

SACRED HEART P.R.E.P.
PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM
BRIDGEPORT, PA

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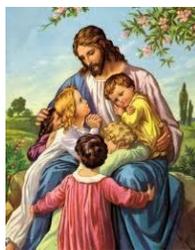
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 SacredHeart Prep

PARENT / PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

2017 - 2018

The purpose of this handbook is to set forth guidelines for those who participate in our Sacred Heart Parish Religious Education Program. By enrolling your child in our program, you agree to support and abide by the provisions outlined in this handbook. Parents are therefore encouraged to discuss these guidelines with their children and any adults involved to ensure that all parties understand the requirements and the obligations of their participation in the Parish Religious Education Program. Thank you for your cooperation with our program, which supports you in your child's faith formation.



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Parish Religious Education Program supports parents, who are the first teachers of the children in the ways of faith. Together, parents and catechists teach children about our Catholic faith by learning the catechesis necessary to grow in the knowledge of their faith. In addition, we strive to support the development of faith formation for children as they grow in their relationship with God and with our Parish family. We cannot forget that by teaching their children about the faith, reinforcing at home what children learn in PREP classes, and especially by participating with them in the Holy Mass and other Sacraments, parents provide the most vital witness to our faith and traditions.

We comply with the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia regarding the appropriate age and developmental stage for the children's preparation for and reception of the Holy Sacraments.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

I ATTENDANCE

The faith formation received in the P.R.E.P. 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 is asked to contact the Catechist or the Program Coordinator to report the absence and to arrange to make up the missed lesson.

In the case of an extended illness or an unusual family situation (e.g., custody issue, hospitalization, etc.), parents are asked to communicate directly with the Program Coordinator regarding the absence. Whenever possible, the Coordinator will work with the parents to support the child's continued faith formation.

Communication of unusual situations is essential to support ongoing cooperation. Generally speaking, after three unexcused absences, the Program Coordinator will contact the parents by phone to notify them that the child **may be required** to repeat the grade level. This **may involve** the delay of the reception of Sacraments due to the child's lack of adequate preparation. Extenuating circumstances can be considered, but please keep us informed.

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 up to date.

II ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Sessions begin promptly at 8:30 AM. Therefore, any participant arriving after the designated starting time will be considered late. It is strongly recommended that children **arrive ten minutes prior** to the scheduled class time. Frequent lateness may interfere with your child's learning and advancement to the next level.

All participants are to use the **main school entrance** and go directly to their assigned classrooms. Children will not enter the classroom until the Catechist or Aide is present.

At dismissal, Parents/Guardians of **Level 1, 2, and 3** students will be required to come into the school to the child's classroom to pick up their children. Only students who walk and whose Parents have signed the required waiver, will be dismissed in the Walker Line at the main school entrance. Parents are asked to be at school promptly by **9:45 AM** to pick up their children.

Children who are not picked up from their classrooms will be dismissed from the front side small schoolyard gate on Ford Street. Please keep in mind that a number of Catechists and PREP families will be attending 10:15 Mass at Sacred Heart Church, so it's important that we dismiss the students on time. To avoid moving traffic when children are arriving or being dismissed, parking in front schoolyard lot is reserved for Catechists and other persons working at PREP. Please park on Ford Street, on Union Avenue, or in the rear parking lot when dropping off or picking up your children.

Please do not block the main entrance gate.

III ENROLLMENT & PLACEMENT

The faith formation provided in our programs involves incremental learning; that is, each Level builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program consistently from year to year. The registration form is available online @ Sacred Heart Parish website under PREP.)

Any participant who leaves the program for a period of one year will be required to make up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program. (e.g., A student who leaves the program for a period of one year after completing Level 3 and re-enrolls in the program when he/she is in grade 5, will be placed into Level 4.)

Any participant who leaves the program for two or more consecutive years must fulfill the following two requirements:

1. The PREP participant will be placed into a grade level that is at least one below his/her current grade in school.
2. For example, a student who leaves the program after completing Level 3 and re-enrolls when he is in 6th grade:
 - The Parent is required to provide home-based catechesis for Level 4.
 - Upon completion of Level 4, the child is accepted into Level 5 to continue.

The program director will work with the parents to support the above requirements and assure the child's preparation for the Sacraments.

IV NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the responsibility of both parents to provide the Parish with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological Parents and/or Guardians 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 copy of the latest 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.

V DISCIPLINE

The Parish Religious Education Program is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as to foster values and behavior that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching.

The program has **no tolerance** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The Parish determines what appropriate or inappropriate behavior in the classroom is and which improper behavior affects the religious education program.

