

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK



St. Mary's – Stony Hill  
Office of Religious Education  
225 Mountain Boulevard  
Watchung, NJ 07069  
908-756-6524  
[www.stmaryswatchung.org](http://www.stmaryswatchung.org)

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

Parish Center Office Hours

St. Mary's - Stony Hill office hours are as follows:

Monday thru Wednesday 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Thursday and Friday 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

The Religious Education Office hours are as follows:

Tuesday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Wednesday 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM

And by appointment

Contact Information:

Parish Center: 908-756-6524

Parish Website: [www.stmaryswatchung.org](http://www.stmaryswatchung.org)

Parish Center Fax: 908-756-2111

Office of Religious Education:

Cathy Cooney, Parish Catechetical Leader

Telephone: 908-756-6524 ext. 16

Email: [ccooney@stmaryswatchung.org](mailto:ccooney@stmaryswatchung.org)

Fr. Brian Nolan, Pastor

Telephone: 908-756-6524 ext. 12

Email: [pastor@stmaryswatchung.org](mailto:pastor@stmaryswatchung.org)

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

## **Mission Statement**

The Religious Education Program at St. Mary's Stony Hill functions under a philosophy that teaches the beauty and traditions of our Catholic Faith both as its heritage and as a means for religious growth and education. This program seeks to nurture the development of the whole person, where respect, dignity and faith in God will be developed in a Christian community.

## **Introduction**

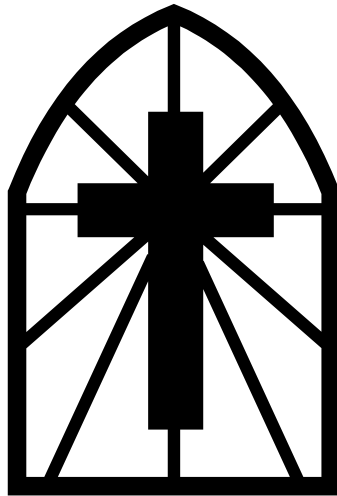
Congratulations! You have selected a Roman Catholic Religious Education Program for your child, based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This program teaches the traditions and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, supported by Church documents and utilizes diocesan programs to form and train catechists.

The choice to attend Religious Education classes is the choice of parents, as primary educators, to prepare their children in the best way possible for full initiation into the community of believers through the reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. These sacraments call us and them to full communion with Jesus in the Church and full participation in the life of the community.

Catechesis, or Religious Education, is the process of communicating the beliefs, values and practices which make people Catholic Christians. It is the work of handing down, from one generation to the next, the faith that has come down to us from the apostles, and the way of life to which that faith calls us.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

Please read through this document carefully and then sign the agreement electronically via the parish website. With your signature you will be stating that you understand the program and will abide by the policies. Please return the policy agreement to the Religious Education Office by the first day of class. This agreement will be kept on file in the Religious Education Office and is binding until your child has graduated out of his/her eighth grade religious education class.



This document is divided into two parts: Curriculum and Policies. Curriculum includes Attendance at Liturgy, Family Faith and Whole Community Faith Formation, Prayer, and Textbooks. Policies include the following topics: Absences, Anti-Bullying, Arrival/Dismissal, Car Line Pickup, Behavior, Cancellations, Cell Phones/Electronic Devices, Change of Address, Telephone Number and/or Email Address, Child Abuse Policy, Distribution of Parent Handbook, Emergency Closing, Emergency Contact Information, Fees, Fire Drills, Food, Home Study Program, Homework, Illegal Substances and Weapons, Illness, On-line Program, Records, Registration, Sacramental Policies, Special Needs and Visitors.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**CURRICULUM:**

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Attendance at Liturgy        | 6 |
| Family/Whole Community       |   |
| Faith Formation              | 6 |
| Prayer                       | 7 |
| Textbooks                    | 7 |
| Benziger Family Life Program | 7 |

