

**St. John of the Cross Religious Education Program**

The Reverend Thomas J. Barry, J.C.L.

Pastor

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**Religious Education Office E-mail:**

[stjohn@stjohnofthecrosschurch.org](mailto:stjohn@stjohnofthecrosschurch.org)

**Religious Education Classes are held at:**

**Memorial Middle School**

**Middlebury Elementary School**

**Long Meadow Elementary School**

Dear Families,

Religious Education involves both educators and parents. Our hope is to provide a climate for learning in which the students can acquire knowledge and grow in friendship with the Lord.

This handbook is given to all parents/guardians. The purpose of the handbook is to present our goals and to familiarize you with the practical aspects of the Religious Education Program. The policies, norms, and requirements of the program are clear and available to all. Please keep this handbook and use it for future reference throughout your child(ren)'s time in our program.

Sincerely,

*Father Barry*

*Annette A. Williams*

Pastor

Director of Religious Education

# NOTES

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

*Matthew 19:14*



*Wherever the term "parent" is used, the term refers to parents and guardians.*

## **Goals for the Program**

- To develop an understanding of the Catholic faith and practices in the lives of the students and families.
- To foster a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer.
- To prepare the students to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation (Penance) and Eucharist (First Holy Communion.)
- To inspire a sense of responsibility for service to the church and community.

### **Family Responsibilities**

The religious education of your child is a task that cannot be accomplished alone. As parents, you are the primary educators of your children. You provide the example for your child by living your faith and attending Mass and receiving the sacraments regularly. In partnership with you, we hope to teach your children what it means to be a Catholic Christian. We are here to assist and encourage you in your God-given responsibilities.

- Families are expected to be active in the parish and support it in the spirit of stewardship, sharing their time, talents, and treasures.
- Regular attendance at Religious Education Classes is essential. Excessive absence (4 or more days ) indicates a lack of priority given to your child's religious education and the grade level may need to be repeated. If there is a problem, please contact the Director of Religious Education.
- In the event of an absence, please call the Religious Education Office and let us know your child will not be at class. It will be the parents' and child's responsibility to make up any work missed.
- Communication between families and the Religious Education Office is essential. Parents will be kept informed of important dates and information through letters, e-mails, and through the weekly church bulletin. The church bulletin is the most important vehicle of communication.



***Growing Together in Faith***

***“G.I.F.T.” is Whole Community Catechesis***

Whole Community Catechesis is an approach to religious education through which all generations gather together in order to learn, share, reflect, and celebrate. Adults as well as youth and children will be invited to participate in three faith formation events throughout the church year. These three intergenerational event centered programs are part of the curriculum for our Religious Education students.

Dates for 2009-2010 are:

November 21st/22nd

January 9/10

April 10/11

### **Discipline Code for Religious Education Program**

Religion teachers are **VOLUNTEERS** who are giving their time and effort for the benefit of the students. They have one hour and ten minutes in which to teach their lesson. The catechists are capable of dealing with normal restlessness or lack of attentiveness that can occur in any classroom situation.

A discipline problem is defined in this context as disrespectful, disruptive or violent behavior. In the event of a discipline problem, the student will be removed from the classroom for the remainder of the session at the discretion of the teacher. The student's parents will be notified of such behavior and resulting disciplinary actions by the Director of Religious Education or the Director's designee.

If the same student causes a *second* disciplinary problem within a thirty-day timeframe, we will follow the same procedure as previously described. Additionally, the parent(s) along with the student will be requested to attend the following week's session.

Multiple or repeated discipline occurrences would result in a meeting among the student, parent(s), the Director of Religious Education and/or Pastor to discuss alternatives.