Conduct by children or Parents/Guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic, by a child against any member of the school community, the child, if suspended but not removed from the program, **may be required** to have psychological clearance before returning to PREP.

VI SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Our program complies with the directives of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Office of Child and Youth Protection. As part of this program, we provide Safe Environment lessons which can be found at their website: <http://phillyocf.org/safe-environment/>

Parents who choose not to have their children participate in these lessons are required to provide us with a written statement to this effect prior to the scheduled Safe Environment lessons.

VII ITEMS NOT PERMITTED IN CLASS

In order to support the prayer and learning environment desired for PREP, children are **not permitted** to bring things to class which would provide a distraction to them or to other children. These items include, but are not limited to, gum, food, beverages, toys, electronic games, beepers, i-pods, i-pads, or other electronic devices. If such items are brought to class, they will be taken from the child and held until the end of class when they will be returned to the parent.

In addition, it is unlawful for minors to be in the possession of alcohol or tobacco products or any other contraband. Participants found to have such products may be immediately suspended from the program and the proper legal authorities may be notified.

VIII CELL PHONES

Students are prohibited from using cell phones at any time during the PREP session. Realizing that cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communications open, we understand that children will bring them. However, during class, the students will be asked to place them in plastic

bags signed with their names and then put them in a basket in their classroom. Cell phones will be returned at the conclusion of the session.

IX ASSIGNMENTS

Catechists in the program may give children assignments to complete at home, in the form of written work, activities, or study. As those primarily responsible for the faith formation of their children, it is expected that parents will supervise the completion of these assignments. If a child does not complete them, the parents may be contacted by the catechist or Program Coordinator.

Please note that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Office of Catechetical Formation provides study guides, as well as other helpful resources, in both English and Spanish, at their website: <http://phillyocf.org/>

X SERVICE INITIATIVES

As baptized Catholics, we are called to live a life of service following the example of Jesus and develop a life-long commitment to serve others, as Jesus taught us. On some occasions, Catechists may invite children and their families to engage in service activities as a means of deepening the formation process. These activities will take place outside the scope of the regular catechetical sessions. In the event that a Catechist elects such an option, he or she will provide the participants with a detailed list of suggested activities.

XI TEXT (*What the Church Teaches and Believes*)

Every participant is assigned a text at the beginning of the year. This book will remain in the classroom, and a Gospel Weekly will go home in the PREP folder with the child each week. Confirmation Candidates may use a different text, with supplemental materials sent home periodically rather than weekly. Parents are encouraged to review the weekly handout with their child as a means of strengthening the lessons taught in class. The Gospel Weekly may also be found at the company's website: <http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/>, along with other resources



In addition, children may receive other handouts in the form of prayers to learn or parish communications. We ask Parents to be sure to check the PREP folder each week and have the child return the folder to class for the following session.

XII SACRAMENTS



Preparation for the reception of a Sacrament ~ Reconciliation, Holy Communion, and/or Confirmation ~ is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A child's desire to receive the Sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process, as well as the commitment of the child and his/her parents to the guidelines and formation preceding the Sacrament. Thus, consistent attendance and proper attitude and behavior are expected. ***Regular and consistent participation in Sunday Mass***

is also a significant part of the child's preparation for reception of the Sacraments. Children exhibiting unexcused absences or lateness may be asked to delay reception of Sacraments if they are unprepared.

Parents are required to attend Sacrament Parent meetings in preparation for their child's reception of the Sacraments. These may be both individual and in a group setting. In addition, children receiving Sacraments have a Retreat Day and practice day scheduled in preparation for reception of the Sacrament. Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receives the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation) in the Parish in which their family is registered.

XIII TUITION

Tuition is a necessary and required part of the religious education program to ensure the most current and best catechetical resources.

If a family's financial situation is such that they are unable to afford the tuition, they should contact the Pastor or the Program Coordinator. A child will not be denied religious education because of financial circumstances.

In the event a child is dismissed from the program due to excessive absences, lateness, problem behavior, or any other reason, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made to the family.

XIV SNOW EMERGENCY & CANCELLATIONS

In the event of severe inclement weather, please listen to KYW for program closing information. In addition, an email will be sent to parents notifying them of the cancellation.

XV COMMUNICATION

Calendar: Parents are provided with a 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 and additional dates or events, particularly for Sacramental preparation.

Parish Contact Information: Parents should feel free to contact the Program Coordinator regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year.

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. Please contact the Catechist or the Program Coordinator to arrange an appointment outside of class time.

FINAL NOTE

The Pastor and Program Coordinator reserve the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.