



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST. ANN

PREP

45 Anderson Street, Raritan, NJ 08869
Parish Office: 908-725-1008 • Fax: 908-707-1915
www.stannparish.com

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Attached is The Catholic Church of St. Ann - Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) Parent Handbook for 2019-2020.

Please read the entire Parent Handbook, so that you will have a better understanding of how we can work together to help your child(ren) have a safe and pleasant experience while growing in their faith and drawing closer to Jesus.

Please sign this contract and return it to the Director of Religious Education by **Friday, September 20th**.



THIS HANDBOOK HAS BEEN REVISED, SO PLEASE TAKE TIME TO READ CAREFULLY.

I have read this Parent Handbook and agree to abide by the directives of the Parish Religious Education Program of The Catholic Church of St. Ann, described herein, to the best of my ability.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature(s) _____

Print Name(s) _____

Date _____

Child(ren) Name(s) _____

Email contact _____

The Catholic Church of St. Ann

2019 – 2020



PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

FOR

PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PARENT HANDBOOK

2019 – 2020



**The Catholic Church of St. Ann
45 Anderson St.
Raritan, New Jersey 08869**

MISSION STATEMENT

The ultimate goal of our Religious Education Program is to lead the children, young adults and adults of our parish to love the Person of Jesus Christ and to understand and to appreciate the salvation and the new life of grace that He won for us. Through the power, grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit we strive to lead everyone to a life of prayer and communion with our God that shows itself in service to others who are in need. We reaffirm our deep love for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and an appreciation for the Healing and Forgiving Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance. It is our desire to nurture all with the richness of our Catholic Faith, which has been revealed as true through Scripture and Tradition.

Parents/Guardians, congratulations! You have enrolled your child(ren) in a Roman Catholic Religious Education Program at The Catholic Church of St. Ann. This program teaches the doctrine of the Catholic Church, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

PURPOSE OF THE PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to provide assistance to the parents/guardians in making our Religious Education Program a vehicle of quality Christian education. Parents/Guardians are responsible to read and carry out the guidelines provided in these pages to the best of their ability. To meet this objective, the Administration (Pastor and DRE) are given the flexibility and the ability to exercise discretion. In appropriate circumstances, the Administration has the discretion to take actions other than those specified in the Handbook.

The agreement on the cover letter of this handbook MUST BE SIGNED and RETURNED to the Religious Education Office with your child by Friday, September 20th.

Thank you for entrusting your child(ren) to us. It is a privilege to share with you in the spiritual formation of your child(ren).

Rev. Tom Odorizzi, C.O.
Pastor

Sr. Phyllis Vella, MPF
Director of Religious Education

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

The policy of the Parish Religious Education Program of The Catholic Church of St. Ann is determined by the Diocese of Metuchen Office of Catechesis, the Pastor and the Director of Religious Education. The established policy is communicated through this Parent Handbook. This Handbook is subject to change at any time when determined necessary by the Administration. If changes are made to the Handbook, parents/guardians will be notified promptly.

EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

Children are expected to participate at weekly Sunday Mass, as well as the Religious Education classes. Parents/Guardians are responsible for bringing their child(ren) to the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist regularly. To avoid this responsibility of weekly Mass attendance hinders any training that can be gained through Religious Education classes, since liturgy feeds the faith and enables our young people and ourselves to better understand/experience what they are learning and develop a relationship with God.

COLLABORATION WITH CATECHISTS

For Catholic parents, the mission to catechize is rooted in the Sacrament of Marriage, which consecrates them for the Christian education of their children. "This sacrament enriches them with wisdom, counsel, fortitude, and all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to help the children in their growth as human beings and as Christians". (On the Family, Pope John Paul II, 1981, 38) By virtue of this sacrament, parents are the primary educators of their children. By enrolling your children in our Religious Education Program, you are asking us to assist you in that process by providing a foundation in Church teachings and morals.