### **Liturgy of the Word for Children—Grades K through 4**

Each Saturday (September—May) during the Vigil Mass and Sunday during the 9:30AM and 11:00AM Mass, all children ages kindergarten through 4th grade are invited to join our Liturgy of the Word for children. Children are escorted to the church hall just after the Opening Prayers of Mass and receive the Word of God at their own level. The children listen to the Sunday readings and are involved in an interactive homily and activities. The children are then escorted back to Mass after the Prayer of the Faithful. Our LOWFC Team is a dynamic group who engage the children in discussion of the readings so that they gain a deep understanding of scripture at this young age.

- Parents are required to attend meetings applicable to them.
- As a parent, please inform us of any special needs your child may have.
- We are not permitted to bring food into the classrooms. Please remember that we are required to abide by the rules and regulations they set forth for us.

### **Student Responsibilities**

St. John of the Cross Religious Education Program is a Catholic Christian Community. As a member of this community, every student has certain privileges and obligations. In order to protect these rights and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, it is necessary to develop guidelines which all students are expected to follow. Violations of program regulations and guidelines, which infringe on the rights and privileges of others, cannot be tolerated. Specific guidelines must be followed so that each child may develop into a responsible Christian.

### **Expectations**

- As we are modeling Christian behavior, all students should conduct themselves in a courteous manner, with respect for themselves and others.
- Fighting or foul language will not be tolerated.
- All state laws and Region 15 Policies concerning alcohol, drugs and weapons will be strictly enforced.

- While our religious education classes are held at Memorial Middle School, Middlebury Elementary School and Long Meadow Elementary School, we will be consistent with the rules of behavior as described in the handbooks.
- Students will be responsible for bringing their religion book to class each week. Other supplies will be provided.
- If textbooks are lost, new ones will be distributed at a cost of \$15.00 each.

### **Role of the Catechist**

The task of the catechist is to echo the Word of God in such a way that the faith of students may mature and the Christian story be faithfully handed on. This is done through an instructional process which provides opportunities for a student's faith to be discovered, named, matured, challenged and affirmed by the echoed message found in the Scriptures, the church's traditions, and the student's own experience.

Parish catechists are engaged in catechizing adults, young people, children, and those with special needs. Theirs is a particular way of carrying out the promise which the church makes at every Baptism: support, pray for, and instruct the baptized and foster their growth in faith.

The fundamental task of catechists is to proclaim Christ's message, to participate in efforts to develop community,

*Child Lures* as its safety training program for all children. It is training for the prevention of sexual exploitation, abduction, internet crime, drugs, and school violence. Sessions will be offered at MES and LMES.

We continue to implement the Archdiocese's Safe Environment program, which includes procuring background checks on employees, volunteers, staff, etc. who have contact with children and young people on a regular basis. Additionally those individuals are required to attend training in the *Protecting God's Children* program.

### **Volunteers**

Parental and volunteer participation is welcomed and needed in various areas of the Religious Education Program. Anyone interested in volunteer service such as clerical and office help, baby-sitting, catechists' assistants, hall monitors, etc. should contact the Religious Education Office.

### **Progress Reports**

The progress of the students in the Religious Education Program is a concern of parents, catechists, and the Director of Religious Education. Progress Reports are an important component of the religious education process. These reports will be distributed in January and in April.

Progress Reports will reflect the students' understanding of the appropriate grade level subject. The growth of students' abilities to understand and to express the teaching of the Catholic Church is reflected in the progress reports. Progress Reports **do not** evaluate the growth of the students' spiritual lives.

### **Religious Education News/Communications**

The Religious Education Program will keep parents informed about activities of the program by the church bulletin, letters, e mails, and newsletters. However, the church bulletin is the most important vehicle of communication.

### **Change of Address, Phone Number, or E Mail Address**

It is important that our records be kept up-to-date. Therefore, please notify the Religious Education Office of any change of address, phone/cell number, emergency number or e mail address.

### **Class Cancellation**

The Religious Education Program follows the Region 15 school calendar. **If Region 15 closes early or cancels after school activities, religious education classes are also cancelled.** If we have your current e-mail address on file, you will also receive an e-mail announcement.

