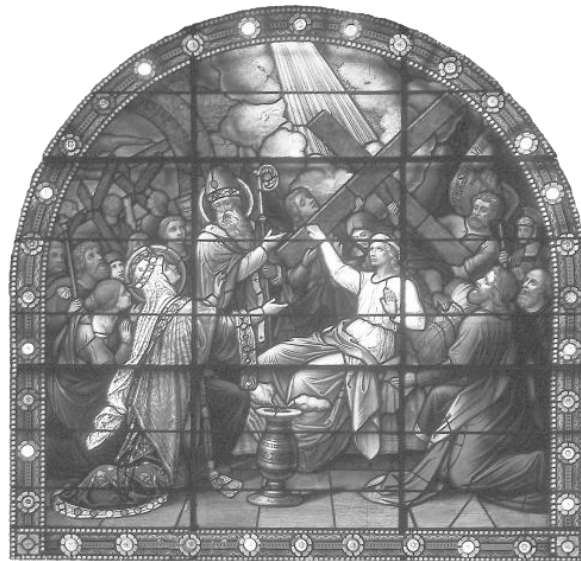


Holy Cross Church

Office of Religious Education

Parent Handbook



Dear Parents/Guardians,

The unpredictability of our present circumstances and the guidance we are receiving indicates that returning our program to 100% pre-covid normal is highly unlikely. The fact that we share space with a fully functioning catholic school and the unlikely hood of seeing childhood vaccination come to fruition makes holding in person classes very complicated both practicality and financially. As of right now the program will be the same as last year. If the situation keeps improving, we are hoping to offer a hybrid model for 1st & 2nd, 7th & 8th grade sacrament programs as well as in-person Faith and Culture opportunities for our students in grades 3 to 6.

Office of Religious Education

(July 2021)

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Mission Statement

The Office of Religious Education is dedicated to assisting parents, the primary educators of their children, in the nurturing and development of their children's faith. We are committed to instructing our students in the teachings of the Catholic Church and to strengthen and deepen their Christian beliefs and practices.

Policies & Procedures

In order to achieve consistency as well as to avoid misunderstanding, we present the following statements of expectations, policies, and procedures regarding the Religious Education Program here at Holy Cross for students enrolled in our program. Please read and share this info with your child(ren). Please keep this information in a place where you can refer to it as needed.

REGISTRATION

Families new to the parish and /or families who wish to enroll children in the program for the first time must contact the Office of Religious Education to register. *Re-registration of currently enrolled students will be facilitated "online."*

ENROLLMENT

In keeping with the guidelines established by the Diocese of Trenton students are required to attend religious education classes continuously from first through eighth grade. Faith formation takes place in developmental sequences and skipping years does not allow for adequate faith formation. Children who miss a grade level of their formation will be required to make-up that formation year before moving to the next grade level.

COMMUNICATION

The primary means of communication with parents/guardians will be facilitated by email.
Please notify the office immediately if your email address changes.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

If it is necessary to cancel religious education classes because of inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances volunteer staff and parents will be notified by email.

Catechetical Sessions

Sacramental Preparation Grades 1 & 2 and 7 & 8 *Remote Learning (2021-2022)*

Grades 1 & 2 Sundays (weekly) 9:00 – 10:15 AM.

Grades 1 & 2 Tuesdays (weekly) 4:00 – 5:15 PM contingent upon our filling the following positions: *Catechists, adult and teen classroom aides, substitute teachers and hall/safety monitors.*

Grade 7 - First Year Confirmation prep - Mondays (twice a month) 6:30 – 8:15 PM.

Grade 8 - Second Year Confirmation prep - Sundays (once a month) 4:15 – 8:00 PM.

Options Grades 3 to 6 for 2021-2022

- 1) At-Home Online Learning

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS for PARENTS

The Parish Religious Education Program builds on the faith formation at home. As parents, the promise you made at your child(ren)'s Baptism to raise your children in the faith is fulfilled by your active participation in your child's religious education are fulfilling the promise you made at their baptism to train your child(ren) in the faith.