Therefore, parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate with their child's catechist throughout the program so that a collaborative effort may be made, each supporting the other in providing a foundation in Roman Catholic doctrine and morals. Together, you are to fulfill the mandate Christ gave His followers to "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 obey everything I have commanded you." (*Matthew 28:19-20*)

BIBLES/TEXTBOOKS/RESOURCES USED

Loyola Press:	Christ Our Life Series	Grade 1 – 7
Our Sunday Visitor	Call to Celebrate Reconciliation	Grade 2
	Call to Celebrate Eucharist	
Dynamic Catholic	Blessed	Grade 2
Dynamic Catholic	Decision Point	Grade 8

Young people may be given a Catholic Teen Bible in Grade 7 for use throughout their continuing years of Catholic education. Replacement fee for lost bibles is \$30.00. Replacement of lost textbooks will cost \$30.00. Young people are required to bring their textbooks each week to class.

REGISTRATION

The Program forms may be obtained on the Parish website: www.stannparish.com under Faith Formation/Religious Education. Re- Registration will begin in March through in person registrations, mailing and emailing. Registration Fees are an annual per child fee payable at registration. After June 30th additional fees will be added as stated on Registration forms.

No refunds will be granted once a child is registered for the Religious Education Program.

SCHEDULE OF PREP CLASSES

Check Church website: www.stannparish.com

(classes are located in St. Ann School)

Monday 6:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Thursday 6:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Thursday 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. (Special Needs)

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

For the safety of your children, we ask your full cooperation in the following method for drop-off and pick-up of the children for The Catholic Church of St. Ann - PREP Program.

Drop-Off/Pick-Up

All drop-off and pick-up of our young people will be done **by entering and exiting** the school building from the **rear parking lot** of school. Cars are never permitted in the playground area closest to the school building.

DOUBLE PARKING IS PROHIBITED in front of St. Ann School and Church areas.

Children will enter the building and gather in assigned areas of the cafeteria. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to remain until Catechists pick up their class. Classes will report back to the cafeteria for dismissal where Parents/Guardians are to meet their child(ren) and exit the building using the doors leading to the rear parking lot of the school building.

Parent/Guardian supervision of your child(ren) must be for entering/exiting the building. Catechists are responsible for directing classes to the designated areas for Drop-Off/Pick Up. Should you have a specific situation and need that prevents you from accompanying your child(ren), please notify the Director whereby a Walking Permission Slip must be completed and on record or other arrangements made for your situation.

No child or parent will be allowed to enter the building through the front doors. Cooperation is essential to the safety of all involved. Should anyone have a specific circumstance for this entry, it should be brought to the attention of the Administration.

Please drive slowly!

We ask your kind cooperation, please!

Drop-Off/Pick-Up

(PREP sessions with attendance at Mass)

There are scheduled times for PREP sessions to include children attending and participating in Mass. The children will move to church about 10 minutes before the beginning of Mass. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to attend. Should there be a change in this schedule, families will receive notification and revised schedule.

Children will be dismissed after Mass from the cafeteria (gathering area). Once the classes have arrived in the cafeteria, children are to be escorted by a designated adult or older sibling for pickup and no one should be taking children before their arrival to the cafeteria or having children walk/run to their car unattended without parent/guardian supervision.

Should anyone have a specific circumstance other than this procedure, parent/guardian should address their situation to the attention of the Administration – (Pastor and Director)

NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Children in our Religious Education Program are encouraged to be respectful, caring individuals. Honesty, fairness, courtesy and cooperation are encouraged in order to prepare children for present and future relationships.

Recognizing that each child is a unique creation and gift of the Father, with special talents and capabilities, we encourage our young people to discover their uniqueness as children of God.

A partnership between catechists and parents/guardians creates an atmosphere, which has a strong positive influence on the child. Careful listening and mutual respect set the foundation for sincere and meaningful communication.

Above all, the parents/guardians and catechists must keep in mind that “it is ultimately not their efforts, but the interaction of God’s grace and human freedom which leads people to accept faith and respond to it.”

(National Catechetical Directory, 213)

Like the sower that scatters the seed, catechists plant the kernel of the Good News in the minds and hearts of their class, while it is God Who gives the yield in due time. This vital work for the sake of the Kingdom of God does not go unnoticed. Jesus reminds us “Whoever fulfills and teaches these commands shall be great in the Kingdom of God.”