**POLICIES:**

|                                    |    |                                       |    |
|------------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| Absences                           | 8  | Emergency Contact Info.               | 12 |
| Anti-Bullying                      | 8  | Fees                                  | 13 |
| Arrival/Dismissal:                 |    | Food                                  | 13 |
| Arrival-Sunday, Platt Hall         | 9  | Home Study                            | 13 |
| Arrival-Sunday, Parish Center      | 9  | Homework                              | 14 |
| Arrival-Wednesday, Parish Center   | 9  | Illegal Substances/Weapons            | 14 |
| Arrival-Monday, Church             | 9  | Illness                               | 14 |
| Dismissal-Sunday, Platt Hall       | 9  | Online Program                        | 14 |
| Dismissal-Sunday, Parish Center    | 9  | Records                               | 15 |
| Dismissal-Wednesday, Parish Center | 9  | Registration                          | 15 |
| Dismissal-Monday, Parish Center    | 9  | Sacramental Policies/<br>Requirements | 15 |
| Car Line Pickup Procedures         | 10 | Special Needs                         | 16 |
| Behavior                           | 10 | Visitors                              | 16 |
| Cancellations                      | 11 | Prayer                                | 17 |
| Cell Phones/Electronic Devices     | 11 | Notes/checklist                       | 18 |
| Change of Address/Contact Info.    | 12 |                                       |    |
| Child Abuse                        | 12 |                                       |    |
| Crisis Management/Fire Drills      | 12 |                                       |    |
| Distribution of Parent Handbook    | 12 |                                       |    |
| Emergency Closing                  | 12 |                                       |    |

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

## **CURRICULUM**

The Religious Education Curriculum at St. Mary's - Stony Hill is comprised of Mass, Religious Education classes, and Family and Whole Community Faith Formation. St. Mary's-Stony Hill Religious Education Program recognizes that parents and guardians are the “first teachers in faith.” Our Religious Education personnel complement our parents and guardians and together, we will share our faith as a learned and lived experience.

### **Attendance at Liturgy**

Families attending Mass and Holy Days of Obligation is the primary component of our Religious Education program and is a pivotal aspect of Catholic life. As the primary religious educator of your children, we need to stress that if you choose not to attend Mass with your children, there is a disconnect between your religious education practice and denial of an essential element of our Catholic identity.

### **Family/Whole Community Faith Formation**

Complementing the formal religious education classes will be Family Faith Formation/Whole Community Faith Formation workshops. Workshop topics will vary from year to year and will be included in the Religious Education Calendar.



ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

## **Prayer**

Parents of children in all grades are asked to teach their children the following prayers:

Grade 1: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

Grade 2: All of the above plus Act of Contrition, Guardian Angel Prayer and Mass Responses

Grade 3: All of the above plus Grace Before Meals and the Apostles' Creed

Grade 4: All of the above plus understanding of the Rosary

Grade 5: All of the above plus understanding of the Stations of the Cross

Grade 6: All of the above

Grade 7: All of the above plus Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Grade 8: All of the above

## **Textbooks**

Religious Education Classes grades kindergarten through sixth utilize the Loyola Press Finding God textbooks. Grade seven utilizes the Ascension Press Altaration: The Mystery of the Mass Revealed and Thy Kingdom Come program and the eighth grade utilizes the Ascension Press Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation program & student workbook.

## **Benzinger Family Life Program**

As mandated by our Bishop, our program includes Family Life Education. Our text is published by RCL Benzinger and is organized according to these five themes: God's Gift of Family, God's Gift of Self, God's Gift of Life, God's Gift of Love and God's Gift of Community.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

## **POLICIES**

### **Absences**

Students are expected to be present for each class unless illness or other serious reason prevents attendance. Please call the Religious Education Office if your child will be absent. A child who has been absent is required to present upon his/her return, a note of explanation signed by a parent. The Diocese of Metuchen allows only three absences per year. Students absent four or more classes, no matter what the reason, may be required to complete summer home study before advancing to the next level. Athletic and social activities are not an excuse for absence, early dismissal or late arrival.

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Harassment, intimidation or bullying will not be tolerated on Church property or at any Church-sponsored function. In addition, staff and volunteers will demonstrate appropriate behavior treating others with civility and respect, and will refuse to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. For a full copy of the policy, please see the parish website. It is also located online at [www.bullypolice.org/nj\\_law.html](http://www.bullypolice.org/nj_law.html).

### **Arrival/Dismissal**

Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared for each class.

**Arrival – Sunday, Platt Hall Grades K-2:** Children will be escorted by a parent or guardian through the main Church entrance. The parent or guardian will stay with the child at all times and proceed down the steps and will accompany them to the check-in table.



ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

**Arrival – Sunday, Parish Center Grades 3-6:** Children must be dropped off at the door located behind the Parish Center or escorted by parent or guardian into the Parish Center via the main door. The parent or guardian will stay with the child at all times, either walking down the steps or while using the elevator, and will accompany them to the check-in table.

**Arrival – Wednesday, Parish Center:** All classes on Wednesdays will take place in the Parish Center. Children must be dropped off at the door located behind the Parish Center or escorted by parent or guardian into the Parish Center via the main door. The parent or guardian will stay with the child at all times, either walking down the steps or while using the elevator, and will accompany them to the check-in table.

