority to her/him for the fulfillment of this responsibility. Therefore, communication with parents concerning the participation of their children in the Catechetical Program will ordinarily be done by the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education or the Moderator. Parental cooperation with the parish catechetical staff is essential not only when a problem involving the child arises, but at all times.

### **COMMUNICATION**

A monthly calendar and additional messages will be sent home with the child, or by e-mail. In addition information is provided in the Sunday Bulletin and pulpit announcements.

Parents are not permitted to visit classrooms without the express permission from the office. A parent who wishes to speak to a teacher is requested to do so through the office or before or after class if in the auditorium if he/she is available.

Cell phones are required to be turned off while the student is in class. Upper grade phones will be collected during class.

### **REGISTRATION**

The Parish Catechetical Program is open to registered parish families or families registered in other parishes whose own programs are not convenient.

A parent/guardian must register a child in person for the first time. Registration starts in the Spring. All new students must present their original Baptismal Certificate (and proof of any other sacraments received in the case of transfer students) at time of registration. Transfer students must also get a transcript from their former parish stating years attended and grade completed. Each year parents/guardians must re-register their children either by mailing in the registration or sending it in with the child.

FEES: \$325 1 child  
      \$425 2 children  
      \$525 3 or more children

### **CLASS PLACEMENT**

Children are expected to register for the Religious Education Program in the First Grade. Students preparing to receive the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation must complete two years of instruction before receiving the sacrament.

Students are expected to continue with their religious instructions and complete all grade levels. Religious Education does not end with the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Any student who did not re-register for one year will be handled on an individual basis.

Children who enter the Religious Education program when older may be placed in a special class until sufficient instruction is completed to bring them up to their proper grade level. The length and content of this instruction will be decided on an individual basis by the Director/Coordinator and Moderator.

### **VISITORS**

While classes are in session, adults or any unauthorized people may not enter the classrooms or school property above the first floor.

### **PREPARATION FOR A SACRAMENT**

The preparation for and the celebration of a sacrament is a parish responsibility in which the family of the candidate has an essential role. This preparation is to take place in the parish in which the candidate's family worships.

There are parents' meetings for the first reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. These parent meetings are mandatory. If attendance at one of these parent meetings proves impossible send a guardian, (i.e. Grandparent, Aunt or Uncle). If this is not possible the parent must call prior to the meeting the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education to arrange for an appointment.

Children must have two full years of instruction before receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Religious Education must be ongoing in order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

### **RECONCILIATION**

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) is normally to precede First Eucharist and continue throughout one's Christian formation and life. Reconciliation is to be separate and distinct from preparation for the reception of First Eucharist so that the integrity of each sacrament is maintained. Children have the right to celebrate Reconciliation face to face or anonymously.

Parents/guardians are to be involved in the preparation of their children for Reconciliation by attendance at sacramental preparation meetings, reviewing sacramental material, format and prayer responses, and by respectfully attending services related to the sacrament including the sacramental celebration itself.

Cooperation of parents with us is mandatory. Respect for the celebration of a Sacrament is of foremost importance.

### **HOLY EUCHARIST**

*“For the administration of the Most Holy Eucharist to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity, and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.”*  
(Canon 913)

*“It is the responsibility, in the first place of parents and those who take the place of parents as well as the pastor to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible, preceded by sacramental confession; it is also for the pastor to be vigilant lest any children come to the holy banquet who have not reached the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed.”* (Canon 914)

The child is to have a desire for the sacrament. The child is to be able to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary bread. The child is to know who Jesus is and be aware of the principal events in His life, especially His death and resurrection.

When properly prepared the child is to be invited to receive the Eucharist. (This reception is to be preceded by Sacrament of Reconciliation.)

A child is to be enrolled in an ongoing parish or school Catechetical program at least one year prior to entering into the immediate preparation program for First Eucharist. (Immediate preparation for First Eucharist begins with a specialized curriculum. The child must have completed two years of study in a program in order to fulfill the required instruction for First Holy Eucharist.)