(Matthew 5:19)

DISCIPLINE

Inappropriate behavior, lack of effort, or poor attitude on the part of the child will result in the young person:

- being talked with privately by his/her catechist
- having a conference with the Director of Religious Education
- parent/guardian being telephoned with situation being discussed
- request for conference with parent(s)/guardian(s) and child(ren)

If the difficulty persists, the young person will be withdrawn from the program until alternative solutions are worked out with the catechist, parent/guardian, child and Director of Religious Education and Pastor. If the young person continues in the program, a method of on-going evaluation will be put into effect.

ATTENDANCE

We expect perfect attendance for Religious Education classes. A child’s absence from class should be for reasons of illness, death in the family or some other emergency only.

Parents/Guardians should call or email the Religious Education Office and inform them when there is going to be an absence. If no call or email, families must give a written excuse for absence upon returning to class. These will be kept on file.

* No more than three excused absences will be allowed per year. This is a Diocesan regulation. Sports and other extracurricular activities are not acceptable excuses for absence from class.

There will be a warning sent home after two absences. If a third absence occurs, your child will be removed from the program and need to repeat the current grade the following year unless other alternatives can be agreed upon based on reasons for absences. Each situation will be evaluated by the Administration.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

The decision for an emergency closing will be made by the Pastor and/or the Director of Religious Education. We are in session unless you receive notification by the instant alert program of Honeywell and/or email. If regular school is cancelled due to inclement weather, Religious Education/PREP will ALWAYS be canceled that evening. Be sure to have updated phone numbers and emails on Honeywell Forms throughout the Program year.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The Diocese of Metuchen requires participation in a two-year Sacramental Preparation Program prior to the reception of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion (Grades 1-2) and the Sacrament of Confirmation (Grades 7-8). There are parent/guardian meetings for each sacrament. These meetings are **REQUIRED**. Please make sure that at least one parent or another adult representative attend. If you as parent/guardian show how important your faith is to you, then your children will learn how important it should be to them.

Please keep your calendar handy for references and keeping track of all required activities for both Parent/Guardian and Candidates for each Sacrament.

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE/RECONCILIATION

Parents/Guardians are requested to take their child(ren) to the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation on a regular basis. Parish Confessions are available on Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. in Church. Children will have an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Christmas and Easter. Parents/Guardians are requested to review the Examination of Conscience and the formula for Confession with their children to help prepare them to receive the mercy and love of God in this Sacrament.

SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

Children are expected to participate at weekly Sunday Mass, as well as the Religious Education classes.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for bringing their children to the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly and the Sacrament of Holy Communion weekly.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

During the two-year Sacramental preparation program, the Candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation must participate in stewardship events provided throughout the year. Reflective questions for the family and interview questions for the Candidate will provide a chance to grow in faith as well as discerning their desire for the Sacrament of Confirmation. A folder may be maintained and be presented when they have their interview and write Letters of Intent.

This folder must contain the following items:

- Stewardship (Service, Works of Charity, etc.)
- Reflective Questions used for Letter of Intent and Interview
- Letter of Intent
- Forms provided during the sacramental program
- Saint Report/Project and Journal Reflections
- Program Classes and Sessions set up for Sacrament Preparation and Formation

The Retreat Day for Candidate is **REQUIRED**. Sports events and programs, family vacations and other school functions, etc. will **NOT BE CONSIDERED EXCUSED REASONS** for missing the respective retreat experiences. The only excused reasons that would be considered are a severe illness (a doctor's notice would be required, or a death in the family).

FIRE DRILLS

Catechists will review fire drill procedures with their class. The Catechist will lead their children to the nearest exit and wait outside the building for further instructions. Catechists are required to take their Attendance Registers outside the building with them to account for each person present.

POLICY FOR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

The Diocese of Metuchen directs that if a Catechist/Director suspects a child has been abused, the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) be notified immediately, in compliance with New Jersey statutes.

Any information which leads a Catechist to believe that a young person intends to harm himself/herself requires the Catechist to notify authority. If a young person asks to speak confidentially to a Catechist, the Catechist should advise the person that information will be shared if he/she is in danger of suicide, self-inflicted harm, etc. Volunteer Catechists are legally responsible.

