

**Saint Cecilia
Parish Religious Education Program**



**Parent & Participant Handbook
2015-2016**

Saint Cecilia
Parish Religious Education Program
Family Handbook

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The purpose of the handbook is to set forth the guidelines for those that participate in the Saint Cecilia Parish Religious Education Program (PREP). By enrolling your child into our program, you agree to support and abide by the provisions outlined in this handbook. Parents are therefore encouraged to discuss these provisions with their children to ensure that all parties understand the requirements and obligations of their participation in the Parish Religious Education Program.

MISSION STATEMENT

We the people of St. Cecilia Parish, recognize our call to grow as a faith community. Accepting the privilege and the challenge of this call, we envision our parish in the future as a treasure to the spreading of God's kingdom on earth for His greater honor and glory.

- One that creates and nourishes Christian community by its emphasis on the Eucharistic Liturgy as the central focus of parish life, and on the sacramental system as the most powerful means of spiritual growth and continuing conversion of life.
- A community that proclaims the Good News by living out our belief that God is Creator and Father of us all, and we are brothers and sisters to one another.
- A community that teaches the message of Christ by supporting and affirming the ministry of Catholic Education in the school, in the parish religious education program, and through the many avenues of adult education.
- A community that serves those in need by establishing and supporting organizations which reach out as the Incarnational presence of Jesus to the elderly, the lonely, the neglected, the hungry and all those in need.

We realize that this statement is merely the end of the beginning. We pray for God's guidance and strength to continue to respond to this call to be a parish faith community.

Dear Parent / Guardian,

On behalf of Father Bonner, the priests, the catechists, and the staff of Saint Cecilia Church I am happy to welcome you to our Parish Religious Education Program for 2015-2016. We give thanks to God for His many blessings bestowed upon the people of our parish community. The mission statement on the previous page outlines who we are and hope to become as the family of Saint Cecilia Parish. Please read it prayerfully.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of the parent's responsibility of evangelizing their children, beginning at an early age, into the mysteries of the faith. Family catechesis (teaching the faith) precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. (CCC paragraphs #2225, 2226). The Catechism also states that "the parish is the Eucharistic Community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents".

We congratulate you for taking this directive seriously by seeing to your children's faith development at home and here in our parish program.

We know that actions speak louder than words; therefore, we are looking to you as parents and guardians, to nourish within your family a strong sense of Christian living. Family participation at Sunday Mass is most essential to the spiritual development of your children. The practice of family prayer and the generous sharing of your time, talent, and treasure draw us deeper into the life of Christ through His Church.

It is the mission of the parish catechetical staff to assist you in teaching the faith to your children. Catechists follow archdiocesan religion curriculum guidelines and use approved textbooks for each class level.

Working together, our goal is to nurture our children's growth in a personal relationship of love faith, and knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ. With the prayers of our Mother Mary, and the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit, we take up this task with joy.

In Jesus' Love,

Marcia Mason

Marcia Mason

Coordinator of Religious Education

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Parish Religious Education Program seeks to serve all registered members of Saint Cecilia Parish ages five and up who attend public or private non-catholic schools. No student will be denied access to catechesis because of race, national origin, or physical or mental challenges.

Registration Information

Registration will be held in the spring before the end of classes. Parents are asked to promptly re-register their children at this time. Class size, book orders, volunteer catechist and assistant recruitment and training are determined with this information. Registration of new families is accepted at any time. Registration forms are available at the rectory and the PREP office (opposite the rectory door). You may also download them at stceciliafc.org under PREP.

Fees

A yearly fee is requested to cover the cost of books and other consumable materials used by the students. The fee for the current year (2015 – 2016) is \$75.00 for one child and \$150.00 for two or more. Fees may be paid at the time of registration or sent to the Rectory before the start of classes. Checks should be made payable to Saint Cecilia Parish.

