



**St. Mary Parish – Stony Hill**  
**Office of Religious Education**  
225 Mountain Boulevard  
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[www.stmaryswatchung.org](http://www.stmaryswatchung.org)

Parish Center Office Hours

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

Thursday and Friday 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Office of the Religious Education

Tuesday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Wednesday 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM

By appointment

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## **Mission Statement**

The Religious Education Program at St. Mary Parish-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. Our 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**

Dear Parents,

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 decision to send a child to religious education classes is always the choice of their parents, “the first witnesses of the faith to their children” (Rite of Baptism) and their primary religious educators. We are pleased to assist you in preparing your children in the best way possible for full initiation into the Catholic community through the reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation, and for a lifetime as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

Catechesis, or religious education, is the process of communicating the beliefs, values and practices that 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.

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

This handbook is divided into two parts: Curriculum and Policies.

Curriculum includes Attendance at Liturgy, Family/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.

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## CURRICULUM

The parish religious education curriculum is comprised of Mass, religious education classes, and Family/Whole Community Faith Formation. Our Program recognizes that parents and guardians are the “first witnesses of the faith.” Our catechists complement our parents and guardians and, together, we share our faith as a learned and lived experience.

### **Attendance at Liturgy**

The II Vatican Council proclaimed the Eucharist to be the “source and summit of the Christian life” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). Families attending Mass and Holy Days of Obligation is, then, the primary component of our Religious Education Program. If, as the primary religious educators of your children, you choose not to attend Mass with your children, we must stress that there is a disconnect between your participation in our Religious Education Program and an essential element of our Catholic identity.

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

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

## **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 the 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 an understanding of the Rosary

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

Cross Grade 6: All of the above

Grade 7: All of the above, plus be familiar with The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and Ten Commandments

Grade 8: All of the above, plus know the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

## **Textbooks**

Religious education classes grades kindergarten through sixth utilize the Loyola Press *Finding God* textbooks. Grade two utilizes the Dynamic Catholic *Blessed Programs*. Grade seven utilizes the Ascension Press *Altaration: The Mystery of the Mass Revealed* and the Pflaum *Gospel Weeklies*. The eighth grade utilizes a Confirmation Preparation curriculum.

## **Benzinger Family Life Program**

As mandated by the Bishop of Metuchen, our program includes Family Life education. Our text is published by RCL Benzinger and is organized according to 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.

## **POLICIES**

### **Absences**

Students are expected to be present for each class unless illness or other serious reason prevents attendance. Please call the Office of Religious Education 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 for four or more classes, regardless of 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 parish property or at any parish-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 fuller explanation of this policy, please see the parish website or go to [www.bullypolice.org/nj\\_law.html](http://www.bullypolice.org/nj_law.html).

### **Arrival/Dismissal**

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

**Arrival – Sunday, Platt Hall, Grades Pre-K thru 1:** A parent or guardian is to escort their child through the main church entrance, down the steps to left of the narthex to Platt Hall, and proceed to the check-in table.



**Arrival – Sunday, Parish Center, Grades 2-6:** Children must be dropped off at the door located behind the Parish Center or escorted by parent or guardian into the Parish Center through the main door

**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 through the main door and to the check-in table, using either the steps or the elevator.

**Arrival – Monday, Grades 7 & 8:**

8th Grade – Parents may drop students off via car line at the lower level of the Parish Center.

7th Grade – Parents may drop off students at the front door of the Parish Center.

**Dismissal – Sunday, Platt Hall, Grades Pre-K thru 1:** Parents will indicate their choice of pick-up options. Students can be picked up either downstairs in Platt Hall by a parent or guardian at 11:00 AM or be escorted to the outside car line pickup area. Students will be outside starting at 11:00 AM.

**Dismissal – Sunday, Parish Center, Grades 2-6:** 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 at 5:00 pm. If a student is not picked up at that time, they will be escorted to the outside car line pickup area starting at 5:00 pm.

**Dismissal – Monday, Parish Center, Grades 7-8:**

8th Grade - Students will be picked up in Murray Hall by a parent or guardian.

7th Grade – Students will be picked up in the lower level at classroom by a parent or guardian.

**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.

**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 their 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.
- ❖ 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 the student to the office and his/her parents or guardians 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, religious education classes will be cancelled that day.

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

Cell phone and other electronic devices can be very disruptive in a classroom setting. 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 a student when this rule is not followed; the device will be returned to the student at the end of the class or gathering. An agreement to consent to the Cell phones/Electronic Devices Policy is to be signed electronically by the parent/guardian and child.

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

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

### **Child Abuse Policy**

If a catechist and/or the Parish Catechetical Leader suspects a child has been abused, New Jersey statues require the Department of Children and Families be notified immediately. In addition, it is the policy of the Diocese of Metuchen that its Office of Child and Youth Protection be notified.

### **Crisis Management/Fire Drills**

For the safety of our children and families, the parish 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 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 the parish website and an email message or text will be sent to each contact supplied during registration.

### **Emergency Contact Information**

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

## **Fees**

The religious education fee 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 the second and eighth grades. 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 the 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, seventh 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.

## **Homework**

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 parish property. If a student is found to be in possession, the student will be detained until the parent/guardians and, if necessary, the police 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 sixth grade students and has three components:

1. the online component using an e-book, which requires completing at home one session each week per schedule on a tablet or desktop and submitting an online e-assessment after each session;
2. a once a month in a classroom with classmates; and
3. attendance at Mass and special liturgies.

Regular registration fees apply. Parent(s) and student must attend the first scheduled sixth grade online class together to learn how to complete the program and receive an online password and username.

## **Records**

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

All students entering the 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 takes 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 continual faith formation starting with third grade and ending with eighth grade. The option for home study is not available for seventh and eighth grade Confirmation preparation.

In addition to the religious education curriculum, sacramental preparation includes parents meetings, retreats and rehearsals. Attendance by one or more parent or sponsor (in the case of Confirmation) is mandatory and if missed, may result in your child having to waiting another year for reception of the sacrament.

## Confirmation Preparation

In addition to weekly Mass and class attendance, Confirmation preparation includes:

### Grade 7

Student/Parent Meeting – held in the fall.

Stewardship – five activities, information provided at student/parent meeting.

### Grade 8

Student/Parent Meeting – held in the fall. Information on the following will be provided at the meeting:

Stewardship – five activities, information provided at student/parent meeting

Selection of Confirmation name and sponsor, with written essay

Participation in an activity with the Sponsor

Confirmation Retreat – Held in the winter, attended by student and sponsor

Confirmation Rehearsal – held prior to Confirmation and attended by the student and sponsor

The Bishop sets the date and time for the celebration of Confirmation and will be provided to you as soon as it is scheduled.

## **Special Needs**

If a child has special needs, parents/guardians are asked to share the information with the Parish Catechetical Leader 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 restrooms during religious education classes and activities without the express authorization of the Office of Religious Education. Visitors, including parents, are to see the Parish Catechetical Leader 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.

## 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.

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?