

St. Jerome Church

Philadelphia, PA

Religious Education Handbook 2021-2022



Theme 2021-2022

Walking with Jesus in virtue.

Dear St. Jerome Families,

It is a joy for me to welcome you to our Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) at St. Jerome Parish. Together, we are partners in educating your child in the Catholic faith. Thank you for the trust and confidence you place in us.

Jesus said "let the children come to me." In God's love, you have brought your child to life and have accepted our invitation to assist you in the faith formation of your child. Our PREP program can communicate information and provide experiences for celebrating the sacraments, but the practice and example of you living out the faith is of equal importance.

"The soul of education is the education of the soul." These words of Pope John XXIII remind us that while it is important that we teach our children reading, writing and arithmetic; it is equally important to teach them about the things of God and the Spirit.

This is the goal of our Program and it is the importance of the religious education of your children. Scripture tells us that "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Our invocation of the Lord depends on our knowledge of Him. But how can we know unless we are taught?

Saint Jerome's Prep and others like it throughout the Archdiocese provide the venue through which and in which our youth are brought to the knowledge of the eternal truths. We are grateful for our catechists and volunteers who answer the baptismal call to be the teachers of your children in the ways of faith. May God bless and prosper our work.

May we continue to strive together to build up the Kingdom of God in this time and place!

God Love Ya!

Fr. Reilly



Dear Parents,

Welcome! This year's theme is "Walking with Jesus in Virtue". Throughout the year, the virtues will be studied, prayed, and practiced by all of us so that we can live more virtuous lives. Cultivating virtue provides a rich foundation for fostering faith at home and in the parish community.

The summer week of the program begins with Mass on June 13th at 9:30 AM. The catechists will be commissioned and our families will receive a blessing. Instruction is June 14th through and including June 18th. It is essential the children attend all the days of instruction during that week from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. The year continues with faith sharing at home, Sunday family formation sessions, and family selected devotional and service activities. The parent orientation meeting is **Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 6:45 pm in the Church**. An adult representative from each family is asked to attend.

We have very high expectations for the newly designed program, however no program can ever replace the central role of parents as "the principal and first educators of their children" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, No 1653*). It is because of your irreplaceable importance in your child's faith formation that family activities are incorporated in the program. Please read through the entire handbook so that you understand the expectations before enrolling. Your parish staff is very excited about the new program and hope that it helps all of us grow closer to God.

Please complete and return the registration form which is on the website or obtain a form from the rectory. Please return by **Tuesday, April 13, 2021**. If you are a new family or a returning family who is adding a new child to your family's registration form, please use the New Student Registration form (2-pages). If you are a returning family with no new children to add, you can complete the one page Re-registration form. All registration forms are on the website.

Thank you for allowing us to accompany your family on your faith journey. If you have any questions, please email me at dff@stjeromechurchphila.org or call 215-333-4461.

Peace,

Janet Fiatoa

Director of Faith Formation

Introduction

As Catholic parents we are gifted with the responsibility of passing on the faith to our children. Though this is an immense responsibility, it is also the most rewarding. When our children are formed as disciples of Christ (followers of Jesus) who are leading virtuous lives, we know they will be spiritually healthy and morally happy adults who are joyful and content. Our modern world presents many obstacles for parents in achieving this goal but together with your parish catechetical (teaching) staff we can navigate through these challenges and reach our objective.

In a world of contradictory values, we all need support and encouragement in order to grow into mature and responsible Catholic adults. This challenge demands the best of all our. The new Religious Education Program at St. Jerome developed so that parents and parish could work together to ensure our children have a solid foundation in the Faith and an authentic friendship with Jesus.

The Parish Religious Education Program solemnly commits:

- To provide regular prayer and worship opportunities for children and their families.
- To offer guidance and support to parents in preparing children for the reception of the sacraments.
- To provide an inclusive systemic approach to teaching the tenets of the Catholic religion to all children according to their abilities, needs, and emotional age level.
- To help parents cultivate a strong Catholic identity in their domestic church (family).