Baptismal Certificates

A copy of your child's baptismal certificate is to be submitted the first time he/she is registered for our program. This will be attached to your child's record card. This information is needed when your child receives other Sacraments. If your child was baptized here at Saint Cecilia Parish it is only necessary to provide the correct baptismal date and we will verify the information in the parish register.

Families Registered in another Parish

For a variety of reasons it is sometimes not possible for a child to attend religious education classes at the parish in which the family is registered. If your family is not registered at Saint Cecilia we must have a letter from the pastor of the parish in which you are registered giving permission for your child to attend religious education classes here. This letter will be attached to your child's record card.

First Reception of Sacraments

In conjunction with the recommendation of the Office for Religious Education of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, two years of catechesis are required for the initial reception of the sacraments of **Penance** and **Eucharist**.

In Saint Cecilia Parish these sacraments are *usually* received in the second semester of Level 3. Candidates for these sacraments are expected to be participating weekly in Sunday Mass with their families, and have an appreciation and understanding of the Sacraments, appropriate for their age. They are also required to have satisfactory attendance at classes and to participate in all activities preparatory to the sacraments.

Candidates for **Confirmation** are *usually* 6th Level students who have completed six years of catechesis. Candidates are expected to be participating weekly with their families at Sunday Mass. They are required to have consistent attendance at classes, and participate in all parish activities preparatory to the sacrament. In addition, candidates for Confirmation are expected to volunteer their services for parish, school, community, and family needs, as awareness of their call to take a more active part in the Works of Mercy.

Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation and is therefore a beginning and not an end to religious education. It is expected and most prudent, that students continue their religious education after they have been confirmed.

Candidates for Confirmation must choose a *sponsor* who will help him/her throughout life to fulfill his/her baptismal commitment. The godparent who initially assumed this responsibility in Baptism is an **ideal** choice. The sponsor must be at least sixteen years of age, have received the sacrament of Confirmation, and be an actively practicing Catholic. A **Letter of Eligibility** from the pastor of the sponsor's parish is necessary. In conformity with the 1983 revised **Code of Canon Law** parents may not be sponsors.

Older Children

Children in grade 2 and above who are just beginning their formal religious education will be evaluated and arrangements will be made on an individual basis for their placement. In addition to the class with their peers, these students may need to participate in a tutor program to help them understand and practice their Catholic faith.

Also, a child who returns to the program after an absence of a year or more will be placed in the appropriate level to cover the work missed.

Parents must take a very active part in their children's studies and readiness process especially when there are gaps in formal religious instruction.

Children with Special Needs

Our Parish Religious Education Program provides classes for children of all abilities. Children with cognitive, sensory, physical or social disabilities are welcome and encouraged to attend weekly classes. All children develop at their own pace and at various times need individual attention. We ask parents to please advise us of anything that will help our volunteer catechists make learning easier for your child. Alert us if your child has difficulty seeing, hearing, delayed reading skills, ADD/Hyperactivity, etc.

Children with special needs are individually assessed and will be accommodated to the best of our ability through classroom site selection, catechist, a personal class assistant or parent's presence as needed. With your help, we strive to offer the best Christian learning environment for each child to develop his/her personal relationship with Jesus.

Mass Always Comes First

The Mass is the source of all our graces and teachings and the summit to which the Holy Spirit draws us, namely union with Jesus Christ. Formal religious education classes build on this central act of worship and the teachings contained therein. Therefore all students in Level 2 and up are expected to fully and actively participate in the prayers of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every week. Masses are Saturday 5:30 P.M. Sunday 6:30 A.M., 8:00 A.M., 9:30 A.M., 11:00 A.M., and 12:30 P.M. Parents are asked to help their children learn the basics of church etiquette: blessing self with holy water, genuflecting toward the tabernacle, Mass prayer responses, singing, stewardship, and other aspects of our sacramental worship.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

I. ATTENDANCE

The faith formation received in the program is ongoing in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is imperative that children attend their program sessions regularly.