### **Health Concerns and Medications**

Health concerns should be brought to the attention of the Director of Religious Education during registration. If a child is diagnosed with a medical concern after registration, please inform the Director of Religious Education as soon as possible.

### **Child Abuse / Safe Environment Program**

Child abuse is of serious concern. Consistent with diocesan policy and local legal codes, parish catechetical staff have a moral and legal duty to comply with the law to ensure the welfare of a child. Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse, and we will also follow diocesan policy on such matters. Per the U.S. Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the Archdiocese of Hartford has selected

in order that the Christian message be sought, accepted and more profoundly investigated. They recognize that faith is a gift and that it is not their efforts, but the interaction of God's grace and human freedom which lead people to accept their faith.

Our catechists are very important to all of us. By their willingness to share their gifts, time, and talents, these people make our program a reality. We are privileged to work with them and offer them Catechist Training Programs and special days of reflection and prayer.

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Preparation for this sacrament is incorporated into the first half of the year in the second grade program. It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Hartford that the Sacrament of Reconciliation be received 3-5 months before the children receive First Communion. In practice, this means that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated in January of the child's second grade year.

### **Sacrament of Eucharist**

Preparation for this sacrament is an important part of the second grade program. The Archdiocese of Hartford requires that children receive First Eucharist only after the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In practice, this means that First Eucharist is celebrated in the Spring of the second grade.

### **Sacrament of Confirmation**

Students will be accountable for fulfilling the requirements for regular attendance of grades 1 through 8 before entering the Confirmation Preparation Program. Preparation for this sacrament begins in the ninth grade and ends with the celebration of Confirmation in the Fall of eleventh grade.

### **Registration**

Registration for religious education classes for grades one through ten is held in the Spring of each year.

### **Textbooks**

It is the responsibility of the students to bring their textbook to class each week. The second time a textbook is forgotten, parents may be called to bring the textbook to the student.

### **Baptismal Certificate**

A copy of your child's Baptismal Certificate is needed upon registration if your child was not baptized at St. John of the Cross Church.

### **Memorial Middle School: Tuesday Evening Classes**

To avoid accidents and disorderly arrivals and dismissals, parents are to drop off their child(ren) at the North door near the gym. Students are to report directly to the Cafeteria at their arrival.

### **Memorial Middle School: Tuesday Afternoon/Evening Classes**

At dismissal time, parents are to meet their child(ren) in the parking lot near the North entrance/gym.

### **Long Meadow Elementary School**

At dismissal time, parents are to go to the assigned classrooms to sign a roster stating that their child is being picked up from classes. This is for the safety of all children.

### **Middlebury Elementary School**

At dismissal time, parents are to go to the assigned classrooms to sign a roster stating that their child is being picked up from classes. This is for the safety of all children.

### **Homework**

For learning to truly take place, children need to review, use, teach others and integrate into their lives the information they have been given. For this reason, catechists are encouraged to require some type of written or practical work to be done between classes. Parents need to ask children about homework and see that the child follows through.

### **Attendance**

Religious education is an ongoing process. Continuous participation in the Religious Education Program from grades one through ten is required for the reception of the sacraments. A student removed from the program by parents between grades three and eight will not be accepted into our Confirmation Preparation Program until interviewed by the Pastor. Children will be required to fulfill the guidelines for regular attendance of a grade before the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Eucharist.

### **Absence**

When your child is absent from religious education classes, please contact the Religious Education Office to report the absence as excused. You may **email** or leave a message on the machine. **If a child is absent and the absence was not reported, the office will contact you.** It is expected that students attend religious education classes every week. We have taken into consideration that there are times when conflict or illness may prevent a student from attending religious education classes; however, the maximum number of absences allowed during the year is FOUR. Students who exceed four absences without serious reason may become ineligible to receive a new sacrament or progress to the next grade level. Excessive absence often indicates a lack of interest by the parent and student.