**Arrival – Monday, Church:** All students are to be dropped off for Monday night classes at the Church. Class begins at 7:00 PM.

**Dismissal – Sunday, Platt Hall Grades K-2:** Parents will indicate their choice of pick-up options. Students will be picked up either downstairs in Platt Hall by a parent or guardian at 11:00 AM or will be escorted to the outside car line pickup area. Students will be outside starting at 11:00 AM.

**Dismissal – Sunday, Parish Center, Grades 3-6:** Students will be picked up downstairs in the Parish Center by a parent or guardian at 11:00 AM. If a student is not picked up at that time, they will be escorted to the outside car line pickup area. Students will be outside starting at 11:00 AM.

**Dismissal – Wednesday, Parish Center:** Students will be picked up downstairs in the Parish Center by a parent or guardian or students will be outside in the car line pickup area starting at 5:00 pm.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

**Dismissal – Monday, Parish Center:** All students are picked up from the Parish Center for Monday night classes. Class ends at 8:00 PM.

**Car Line Pickup Procedures:**

All parents picking up students behind the Parish Center will form one line of cars and will drive cautiously to the back of the Parish Center to the pick up area. Once your car is stopped, your child will be released to you. Please remain in line and refrain from passing stopped cars. Once you have picked up your child and there are no stopped cars in front of you, please continue to drive cautiously as there are other children in the area. Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** will students be allowed to meet parents in the parking lot or upstairs in the Church.

Parents/guardians are required to help as a Dismissal Monitor at least two times during the school year as needed. Parents/guardians will be notified via email as to when they are needed. If you cannot help at the time, let the office know and you will be assigned a different day.

**Behavior**

Students are expected to follow the “Student Code of Behavior” as listed below:

- ⚡ Students are expected to attend class and Mass every week.
- ⚡ Students are expected to show respect for all persons in words and actions.
- ⚡ Students are expected to comply with the classroom rules set out by their Catechist.
- ⚡ Students should not do anything that could cause physical harm to themselves or to another.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

- ‡ Students must not destroy, deface or remove any property from the buildings.
- ‡ Students are responsible for completing all in-class and homework assignments to the best of their ability and according to the time schedule provided.
- ‡ Students are responsible for bringing their textbook and communication folder to class each week.

Catechists will deal with behavior issues as early as possible. After two warnings, the catechist will send student to the office and his/her parents or guardian will be called. Any student sent to the office more than once will be required to have his/her parent attend class with him/her or be removed from the program.

### **Cancellations**

If Watchung Public Schools are closed or have an early dismissal due to inclement weather, then St. Mary's - Stony Hill will cancel classes for that day.

### **Cell Phones/Electronic Devices**

Students are not permitted to use cell phones or other electronic devices from the time they enter the building until the time they are picked up by their parent/guardian. Cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and kept out of sight for the entire duration of all classes and activities. Catechists have the right to collect cell phones and other electronic devices from the students if the rules are not adhered to. Devices will be returned at the end of the gathering. An agreement to cell phone/electronic device guidelines is to be signed electronically by the parent/guardian and child.

ST. MARY’S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

**Change of Address, Telephone Number and/or Email Address**

Please notify the office immediately if you should have a change of address, telephone number or email address.

**Child Abuse Policy**

If a catechist and/or Director of Religious Education suspects a child has been abused, New Jersey State statues require the Division of Youth and Family Services to be notified immediately. In addition, the Office of Child and Youth Protection of the Diocese of Metuchen will be notified.

**Crisis Management/Fire Drills**

For the safety of our children and families, the parish of St. Mary’s-Stony Hill has in place policies for lockdown, evacuation and fire drills.

**Distribution of Parent Handbook**

The Religious Education Program Parent Handbook is available online at [www.stmaryswatchung.org](http://www.stmaryswatchung.org). Parents will be informed each time the Parent Handbook is updated. Parents are required to electronically sign the Parent Handbook Agreement via the parish website.

**Emergency Closing**

In the event of inclement weather, notification will be provided on St. Mary’s – Stony Hill website and an email message or text will be sent to each contact supplied during registration.

**Emergency Contact Information**

Parents are responsible for insuring that the Religious Education Office always has the current telephone number on file of a parent or other designated adult who can be called in case of emergency.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

**Fees**

The fee for religious education for the school year is \$175.00 for one child and \$225.00 for two or more children. An additional sacramental fee of \$100.00 is required for children entering grades 2 and 8. This \$100.00 helps defray the costs of additional materials, books and retreats specific to grades 2 and 8. If there is a financial burden and you cannot pay the fee(s) please call the Office of Religious Education.