If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, a parent ***MUST*** complete the following procedures:

1. Call the Religious Education Office at 215-725-2821 to report the absence. Please be sure to leave your child's name, grade level, and the date and reason they will be unable to attend. Excused absences are absences for serious reasons beyond the family's control.
2. If your child will be attending the session late, you must call and notify the PREP office as described in 1 above.
3. If your child fails to report to a session and no phone call is received, then the absence will be recorded as unexcused unless a doctor's note is provided upon returning to the program.
4. After the third unexcused absence in a semester the program coordinator will notify the parents by phone that after school make-up work may be required and/or the participant may not be admitted to the next level of instruction. This proceeding may delay the reception of sacraments.
5. Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to the program. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child's faith formation up-to-date when possible.

II. LATENESS & EARLY PICKUP

Interruptions due to lateness take precious instruction time from all students. It is strongly recommended that children arrive at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled class time. Students who arrive after the classroom door has been closed must report to the Office or to a hall moderator to obtain a late slip.

Early dismissal should be considered an *unusual* occurrence, as it disturbs the whole class. A parent must first report to the Coordinator at the office to give written permission for early pickup and the name of the adult coming for the child. When returning for the child the adult must sign the child out before the child is called from class.

III. ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Participants should arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of a program. All participants are to use the main school door, and follow these procedures:

- Tell the door monitor the name of their teacher. If the teacher has arrived, the child may proceed to the room. If the teacher is detained, the child must wait for an adult to escort the class to the room. At no time are children to go to the classroom if there is no adult present.
- At dismissal all children who have classes on the second and third floor will be escorted to the door by their teacher. Please pick your children up in the designated area (outside of the main doors) Children who have class on the first floor will remain in the classroom to wait for their parent.
- Children must wait inside the building once the cones have been removed.

IV. NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the Parish with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. Saint Cecilia Parish will request these documents in the beginning of the year. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide that document to the Parish immediately.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official and latest copy of the court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

Note: In cases of shared legal custody, we expect cooperation from both parents.

V. DISCIPLINE

The Parish Religious Education Program offered by Saint Cecilia Parish is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching. Our purpose is to help the child learn that he/she must act responsibly toward self, others and other people's property. For repeated disruption in class, a child will be brought to the office. At the discretion of the Coordinator of Religious Education the parent may be contacted regarding the matter.

VI. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In order for a child to learn to be responsible for their relationship with God in the practice of their faith, we begin with the little things.

Each student who has reached the age of reason (seven) shares the responsibility with their parent of full, conscious and active participation in Sunday Mass. Your child depends on you for transportation. Please make this a priority on the weekend and help your child cultivate this good habit.

Each student is responsible to use only appropriate language, especially the use of God's Holy Name. Disrespectful use will not be tolerated.

Each student is responsible to display a Christian attitude and act in a Christian manner respecting all adults, fellow students and the property of the school and others. Disrespect will not be tolerated.

Each student is responsible to prepare for and participate in class, and to bring to class their textbook, folder, homework, prayer cards, and any other material required by the Catechist. Students may not "borrow" any material from a school desk. Crayons, scissors, and glue will be provided by the program for art activities. All belongings should be labeled with the student's name. An \$18 fee will be charged to replace lost books.

Each student is responsible to transport communications in the two-pocket folder given for this purpose. Parents are asked to check these folders weekly for information on their child's class and/or the program.

Each student is responsible to help make sure that their desk and classroom are in good order at the end of class each week.

Each student is responsible to leave food, drinks, gum, toys, and inappropriate personal belongings at home. Cell phones may not be used in class. These items will be taken away and held until dismissal.

VII. ASSIGNMENTS & PROGRESS REPORTS

Catechists have been instructed to give homework assignments on a weekly basis in the form of written work, activities, or study. All students will be given a homework assignment sheet at the beginning of each semester for recording these assignments. Parents are asked to see that their children spend time each week reviewing the material covered in class and that all specific homework assignments are completed.