Program Components

- Mass June 13, 2021 at 9:30 am to launch the week (families receive a blessing and catechist commissioned)
- Grade level instruction—June 14-18 (9:00 am to 3:00 pm)
- 3 Family Faith Formation Sessions during Advent, Lent, and Easter
- 5 Family Devotional Activities - 2 of the 5 can be done at another location (ex. St. John Neumann's Shrine, St. Peter and Paul's Cathedral, St. Kathrine Drexel's Shrine)
- 4 Family Service Activities
- There will be additional components for families with children preparing to receive a sacrament that will be communicated at the parent meetings in the Fall.

Family Commitment

Each family is asked to faithfully commit to completing all components of the program. The registration form includes a Pledge and Commitment Statement. Families submit a Family Participation Slip for each of the devotional and service activities they complete. Attendance every day of the week of instruction is a must.

Registration

- Participants must be parishioners of St. Jerome or have permission from their pastor to attend.
- Completed registration form must be submitted by April 13, 2021 with the registration fee. Arrangements can be made with the Director of Faith Formation to set up a payment plan if necessary. A financial concern **should not** prevent your family from registering.
- Emergency contact must be included when registering.
- Please include an active and monitored email address.
- By registering, parents/guardians agree to fulfill the program components to the best of their ability.

Classroom Management

Our program's goal is to create a learning environment that reflects the virtues of love, holiness, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, peace, unity, thankfulness and forgiveness. Our faith environment follows the guidelines of Virtue-Based Restorative Discipline (VBRD), a spiritual approach to disciplining that cultivates virtue and provides a rich foundation for fostering faith both at home and in PREP:

1. We will dedicate ourselves to living the virtues.
2. We will support others in living the virtue.
3. We will commit to constructive thoughts, words, and deeds.
4. When challenges arise, we will find solutions that cultivate virtue for ourselves and for one another.

Student's responsibilities include:

Cooperate with the catechist in order to maintain a Christian atmosphere of mutual respect.

Participate fully and appropriately in group activities.

Treat others and the property of others with respect.

When challenging situations arises, ask what would Jesus do?

Unacceptable Behaviors:

Disrespect for any adult or student by word or action.

Leaving the premises without permission from the office.

Disruptive or inappropriate behavior.

Defacing books, desks, walls, bathroom, or any property.

Plan for behaviors that do not demonstrate the virtues:

The child, with help from the Catechist or Director will identify the harm created by the behavior.

The child will be offered an opportunity to make up for the harm done.

The child will identify what virtue will help him/her make better choices.

The parent will be notified about the specifics, if the situation persists.

Catechist Information

The ministry of catechesis is a vocation, an interior call of the Holy Spirit. Commissioned by the Church, catechists participate in a divine calling to teach as Jesus did. St. Jerome's Summer catechists are practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the church. The Lay staff includes certified school teachers with or working toward their Catechetical Certification, meet the Safe Environment guidelines established by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and follow the guidelines and curriculum set by the Parish Religious Education office and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Session Schedule

- Sunday, June 13, 2021 9:30 am Mass—Commissioning of the Catechists and Blessing for the Families
- Week of June 14, 2021 Drop off at 8:45 am—Pick up at 3:00 pm
- Arrival and dismissal will be done by car line in the school yard between the two buildings
- Classes begin promptly at 9:00 and exterior doors will be locked
- If, due to an unforeseen emergency, your child arrives late, you must call the Director at 267-799-6822 to gain access to the building.
- Early dismissal is not permitted. In the event of an emergency, call the Director at 267-799-6822.

Emergency Closing

In the event that classes need to be canceled, families will be notified by email. It is important that we have an email address that is active and monitored regularly.

Illness during Class

Parents/guardians are called to pick up the sick child at the drop off door. If the sickness or injury requires immediate attention, 911 will be called.

Attendance

Daily attendance in the summer week of instruction is essential. Please do not plan doctor's appointments or Friday afternoon travel.

Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Below is a synopsis of the core content guidelines that should be mastered for each grade level. Each year students review the traditional prayers and add new prayers.

Level One: Creation, God the Father and Son, Mary, Mother of God, Sacrament of Baptism, Liturgical Seasons and colors.

Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Grace Before Meals, Glory Be

Level Two: God, the Holy Spirit, Trinity, Sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation, Sunday (The Lord's Day), Parts of the Mass, Preparation to receive Reconciliation & First Eucharist

Prayers: Hail Mary and Act of Contrition

Level Three: The Trinity, Mass, Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist)

Prayers: Prayers of the Mass, Apostle's Creed

Level Four: Ten Commandments, Great Commandment, The Beatitudes (Living a happy life), Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

Prayers: The Rosary

Level Five: Seven Sacraments (Healing, Service, and Initiation) Mass (Parts, Vessels, Vestments), Holy Days of Obligation, Liturgical Seasons

Prayers: The Rosary, Nicene Creed

Level Six: The Old Testament, Christ fulfills Old Testament, Types of Prayer

Prayers: Hail Holy Queen, Memorare, Magnificat

Level Seven: Mysteries of our Faith – Trinity, Incarnation, Paschal Mystery, Mission of the Church, New Testament (Gospels), Saints, Social Justice, Confirmation Preparation

Prayers: Lectio Divina, Guided Reflections, Adoration, Daily Examen

The Archdiocesan approved textbook series is Loyola Press' Finding God. Please visit the Loyola Press website to explore wonderful family resources and fun review activities for children.

Evaluations of Progress

An Archdiocesan assessment will be completed at home and submitted at the First Family Faith Session. Families will receive a review for the assessment. Catechist may decide to do periodic assessments to determine student retention. Assessments will reflect knowledge of the Faith Concepts given to each grade level. Please notify the Religious Education Office of learning needs your child may have in regards to assessments. Accommodations are made for children with special needs.

Sacrament Preparation

Though preparation for the reception of a sacrament is done with the children during the summer week of instruction, parents will receive materials to share and review with their children prior to the reception of the sacrament. It is expected that children are receiving a Catholic upbringing in their family which includes regular Mass attendance. Moreover, participating in Mass is a gift for every Catholic and helps a learner of the faith have a clearer understanding of God's love. Parents will be expected to take their children who will be receiving First Communion and Confirmation to Confession before the reception of the Sacrament so that they are properly disposed to receive the graces of the Sacrament

FIRST RECONCILIATION/FIRST EUCHARIST

Children who have completed two years of religious education prepare for the healing sacrament of Reconciliation and the Initiation Sacrament of the Eucharist. Parents are asked to journey with their children as they prepare to receive by reviewing work at home, attending Sunday Mass, and modeling forgiveness and contrition at home. Parents will be invited to attend the Parent Reconciliation meeting and Holy Eucharist meeting. Parent and child will also attend a retreat together.

CONFIRMATION

Candidates prepare for Confirmation typically for two years and receive in the spring of seventh grade. The preparation includes prayer, study, retreat, and service. Parents will be invited to attend the Parent Confirmation meeting in the Fall. Sponsors and candidates attend a retreat together.

BAPTISM

Arrangements are made with the Director if an older child desires to be Baptized. Please contact Janet Fiatoa at 215-333-4461 or email dff@stjeromechurchphila.org.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Families who enroll their children in religious education understand how important it is for a child to have a source of faith in his or her life. Fostering faith requires family and community to work together. Our program could not function without the generosity and support of many people who share their gifts in our program. If you want your child to value his or her religious education, it is important for you to be a part of the program as well. All of our volunteers have completed Archdiocesan Safe Child Training and have all clearances. Please consider filling one of the roles described below, completing the form on the next page and return it with your family's registration form or scan it to dff@stjeromechurchphila.org.

CLASSROOM AIDE: Individuals to assist the teacher with various tasks, i.e. attendance, paperwork, and classroom management. (Adult or teen)

HALLWAY HELPERS: Responsible people to supervise, direct, and redirect movement of children before, during, and after classes. (Adult)

OFFICE STAFF: Adults who can help with an orderly arrival and dismissal in the parking lot and monitor the office during classes.

BAKING: We need bakers for various events throughout the year – Family Faith Sessions, Celebrations, etc.

Volunteer Form

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Child(ren) names: _____

Position: _____

Detach from booklet and return with your family's registration form or scan it to dff@stjeromechurchphila.org.

Thank you very much.

**PLEASE return
registration form by
Tuesday,
April 13, 2021**