Parents/Guardians have the right and duty to be directly involved in preparing their children for First Eucharist by attendance at sacramental preparation meetings, reviewing sacramental material, format and prayer responses with the child, and by attending services related to the sacrament including the sacramental celebration itself.

### **CONFIRMATION**

Confirmation is first and foremost a Sacrament of Initiation, i.e. a further incorporation after Baptism into the Christian Community.

*“The sacrament of Confirmation impresses a character and by it the baptized, continuing on the path of Christian initiation, are enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit and bound more perfectly to the church; it strengthens them and obliges them more firmly to be witnesses to Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith.”*  
(Canon 879)

*Outside the danger of death to be licitly confirmed it is required, if the person has the use of reason, that one be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew one's baptismal promises."*

*(Canon 889 Art. 2)*

*Canon 890 puts the obligation on shepherds of souls, especially pastors, to ensure that those to be confirmed are properly instructed.*

### THE SPONSOR FOR CONFIRMATION

*"It is for the sponsor to see that the confirmed person acts as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations connected with the sacrament."*

*(Canon 892)*

The procedure of choosing the sponsor will be explained to the student early in the school year by the catechist. The following qualifications are necessary:

- The Sponsor must have completed his/her fourteenth year.
- The Sponsor must be a Catholic who has been confirmed, who has received the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and who leads a life in harmony with the Faith and the role to be undertaken; i.e., be a practicing Catholic.  
(Canon 874 Art. 3)
- The Sponsor is expected to receive the Eucharist at the Ceremony. This implies that if married, the sponsor is married in the Church.
- Parents cannot be sponsors for their children.
- If from another parish, the sponsor must bring a written statement from the pastor of their parish affirming that he/she is a practicing Catholic and qualified to be a Confirmation sponsor.
- It is desirable that the Godparent (the candidate's sponsor at Baptism) also be the sponsor for Confirmation since the responsibilities undertaken by the sponsor at Confirmation are a continuation and development of the sponsor's promises made at the candidate's Baptism. (Canon 693 Art. 2)
- However this not mandatory and someone other than a Baptismal Sponsor may be chosen.
- A Confirmation Sponsor need not be of the same sex as the candidate.

### STUDENT PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION

Many students preparing for Confirmation in the Archdiocese of New York are either in Junior High or High School. This is an age at which a response indicating "proper disposition" should be expected before the reception of the sacrament.

The following guidelines for those asking to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation have as their purpose to elicit proper dispositions and to provide opportunities to the students to express these dispositions.

The candidate requests in writing the Sacrament of Confirmation and gives the reasons for this request. This is done in order to help the maturing student realize that Confirmation like every sacrament demands a personal faith response.

### **DEMONSTRATION OF READINESS FOR SACRAMENTAL RECEPTION**

- By regular participation in Sunday Mass
- Reception of the sacrament includes a basic understanding of the Catholic Faith, the candidate must know their prayers orally.
- By showing openness to grow in faith and Christian service.
- By recognizing that he or she is a unique individual with gifts and is willing to share these with the community.

To help the candidate become better acquainted with the Saint chosen as a Confirmation part, each student will work on a small project in class on the life and qualities of that saint as well as on the reasons for the choice.

Every candidate participates in a retreat arranged by the parish as proximate preparation for the reception of the sacrament.

During each year of preparation for Confirmation, **15 hours**, of voluntary Christian Service will be required. Each candidate is expected to find ways to serve others for which he/she receives no remuneration. This service is to be different from every day chores. A form is to be given to each candidate on which the log of voluntary service is recorded. It will contain the date, time, service and the signature of the recipient of the service. Three areas that this service project will cover are Community, Parish and School. Suggestions for possible areas of service will be provided.

