

**St. Mary Catholic Church
Parish School of Religion**



**St. MARY'S
CATHOLIC PARISH**

**Parent & Student Handbook
2020-2021**

St. Mary Religious Education Staff

Fr. John Singler	Pastor	440-243-3877 ext. 14
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Fr. Michael Feldtz	Parochial Vicar	440-243-3877 ext. 17
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Johanna Garr	Parish Catechetical Administrator	440-243-8221 ext. 24
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Office Hours – when PSR is in session

Johanna Garr

Mondays: 9 am - 3:30 pm & 5:30 – 8:30 pm

Appointments available upon request.

Welcome to 2020-2021

Throughout this new year of learning, we invite you to become more involved with your child's religious education. There will be opportunities for you to study the faith at an adult level while your children are learning on their level. Your interest and attendance sets an example for the children that growing in understanding of our faith is an ongoing process no matter how old we are. This year's Religious Education Program includes three major efforts explained below:

Child Safety Training

Bishop Lennon has approved the implementation of a four-part multi-media training program created by Praesidium, a national leader in abuse risk management. "Called to Protect" presents comprehensive and current abuse prevention information to parents, children, youth and young adults. St. Mary's presents this program in all classes K-5 each year. There is one program for grades 6-8 (Called to Protect for Youth) so this program is presented every three (3) years. Parents are asked to attend a meeting before the program is given to these "Junior High" students to explain the program. This program will be presented in the 2020-21 PSR year.

Echoing God's Word (Catechesis)

In grades K thru 6, a Lectionary based program presents the Sunday Gospel readings on an age appropriate level then applies the teachings of Christ to everyday life. The convenient booklet format involves both parents and children. Each weekly lesson is supported by a catechism of basic doctrine.

Grades 7 and 8 use an instruction based approach. This Catechism centered, more focused approach provides the information these students need in order to better prepare them for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the 8th grade.

Sacramental Preparation

Preparation for the "First Sacraments" of Reconciliation and Eucharist (grade 2) and preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation (grade 8) are provided for our parish children. This preparation is in addition to normal class time. The approach is class-based, with the Candidates, parents & sponsors gathering on a regular basis to better learn the meaning and intention of the special gift they are preparing to receive. These lessons are then "reinforced" in their normal classroom setting (PSR or School).

Stewardship

As in years past we will provide Stewardship opportunities for our children to allow them to become more aware of their responsibility to "be Christ" in their everyday world. Out-reach such as collecting donations and assembling Blessing Bags for the West Side Catholic Center, helping with the Parish Giving Tree, visiting the Elderly, serving meals at Diocesan/local events, donating to the Missions, and supporting parish events are only some ways the children's innate generosity is expanded to a Christian response. Again this year each class will have an opportunity to share their faith with St. Mary School by creating a message on our PSR board in the school. Their message will reside on the PSR board for a month.

Every year, Catechetical Sunday, (this year September 20, 2020 at 9:30 am Mass)

commissions those whom the community has designated to serve as catechists. It is a wonderful opportunity to reflect and rededicate ourselves to the Baptismal call to hand on the faith and be a witness to the Gospel.

ST. MARY FAITH PROGRAMS

PSR (Faith Formation) Program

Preschool Program Location: Fr. Garrity Center Meeting Room, 250 Kraft St.

Sunday mornings are for Preschool and Kindergarten students. They meet on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:30 AM. Sunday morning students meet in the Fr. Garrity Center Meeting Room. This session is dependent on the number of students that apply.

Grade 1-8 Program Location: St. Mary School, 265 Baker St.

Monday evenings are for students in grades 1-8. They meet on Monday evenings from 6:45-8:00 PM. Monday evening students enter through the gym at the back of the school. All other doors will be locked from the outside. For security reasons, the gym doors will be locked 10 minutes after the evening sessions begin. The doors will reopen by 7:45 pm for student dismissal at 8 pm. **Please be prompt in bringing children to the PSR program.**

Anyone trying to enter the building after these times is asked to enter by the side doors. These doors are monitored during every PSR session so someone will be available to provide you entrance.

PSR Staff

St. Mary PSR program is staffed by a dedicated and talented group of volunteer catechists who wish to share the Good News of Jesus with the children of the parish. These catechists take advantage of a variety of in-service sessions and diocesan training and certification opportunities to assure they are knowledgeable and up-to-date in Church teaching and classroom methods.