Active participation in your child(ren)'s faith formation includes:

- **Attending Mass every week with your child(ren) as a family.** It is virtually impossible to expect a religious education program to succeed if the central act of worship is ignored. Attendance at class and Mass is very important. Religion Education Classes are NOT a substitute for Mass. Parents are responsible for working with their children on their Mass Reflection Sheets and making sure reports are submitted in on time.
- **Getting your child(ren) to class each week and on time!** The time you have set aside for religious education is the priority over all other activities.
- Making sure your **child(ren) come to class with their required Textbook and Materials.** We suggest that parents provide for their child(ren) a string bag, tote or back pack for their religious education books and materials needed for class. If a book is lost, parents will be responsible to purchase another book for \$20.
- Reviewing and discussing each session's lesson with your child(ren) thus, extending the lessons learned in the classroom throughout the week.
- Work with your child(ren) to learn by heart their prayers and participate with your children in the life of our Parish Community; Working with your child(ren) to complete any homework assignments as well study and prepare to pass tests/assessments.
- Reviewing the Religious Education Program Policies, Rules and Regulations with your child(ren). Students are expected to obey the program policies, rules and requirements

VOLUNTEERS

Parental involvement is the key to the success of the Religious Education Program. It helps you know more about your own faith and encourages your child by showing you value Religious Education enough to give your gifts, time and effort. We encourage all parents to help out in some way. We are always in need of catechists, classroom aides, substitute teachers, and hall monitors. VIRTUS training and fingerprinting are mandated by the Diocese. We provide teacher training, materials and support.

ATTENDANCE

Our Catholic faith is a “way of life.” Regular attendance is very important for your child’s spiritual and moral development and enables them to enter into a greater understanding and relationship with God. By getting your child(ren) to class each week you are validating the importance you place on their religious education.

- Parents are expected to take great consideration in planning activities around their child’s scheduled class times.
- All students are expected to attend ALL sessions in accordance with the Diocesan requirements for classroom instructional time. It is difficult for a child to learn if they are not in class. A student who misses a class misses a valuable lesson that cannot be entirely recovered. Three excused absences (Grades 1 to 6) will be granted for illness or family emergency only (NOT sports, dance or activities). A physician’s note may be required.

REPORTING AN ABSENCE

- **If your child is unable to attend class, it is required that the parent/guardian call the Office of Religious Education to report the absence and the reason for the absence.**
- Students with the help of their parents will be required to make up the missed lesson.
- Students with an excessive number of absences may not be prepared to move on to the next level and thus required to repeat the year. During a Sacrament year, excessive absences may result in a student not being prepared to make their sacrament. In the case of prolonged illness, a physician’s note will be required. Please let us know if your child has health problems or there is a serious family situation so that we can assist you and be there for you.
- **No late arrivals or early dismissals allowed.** A student arriving late for class or leaving early not only disrupts the classroom but results in the student missing valuable lesson time. Parents of students who are frequently arriving late or leaving early will be asked to make a time to meet and discuss their child’s attendance.
- If it is necessary for a child to leave before the scheduled end of class time, the Office of Religious Education must be **notified in advance** from the parent/guardian requesting that the child be dismissed and the time he/she will be picked up and by whom. Students must be in class a minimum of 45 minutes to get credit. In the case of a child falling ill during class time the Office will call the Parent to come pick up their child.
- **Sunday & Tuesday Session’s Grades 1 to 6:** We ask that the parent/guardian picking up a child go to the **center doors of the school.** **Parent/Guardian will sign out their child.** A staff member will bring the student to the faculty room and their parent/guardian.

SACRAMENTS

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

Preparation to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharist in the second grade is a two-year formation process. Students are required to have completed at least one year of religious education in preparation to receive Reconciliation and Eucharist for the first time.

Confirmation

The formation process to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church is a six-year formation process that begins in the third grade and culminates with the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation in the spring of the eighth grade year. Parents will receive specific dates, expectations and requirements regarding each of the two formation years.

In keeping with the guidelines established by the Diocese of Trenton, students are required to have attended religious education classes continuously from first through eighth grade to be considered for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

All grade levels of religious education are important, each assisting the child to grow in deeper knowledge of God, an awareness of the responsibilities as a disciple of Jesus and member of the Catholic parish community and Church. Students must also possess knowledge of the faith including the Commandments & Beatitudes, Sacraments, Scripture, the Church, worship, prayer and Catholic Christian Service.

Students who drop out of Religious Ed after First Communion will need to complete courses for all grade levels they have missed to be confirmed in the spring of their 8th grade year.