### **CURRICULUM**

The Archdiocese of New York has published Guidelines for Catechesis which ensures a clear and uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level. These guidelines are implemented in all parish Religious Education Programs and parochial schools throughout the Archdiocese.

The following are the themes and objectives as stated in the Guidelines:

**GRADE 1** - God is our Father and loves us. Jesus is the Son of God who tells us about our Father. The Holy Spirit helps us to be holy.

*OBJECTIVE:* To develop an awareness of God who gives life and grace to us, the wonders of creation and the promise of eternal life.

**GRADE 2** - Jesus comes to nourish and strengthen God's life, grace within us.

*OBJECTIVE:* To present Jesus as the model of Christian Living.

**GRADE 3** - Jesus continues His Life and work through His Church.

*OBJECTIVE:* To deepen the child's understanding of the Church as Christian Community.

**GRADE 4** - As God's people, we are called to live as Jesus did, choosing a life of love, characterized by obedience to God and service to others.

*OBJECTIVE:* To help the children form their consciences according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, and to learn the basis of Christian morality especially as taught in the Old and New Testaments.

**GRADE 5** - Through the Sacraments the Church celebrates the life-giving signs of Christ's saving action in our lives.

*OBJECTIVE:* To help the child become a conscious and active member of the Church through an appreciation and celebration of its sacramental life, and to experience and understand the rites of the Sacraments.

**GRADE 6** - God's saving actions are found throughout history. The Bible written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records God's plan of salvation.

*OBJECTIVE:* To understand the Old Testament as the revelation of God in the history of a people, a revelation fulfilled in the New Testament.

**GRADE 7** - The growth and change experienced during adolescence are the unfolding of God's plan for our development as fully Christian persons.

*OBJECTIVES:* To develop a sense of self-worth and self-love nurtured and strengthened by a knowledge of God's love. To develop the young adolescents' self confidence, thus enabling them to internalize their faith and take greater responsibility for personal choices. The gospels reveal Jesus as the Savior and Risen Lord who calls us to advance the Kingdom of God through discipleship.

To broaden the young adolescent's understanding of the Gospels through a study of their formation, themes, message and literary aspects. To help the young adolescent grow in a personal relationship with Jesus by encountering Him in the Gospels and learning to live His message.

Jesus Christ is the Sacrament of God. The mystery of Christ continues



in the Church through the Sacraments which are the visible signs of the love and saving action of Jesus.

To help the young adolescent understand, appreciate, and celebrate the continuing presence and saving action of Jesus in the Church.

To lead the young adolescent to a full and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Prayer is an expression of our awareness of and response to God's presence, goodness and saving power.

To assist the young adolescent to grow in a desire for and appreciation of prayer as integral to a full Christian life.

To help the young adolescent develop the ability to pray through the presentation and experience of a variety of prayer forms.

**GRADE 8** - Developing our relationships with others and with God is essential to our becoming our true selves.

*OBJECTIVES:* To help the young adolescent understand the elements which are essential to developing positive relationships.

To help the young adolescent understand that true community is built on honest, loving and respectful relationships, and that Jesus is the role model for these relationships.

Jesus' life and mission are continued through the Church, the community of believers who are called to be the sign of the Kingdom of God.

To deepen the young adolescent's knowledge of the history of the Church. To lead the young adolescent to a fuller participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Through our relationship with Jesus, we grow in an ever deepening awareness of who God is, who we are, and particularly how God calls us to live. Catholic Christian morality gives direction to our response to God's call.

### **REQUIRED PRAYERS**

**GRADE ONE** Sign of the Cross. Our Father.

**GRADES TWO-FIVE** Sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Our Father and Act of Contrition and Glory Be

**GRADES SIX-EIGHT** Sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Our Father, Act of Contrition, Glory Be and Apostles Creed

### **ONGOING FORMATION**

A child's religious formation is not completed simply because he/she has been confirmed. A deep, lasting relationship with God requires that each one continue to learn both formally and informally the things of God and His Church during the whole of life.