The program is overseen by the Pastor of St. Mary's Parish and an administrator, responsible for the office operations. The Religious Education Office is located in St. Mary's School. It is staffed during the school year on Mondays. The phone number is (440) 243-8221.

PSR Registration / Fee

Each year all students who are part of the Religious Education Program are required to register with the REO. The information provided is for the use of the REO and will never be provided to any 3rd party unless specifically approved by the student's parent a/or guardian.

Proof of Baptism must be submitted with all **new** registrations. If the student has been baptized at St. Mary Parish, that information should be indicated and the REO will check the Parish records for verification.

The fee schedule applies to the all children in the Religious Education Program. Our schedule for 2020-21 is as follows:

Fee Schedule from May 15 through September 9

\$ 75.00 per child

LATE FEE! \$20.00 per student whose registration arrives in our office after September 14

ST. MARY FAITH PROGRAMS – cont.

Sacramental Preparation

The Sacramental Preparation Program is a parish program to be completed by all students intending to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation & Eucharist (First Sacraments) or Confirmation. Details below provide expectations of full participation in the Sacramental Preparation Program.

- a. At a minimum, sacramental candidates are expected to attend monthly Candidate Mass. These Masses are held on Sundays at 9:30 am, once per month, during the school year. Please see calendar for dates.
- b. Monthly Preparation Sessions are offered during the school year covering content supporting the preparation process. The curriculum is specially designed to meet the needs of Sacramental Preparation. All candidates and parents/or sponsors are expected to attend.
- c. In addition to completion of the Sacramental Preparation Program, 1st and 2nd grade Catechesis is required for First Sacraments (Reconciliation & Eucharist) and 7th and 8th grade Catechesis is required for Confirmation.
- d. Confirmation candidates are expected to engage in discipleship opportunities throughout their preparation to explore their unique gifts and deepen their connection to the faith. Discipleship expectations include 1 outreach, 3 social and 3 spiritual activities. A Confirmation Service Form is available upon request for those wishing to complete requirements outside the St. Mary Sacramental Preparation Program.

Sacramental students who are unable to commit to this effort will be considered unprepared to receive the sacrament. Meeting with the Pastor will be required to reinstate these students.

Sacramental Preparation Registration / Fee

A fee of \$30.00 per child is requested for those planning to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation & Eucharist or Confirmation. Early/Late fees do not apply to Sacramental fees.

It is the policy of St. Mary Church that no child is refused instruction on the basis of need. Anyone who cannot pay the full fee at this time should contact Fr. John Singler to discuss options. (440-243-3877).

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

Student Etiquette/Behavior

1. All adult personnel are to be addressed in a polite, respectful manner, preferably as “Miss, Ms., Mrs., or Mr.”.
2. Radios, toys, snacks, candies, general reading materials and skateboards, etc. are not to be brought into class without the expressed approval of the PSR Administrator & the Catechist. Without such approval, eating, drinking, or chewing gum will not be tolerated in class.
3. Students should not wear inappropriate T-shirts, clothing or accessories to PSR sessions. Inappropriate includes, but is not limited to, clothing referencing alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, weapons or themes inconsistent with Christian belief and practice.
4. Students’ personal needs should be taken care of before class time. There is not a recess break for this purpose. Individual consideration will be shown with parental notification.
5. Students will have assigned seats each week. If desks or their contents are damaged, parents/guardians will be notified and assessed an appropriate replacement value.
6. Homework assignments, if given, are to be completed on schedule.

Students who do not obey these policies will be subject to disciplinary action.

PSR Curriculum

Weekly participation in Saturday (evening) or Sunday Eucharist (Mass) is the most essential part of each child’s ongoing faith development. Not only is participation in the Eucharist expected of every baptized Catholic, but it is the center of our faith life. The staff of St. Mary’s Parish cannot place enough stress on the importance of making regular Mass attendance a priority.

This year the St. Mary PSR program will be supplementing our traditional classroom catechesis with use of the text *Finding God* by Loyola Press. This is an exciting approach to children’s catechesis for preschool through junior high which offers a developmentally appropriate text per grade level with supplemental activities and assessments. The *Finding God* series is in accordance with the diocesan religion curriculum and approved by the U.S. Bishops committee for Catechesis. More information is provided [online](#)

Are there any other books we are going to use?