CURRICULUM

MASS

Our Religious Education Program incorporates into our curriculum at all levels, a method of catechesis that brings together the classroom lesson and the Sunday Mass experience. Each week time is dedicated to listening to the Gospel, and reflecting on the “Good News” through discussion. This time also provides an opportunity for the class to share their worship experience.

As a family, take time each week before and after Mass to talk about the Gospel message as well as the ways in which the entire family can share the love of God and live the Gospel in the home, school and community.

The most important thing we do as Catholics is to participate at mass on a weekly basis. The Mass is about Praising God and giving thanks. The Mass is a school for prayer. At every Mass the readings, homily and the prayers of the Mass provide us with wonderful lessons in our faith!

As part of their faith formation curriculum, students with the help and direction of their parents will complete and submit a “Mass Reflection Form” on any 8 Masses they attend at Holy Cross Church. The four first semester reports (September – December) will be due in December. Four second semester reports (January – April) will be due in April.

CATHOLIC FAMILY LIFE Curriculum

RCL Benziger Family Life and *Growing with God-Loyola Press* are comprehensive moral catechesis adopted by the Diocese of Trenton for all Religious Education Programs and Catholic Schools. Catholic Family Life Curriculum offers support for parents to pass on the teachings of the Church, as well as moral, virtue and safety education to their family.

To assist parents in teaching their children good decision-making in light of the Church's teachings on faith and morals we will provide age appropriate lessons for parents to complete with their children at home.

TESTING

Students in grades 3 to 7 will be tested on the essential beliefs of the Catholic Faith and traditional Catholic prayers. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure their children are prepared to complete and pass their tests. Please work with your child(ren) to learn the required prayers for their grade level.

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS

The unpredictability of our present circumstances and the guidance we are receiving indicates that returning to Traditional Classroom learning this coming year is highly unlikely. The fact that we share space with a fully functioning catholic school and the unlikely hood of seeing childhood vaccination come to fruition makes holding in person classes very complicated both practicality and financially. Grades 3 to 6 will learn via the Online Home Study Program MCFD. If the situation keeps improving, we hope to offer a hybrid model for 1st & 2nd and 7th & 8th Sacrament preparation classes as well as in-person Faith & Culture opportunities for students in grades 3 to 6.

TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM LEARNING GRADES 1 TO 6

To complete their year of Faith Formation Traditional Classroom Students are required to:

- Attend Mass each week on Saturday or Sunday.
- As part of their faith formation curriculum, students with the help and direction of their parents will complete a "*Mass Reflection Form*" on Masses they attend at Holy Cross Church. Four first semester reports (for September to December) will be due in December. Four second semester reports (for January to March) will be due the beginning of April.
- Attend ALL class sessions. Three excused absences granted for illness or family emergency only (not sports, dance or activities). In the case of illness, a physicians' note will be required and make-up work will be assigned by the Office.
- Be on time for class. No late arrivals or early dismissals permitted.
- Parents are required to report an absence to the Office of Religious Education prior to the beginning of class.
- Bring required books, materials to class each week.
- Come to class with a good attitude ready to learn.
- Pass their tests (80%) on essential beliefs, doctrines and prayers – Grades 3 -6
- Complete any required Home Work Assignments.
- Family Life: as part of their faith formation curriculum, Parent & child completes and submits favorite UNIT with Mass Reports by the end of year deadline.

- **To successfully complete their year of Faith Formation students are required to:**
 - Complete the online Curriculum by the course deadline;
 - Complete all online chapters with a minimum of 20 /30 minutes per chapter.
 - Demonstrate mastery of the material by scoring a Best Score of 80% chapter and unit tests;
 - Attend Mass and two Holy Cross Parish Faith & Culture events with family;
 - Work together as a family to complete (8) Mass Reports on Masses attended at Holy Cross and a Faith & Culture Report on each of the two parish events they attended with their family;
 - Family Life Curriculum: Parent & child completes and submits favorite unit by course deadline.
 - Submit Mass Reflections & Faith & Culture reports to the Office of Religious Education by the course deadline.
 - All work must be completed as required for a student to move up to the next grade level.

POLICIES, RULES AND PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL

Parents and students are to use the Main Doors of the School. Parents can either park and walk their child into the school or drop their child(ren) off by the Main doors.