CUSTODIAL STATUS

The Catholic Church of St. Ann PREP abides by the provision of applicable law with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. If there is a court order specifying the rights and responsibilities of individual parents, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide The Catholic Church of St. Ann Parish Office with an official copy of the court order.

DRUGS

Drugs are not allowed on premises. If a child is found to be in possession of drugs, the child will be detained while police and parents are notified. Catechists have been directed not to send a child home with a driver who is visibly impaired. The Director of Religious Education reserves the right to call an emergency number.

MEDICATION & ALLERGIES POLICY

Catechists do not administer any medication. If your child is taking medication, which would affect the child's participation, please notify the Director of Religious Education.

Please notify the Catechist and Director of Religious Education of **any allergies** that your child may have (i.e. food, hay fever, etc.) and in turn the Catechist will notify the Administration of any updated health issues and concerns.

NO FOOD POLICY

To keep the school clean and to protect children who have food allergies, children attending Religious Education classes are not allowed eating of food inside of St. Ann School. Any snacks must be finished before entering the building. Water bottles are not permitted. Water fountains are available inside the school. Please alert the Director of Religious Education and Catechist of any medical necessity that would be considered an exception to the above policy.

NO GUM CHEWING OR SNACKS ALLOWED.

SCHOOL PROPERTY

St. Ann School is our parish school, for our parochial students who attend daily, and our young people in our Religious Education Program. Every effort is to be made to respect the school property of the teachers and children who utilize the building on a daily basis. **Disrespect of property, vandalism and stealing are serious offenses, and will have serious consequences, including, but not limited to, suspension from the program.**

HOMEWORK

Homework may be given to classes. It is included in the overall assessment of your child's progress. Please set aside an hour each week to review the current lesson, prayers and homework assignments. Thank you for your help in this matter.

TESTS

Tests may be given by the individual Catechist. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to review lessons to ensure that the vocabulary and doctrines are well understood by their children.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES USAGE

Diocesan Policy for Parish Religious Education Program – PREP

Electronic Devices may be brought to a Parish Religious Education Program under the following conditions:

1. Phones and electronic devices **MUST** be kept in the OFF position and kept out of sight for the entire duration of any and all parish religious educational activities including, but not limited to religious education classroom instruction, class trips, retreats, prayer experiences, liturgies, etc. and may be reused upon exiting these areas or directed otherwise by person in charge.
2. The use of cell phones and electronic devices for picture taking, harassment or threats is *prohibited* at all times.
3. The use of cell phones and electronic devices to access the internet, email, have conversations, text, game play, gamble or make purchases of any kind is *prohibited* at all times.
4. No communication devices are allowed including iPods, MP3 players, or other forms of technology.
5. Those who violate any of the rules regarding cell phones or other devices will forfeit their privilege of bringing these devices to religious education/formation program/activities.

Should anyone have a specific circumstance other than this procedure, parent/guardians should address their situation to the attention of the Administration (Pastor/Director).

CATECHISTS/VOLUNTEER STAFF

Our “faculty” is comprised of volunteers from our parish family. Some Catechists are teachers by profession, while others come from varied professions and occupations. Many of them have families very much like your own. In-service programs provide Catechists with the necessary training, guidance, and support to serve our young people. Our Catechists are encouraged to attend Diocesan workshops and presentations to strengthen their faith and enhance their skills. Our Catechists are committed to their faith and have a strong desire to share it with our young people of the parish.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT – Parents/Guardians are encouraged to participate in the program as catechists, aides, substitute, hall monitors - training provided as needed in these areas.

Our Catechists and other volunteers must be certified by the Diocese of Metuchen by being fingerprinted and completing the three-hour workshop of Protecting God's Children. You can go to www.virtus.org for more information regarding this program.

Stay connected to the Parish website: www.stannparish.com for faith formation and activities in the parish as well as PREP information (found under the Faith Formation/Religious Education tab).

The Religious Education Office for PREP is currently located in The Catholic Church of St. Ann Parish Office.

Parish Office: 908-725-1008

Email: pvella@stannparish.com