Sacramental Preparation Curriculum

Additional books and booklets are used for both the First Sacraments and Confirmation preparation programs. The Blessed books by Dynamic Catholic ([link](#)) are distributed at the First Sacrament Preparation meetings. There is considerable free online content/videos provided on the website for parents to use with students. The Confirmation program will utilize the booklet program *Gifted with the Spirit* by Pflaum Publishing which provides bonus resources for parents online ([link](#)).

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES – cont.

Classroom Discipline

Respect and courtesy are expected of every PSR student. Catechists will clearly state classroom rules and procedures during the first session of PSR year.

Routine discipline matters within the classroom will be handled by the Catechist. If the behavior continues or escalates, the Catechist may request support and/or assistance from the office. The DRE, REO Administrator or Assistant member of the office support staff will come to the classroom to escort the disruptive student to the office. During this time, the student will be assigned tasks by the DRE or the REO Administrator. These assignments will be documented and sent to the parent/guardian for review, signature and return to the DRE.

Parents/guardians will be called should a second visit to the office be necessary. If the disciplinary problem is not resolved, despite the best efforts of the catechists, the Review Board will convene to decide the best resolution to the problem. Their decision will be documented and discussed with the student's parent/guardian before any action is taken.

The Review Board consists of:

The Parish Pastor
Student's Catechist
REO Coordinator

Students should always remember that when they gather, they represent St. Mary and always act accordingly.

Student Evaluation Forms

Parents/guardians of students in grades 1-8 will receive an evaluation form at the end of the school year. The preferred method of communication for these evaluations is via electronic mail. If this method of communication is not possible, the evaluation will be sent via postal mail.

Evaluation forms will be completed and sent to the parents/guardians of our students after PSR has concluded for the year.

Should a student perform poorly the first semester, the Catechist will contact the parent/guardian after the first semester is complete to discuss ways to help the student. If sufficient progress is not made in the second semester, the Review Board will convene to discuss the matter.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES – cont.

HOME SCHOOLING POLICY

With prior approval from the Pastor and according to this policy, parents and/or family members may provide formal catechesis for their own children in their home. Listed below are the procedures for Home Schooling Policy (adapted from the “Guidelines for Catechesis” established by the Diocese of Cleveland):

2. If a child is unable to attend classes during the times that St. Mary PSR meets, then the parent or guardian should be encouraged to investigate a PSR program at another parish that meets on a different evening.
3. If the child is not able to attend another parish’s PSR program, then the parent or guardian is to schedule with the PSR Coordinator to discuss the home schooling process and to receive teaching materials. The student should meet with the PSR Coordinator before home schooling starts to understand his or her responsibilities.
4. The parents or guardians are to meet with the PSR Coordinator for training, advice and consultation every 6-8 weeks to discuss how the home-based catechesis is developing. These meetings also provide an opportunity for the PSR Coordinator to evaluate the families’ catechetical efforts.
5. The student, with or without the parents or guardians, is to meet with the PSR Coordinator or Catechist every 6-8 weeks to review the topics covered between meetings and allow a review of the completed work for those topics.
6. Home-schooled students’ families will be responsible to find out through the REO website and the parish bulletin about any community activities, liturgical celebrations or other enrichment opportunities offered to the PSR students. The REO Coordinator will also include the family in emails about upcoming events.
7. There is a \$35 fee for all years except the sacramental years. The fee for sacramental years is the \$35 standard registration fee plus the sacramental fee (\$30).
8. **Sacramental Year (grade 2 & 8).**
All parish students (PSR & school) intending to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation & Eucharist (First Sacraments) or Confirmation are expected to fully participate in the sacramental preparation program by the following actions:
 - a. Sacramental students are expected to attend monthly Candidate Mass. These Masses are held on Sundays, once per month, during the preparation program.
 - b. There are a number of Preparation Sessions during the year, that support the preparation process. All parents and/or candidates are expected to attend when required.
 - c. All Sacramental Students are expected to attend regular parish religion programs during the year.
 - d. All Sacramental Students are expected to pay the established Sacramental fee (\$30) to offset the additional costs associated with this parish program.
 - e. The student will be expected to attend all community of faith events that occur during the year of their sacraments. These events will be listed on the sacrament schedule. The meetings and expectations mentioned above (#3,4,5) will also be required.