Students may be given make up work for classes missed. If more than three classes are missed in a semester, after school make up class may be required.

Progress reports will be issued twice a year. The first semester report should be signed and returned the following week.

VIII. SNOW EMERGENCY & CANCELLATIONS

In the event of severe inclement weather, or other urgent reason please listen to KYW radio for closing notification. You may also call the PREP office at 215-725-2821 for a message. You may call the rectory on Sunday morning after 8:30 at 215 – 725 - 1240

IX. COMMUNICATION

1. Calendar

Parents are provided with a yearly calendar at the beginning of the program year. *This calendar is subject to change during the course of the year.* Parents will be notified of changes.

2. Coordinator of Religious Education/Catechist Communication

Parents should feel free to contact the program coordinator regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. Monthly calendars will be sent home (in a student folder) with the youngest/only child. These calendars will keep parents informed as to upcoming events in the parish education program, and the liturgical life of the parish. Specific grade reminders will be sent home periodically. Parents are always welcome to call or visit.

Direct communication with your child's catechist is also a necessary component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to meet with their child's catechist to discuss any concerns or information that will enhance the learning experience. Call the program coordinator to make arrangements to meet or speak with your child's catechist.

PREP office: 215-725-2821

Email: marcia.mason@stceciliafc.org

Appendix A

Inappropriate Behaviors

Prohibiting Harassment, Intimidation, Hazing, or Bullying, etc.

A safe, secure, and respectful educational environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards and build appropriate relationships with others. The St. Cecilia Parish Religious Education Program environment refuses to accept any such behaviors.

Therefore, acts of harassment, hazing, intimidation, and bullying (including cyber bullying and the like) are unacceptable behaviors and are prohibited in our religious education program. The religious education program personnel cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students particularly when students are not under their direct supervision. However, to the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of the religious education program and the rights and welfare of the students and is within the control of the religious education program in its normal operations, it is the St. Cecilia Parish Religious Education Program's intent to prevent bullying and thus, must take action to investigate, respond, discipline, and remediate those acts of bullying. Administration and the catechetical staff are to demonstrate appropriate behavior by treating others with civility and respect and being aware of and not tolerating harassment, intimidation, hazing and bullying, etc. If incidents do occur, students should be able to report and know that the inappropriate behavior will be dealt with promptly and effectively. There will be no retaliation against a victim, reporter or witness.

Policy

Bullying involves actions or words against another for the purpose of inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to a person's reputation that is intimidating or threatening and affects the learning and school environments. The following describes types of bullying but is not an exhaustive list.

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair-pulling, or throwing something
- Getting another person to hit or harm a student
- Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks, or threatening in person or by other means
- Demeaning and making another the victim of jokes
- Making rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting a student
- Intimidating, extorting, or exploiting
- Spreading harmful rumors or gossip

If the bully is threatening harm, a student should tell a catechist, adult volunteer, and/or the Coordinator of Religious Education immediately.

X. FINAL NOTE & THANK YOU

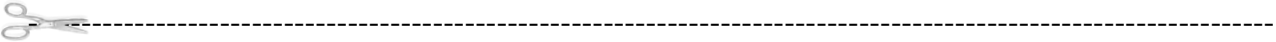
The program coordinator reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.

Thank you for being such wonderful families! May God bless you abundantly!

PARENT SIGNATURE

The Archdiocese has advised us that we need to have each parent’s signature (if possible) on file in our office. We ask you, therefore, to review this handbook as a family and discuss responsibilities with your child.

Please print your name and phone number below, sign and return the bottom portion of this page for our records. Also, indicate any unusual custody situations concerning the pick-up of your child.



Print Last Name:

_____ **Family**

I (We) have read the Handbook and discussed the appropriate parts with my child. I (We) will work with my child to review the lessons taught, bring my child to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and engage in acts of charity as a family.

Unusual custody situations concerning pick-up of my child:



Signature: _____ Print Name _____

Signature _____ Print Name _____

Date _____