**Food**

Because there are so many food allergies that endanger children today, no food or drink of any kind will be permitted in the Parish Center or Platt Hall during Religious Education classes. Catechists are not permitted to give out food treats of any kind. Food will only be permitted in Murray Hall during special events, for example, during a Christmas party or during Retreats. During these times, parents of children with food allergies, are required to attend celebrations and if necessary, provide acceptable food for their child(ren).

**Home Study Program**

The Home Study Program is used when special circumstances in the life or family of a student prohibit a child from attending regular religious education classes. The Home Study Program option is not available for second or eighth grades. In addition, this program cannot be done for consecutive years. Regular registration fees apply. Curriculum, textbooks and Parents Guides will be distributed in September. Students in the Home Study Program are expected to join the program when special activities are planned. Please call the Office of Religious Education to discuss this option.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

### **Homework**

The Catechists will assign homework to the student on a regular basis. Students are responsible for completion of these assignments by the next scheduled class. Parents/guardians should review the assignments with their child.

### **Illegal Substances and Weapons**

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and weapons of any kind are not allowed on Church property. If a student is found to be in possession, the student will be detained until the police and parent/guardians are notified.

The Dismissal Monitor will not send a student home with a driver who is visibly impaired.

### **Illness**

If your child becomes ill during class, you will be notified by telephone and asked to pick up your child.

### **Online Program**

Our online program is available for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and has 3 components:

1. Online component using an online e-book, completing one session each week per schedule from home on a tablet or desktop and submitting an online e-assessment after each session;
2. Once a month in class session with classmates in a classroom; and
3. Attendance at Mass and Special Liturgies.

Regular registration fees apply. Parent(s) and student must attend first scheduled 6<sup>th</sup> grade online class together to learn how to complete program and receive online password and username.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

## **Records**

The Office of Religious Education maintains a record for each student in the program. The record includes the dates of the sacraments that have been received and other important facts.

All students entering program must submit a copy of their Baptismal Certificate and when applicable, must also submit their record of religious education from their previous parish. For those students moving to another parish, parents may request a copy of their child's records.

## **Registration**

To participate in the Religious Education Program each family must first be registered with our parish. Registration will take place online in the spring. Registrations are processed and classes are filled as forms are received. Class size will be limited, so please register early. A copy of all sacramental certificates is required for each new student.

## **Sacramental Policies/Requirements**

Preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist consists of two years of formal class instruction. Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation entails six years of formal instruction starting with third grade and ending with eighth grade. There will be no home study for a sacrament year.

In addition to the Religious Education Curriculum, sacramental preparation includes parents meetings, retreats, and practices. Attendance by one or more parent or sponsor (in the case of Confirmation) is mandatory and if missed, may result in waiting another year for reception of the sacrament.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

Those students receiving the sacrament of Confirmation must pick a confirmation name based on a saint or role model and will write a brief paper on why the name was chosen. Each Confirmande will pick a sponsor who is at least sixteen years of age and active in their faith. The sponsor cannot be the parent of the Confirmande. Each Confirmande must participate in one service project. Three opportunities will be offered. In addition, each Confirmande will have an interview with Fr. Brian or another adult from the parish.

The Bishop sets the date for the celebration of Confirmation and will be provided as soon as it is set.

### **Special Needs**

If a child has special needs, parents/guardians are asked to share the information with the PCL and/or catechist. This information will be used to help meet the needs of the child and will be kept confidential.

### **Visitors**

Other than students, Catechists, aides, hall monitors and parish staff, no persons are permitted in the halls, classrooms, or rest rooms during Religious Education classes and activities without the express authorization of the Religious Education Office. Visitors, including parents, are to see the Director of Religious Education before proceeding into the classroom areas. Parents are welcome to attend their child's classes but must first register at the sign-in table. Catechists are asked to contact the hall monitors immediately if they notice any unauthorized persons in the building.



ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK



## Prayer To Your Guardian Angel

Angel of God,  
my guardian dear,  
to whom God's love  
commits me here,  
ever this day,  
be at my side,  
to light and guard,  
to rule and guide.  
Amen.

ST. MARY'S - STONY HILL  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
PARENT HANDBOOK

Notes:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Did you sign the Photo Release Form?
- Did you sign the Parent Handbook Agreement?
- Did you and your child sign the Cell Phone Policy?