DISMISSAL

- Parents are to park and come into the school to pick up their child(ren).
- Students will remain seated in their classroom until their parent comes for them.
- NO student will be allowed to leave the school unless they are with their parent/guardian. At dismissal time the doors will unlock for parents to enter the school and pick up their child(ren).
- We must be informed in writing if a child is to be picked up by someone other than his/her parent/guardian. This includes car pools.

NO FOOD POLICY

- Parents – **DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD(REN) TO CLASS HUNGRY!** Make sure they have something to eat before they come to class.
- Unless there is a medical notification **NO FOOD or DRINK of any kind** is permitted to be brought into the school at any time! This includes candy and GUM!

ITEMS TO LEAVE AT HOME!

Students are not permitted to bring toys, stuffed animals, spinners, ipods, or sports equipment of any kind to class! This includes skateboards.

CELL PHONES

- We suggest that students leave their cell phones at home. If a student needs to call their parents, they can request to use the school phone.
- IF a child must carry a cell phone it must be turned off and out of sight in a pocket, backpack etc. Use of a cell phone during class will result in the cell phone being confiscated and parents will be called.

SAFETY

- For the safety of all the children please drive slow, refrain from talking on your cell phone and be aware of parents and children crossing through the parking lot.
- For the safety of our students and teachers, the doors of the school are pre-programmed to lock and unlock. The Main Entrance to the School will automatically lock down 10 minutes after class begins. Doors will unlock at dismissal time.
- While we would love to welcome visitors, there are legal as well as other issues that prevents us from doing so. During class time only authorized CCD staff will be allowed in the building. ***Please do not send children who are not enrolled in the program with your child on any day.***

Please help us make these procedures as safe and easy as possible for all concerned.

Holy Cross Religious Ed Discipline Code

As Christians, we are committed to live by the example of Jesus Christ. This commitment includes each student's acceptance of responsibility for his/her actions.

Students who are disruptive disturb the learning atmosphere in the classroom and infringe on the rights of all. All students are expected to show consideration and respect for their catechist and classmates and refrain from any behavior that would prevent learning or cause injury. Our discipline code is meant to ensure a safe and peaceful learning environment for all our students. Students in grades 4 to 6 will be required to read and sign the Program's Zero Tolerance Form.

It is important to consider that our staff, catechists and volunteers are volunteering their time and talents to teach the faith to your children. They deserve the utmost respect for all of their efforts. They are not expected to cope with discipline problems. It is essential that we maintain an atmosphere in which the students can form a community of faith and to learn.

Students are expected to:

- Strive to act in a manner that makes them proud of themselves
- Respect and obey adults in authority as well as fellow students
- Respect the space and personal property of others including that of Holy Cross school students
- Respect the space and personal property of others including that of Holy Cross School.
- Be courteous in speech and mannerisms.
- Cooperate with program and classroom policy and rules.
- Exercise control in dealing with others

The following infractions/behaviors include, but are not limited to the following, and are all sufficient reasons for a student to be held back or dismissed from the program.

1. Disregard for program or classroom rules,
2. Disrespect to teachers, volunteer staff and/or fellow students.
2. Rude or inappropriate behavior or language.
3. Disruption in the classroom or outside during arrival or dismissal
4. Consistent lack of cooperation,
5. Negative attitudes
6. Refusal to participate in class or complete assignments.
7. Use of cell phone/texting during class,
8. Disrespect/destruction of another student's property or school property.

Parents may be asked to pay for property damage caused by their child.

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY: the following behaviors will be taken seriously and will be investigated and reported depending on the severity of the incident.

- Violence/fighting during, coming to or going home from CCD
- Possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons
- Any form of social cruelty including bullying, hitting, constant teasing, name calling etc.
- Threats either written, verbal, internet or physical harm from one student to another.

In the event a student engages in inappropriate behavior, any or all of the following may occur:

- a. First Infraction: verbal warning will be issued. If necessary, a call will be made to the students' parent/guardian. ***Depending on the gravity of the infraction the Pastor may be informed.
- b. Second Infraction: Student will be sent to the office. Parent will be called.
- c. Third Infraction: Student will be sent to the office. Parents will be called. A meeting between parents, catechist and Director of Religious Education will be scheduled.
- d. If the behavior problem persists a meeting with parents will be scheduled to discuss alternatives for their child's religious education and/or permanent dismissal from the program.

