



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

Parish Center Office Hours

(when our office fully opens, the hours will be):

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

Thursday and Friday 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Office of Religious Education

Monday 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Tuesday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Wednesday 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM

and by appointment

Contact Information:

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

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## **Mission Statement**

The Religious Education Program at St. Mary 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 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 - STONY HILL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM PARENT HANDBOOK

Please read through this document carefully and then sign the Parent Handbook Agreement electronically. With your signature you will be stating that you understand the program and will abide by the 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 Faith and Whole Community Faith Formation, Prayer, Textbooks and Spiritual Development Points.

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, Crisis Management & 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 will 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 either in-person or virtually is, then, the primary component of our Religious Education Program. If, as the primary religious educator 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 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 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 one through sixth utilize the Loyola Press *Finding God* textbooks. In addition, 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.

**Spiritual Development Points**

Each student in grades 1-6 must accumulate spiritual development points throughout the school year. Activities in the classroom will also be counted towards the yearly total. The points are based on activities that can be done in the classroom, alone or as a family to nourish your spirits. The points needed per grade level and activities are detailed below:

- Grade 1: 100 points
- Grades 2, 3 and 4: 150 points
- Grades 5-6: 200 points

Spiritual Development Points	
Live stream Mass attendance	4
Go to cemetery to visit/pray for loved one	3
Visit any other church, say a prayer and send a picture	3
Picture of your family’s sacred space/altar	2
Online adoration	2
Pray a rosary – color as you go, date and send a picture	2
Stations of the Cross – online or individual family at a church	2
Pray the Daily Examen before bed (inside back cover of textbook)	1
Bless yourself and family with Holy Water	1
Go to St. Joseph Shrine in Millington or any other shrine and walk grounds/pray for loved one(s)	5
Bring your pet to “Blessing of the Pets”	3

Points should be accumulated from a variety of options, for example all points should not come from blessing oneself with Holy Water each day, but it’s not a bad idea.

You can also email me and suggest Spiritual Development Points for any activity that you feel increases your own family’s spiritual development.



## 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 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 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 prepared for each class.

**Arrival – Sunday, Parish Center Grades 1-6:** Children must be dropped off at the main door or the door located behind the Parish Center as determined by grade level.

**Arrival – Wednesday, Parish Center:** All classes on Wednesdays will take place in the Parish Center. Children must be dropped off at the main door or the door located behind the Parish Center as determined by grade level.

**Arrival – Monday, Grades 5 - 8:**

All classes will take place in the Parish Center. Children must be dropped off at the main door or the door located behind the Parish Center as determined by grade level.

**Dismissal – Sunday, Parish Center, Grades 1-6:** Students will be picked up downstairs in the Parish Center via the car line by a parent or guardian at 11:00 AM.

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

**Dismissal – Monday, Parish Center, Grades 5-8:**

Students will be picked up downstairs in the Parish Center via the car line by a parent or guardian 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.

## **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.
- ‡ 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, 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 Family 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and has three components:

1. the online component using an online 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. 6 service project hours to be offered throughout year; 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 in the dining hall to learn how to complete the program and receive online password and username.

## **Pandemic Plan**

In the event of a pandemic, St. Mary Stony Hill Religious Education Program will follow the rules and regulations set forth by the State of New Jersey and the Diocese of Metuchen.

If in person classes are canceled due to a pandemic, parents must pick up their child's book and materials and complete one session each week from home. In addition, students will need to attend virtual mass each week if they cannot attend the celebration of mass in person. Zoom classes will be scheduled one to four times a month depending on the catechists schedule and students will need to attend. Until in class classes resume, students will need to accrue and document spiritual development points as indicated by the curriculum. Students work must be turned in complete and on time for the students to move forward to the next grade level.

## **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 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. 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 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

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 for the celebration of Confirmation and will be provided 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 rest rooms 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. 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?