Sacramental students who are unable to commit to this effort will be considered unprepared to receive the sacrament. Meeting with the Pastor will be required to reinstate these students.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES – cont.

Reporting Student Absence

Parents are asked to contact the Religious Education Office if their child will not be attending a PSR session. Absence is reported by calling (440) 243-8221 ext. 24 and reporting the child's name, grade and Catechist name.

Unless requested otherwise, the REO will not contact parents/guardians of students who are not present and have not called in absent. Request forms are part of the registration packet completed each year.

Snow Days

When PSR sessions are cancelled, due to heavy snow fall or other inclement conditions, students will normally be notified via broadcast email message and Remind. As needed, this information will also be reported on the following radio/TV stations: iAlert (Channel 3 & WTAM 1100AM) & NewsChannel 5's School Closing Network. Please do not call the rectory. If conditions are hazardous, parents/guardians should use their good judgment concerning coming to class.

Visitors Policy

No visitors are permitted to enter any classroom without permission from the Religious Education Office. All special arrangements for visitors should be made with the office prior to the visit.

Should a student bring a visitor to class, he or she **must** have permission from the catechist. The student **must** check in at the office with his or her visitor before going to class.

Recognizing that parents are the primary religious educators of their children, parents/guardians are encouraged to visit PSR classes. However parents are expected to notify the REO and make arrangements with the individual catechist before visiting classes. Please remember that the catechist has a lesson plan and is teaching the entire class, therefore any visitor to the classroom should not disrupt normal activities.

Protecting God's Children

Saint Mary's Church is firmly committed to providing a safe, positive learning and working environment for everyone in the Religious Education Program. For this reason, and in keeping with the goals and objectives of Catholic education, Saint Mary's Religious Education Program expressly prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence in the school environment. This policy re-emphasizes the personal dignity of the individual and fosters positive sexual attitudes and respect for others.

For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment includes the following specific instances:

- Verbal sexual abuse
- Disseminating obscene or sexually explicit material, whether in the form of music, written lyrics, pornographic pictures, or other literature
- Having such materials in one's possession in the school, on school grounds, or at school-sponsored activities
- Obscene or sexually explicit graffiti anywhere in the school or on the school/parish grounds
- Continuing and unwanted written or oral communication directed to another of a sexual nature
- Spreading sexual rumors/innuendoes
- Obscene or sexually explicit gestures
- Any other inappropriate behavior of a sexually explicit or obscene nature that demeans or offends the recipient.

The above list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but is intended to provide guidance as to what may constitute sexual harassment.

Some acts of sexual harassment may also be criminal. Criminal acts of sexual harassment are defined as an act where the recipient is physically touched without his/her consent in a sexual manner; is expressly threatened or perceives a threat of physical harm for purposes of the offender's sexual gratification; or is the victim of sex offenses under Ohio law, including Gross Sexual Imposition (O.R.C. 2907.05), Sexual Battery (O.R.C.2907.03), Rape (O.R.C. 2907.02), Importuning (O.R.C.2907.07), Voyeurism (O.R.C. 2907.08), Public Indecency (O.R.C. 2907.09) or Felonious Sexual Penetration (O.R.C. 2907.12) as examples.

In each of the above examples, the Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately.

Isolated, trivial incidents are not sufficient to constitute harassment and will be handled according to the student behavior code.

Allegations of sexual harassment, as defined above, are to be reported to the Catechist and the REO Administrator. Parents of both the offender and the victim will be informed of the allegations. The matter is to be kept confidential by all parties involved, and every effort will be made to protect the alleged victim from retaliation. The parents of both the offender and the alleged victim are obligated to cooperate in remedying the situation.

Protecting God's Children –cont.

If the allegations are substantiated, disciplinary actions will be taken. These actions will depend on the nature, frequency and severity of the action, the ages of the offender and victim, the history of similar actions by this individual, and the circumstances in which the harassment occurred. Possible disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, any or all of the following:

- Verbal warning/reprimand and apology to the victim,
- A parent/student/Pastor/Administrator conference,
- Written warning/reprimand and parent notification,
- Detention or removal from selected school or program activities,
- Behavior/probation contracts, possibly requiring professional intervention,
- Suspension,
- Expulsion.

Sexual violence is handled separately because of its potentially criminal nature. If an incident of sexual violence occurs, the Pastor, Deacon or other school authority or Religious Education Program personnel are required under state law to report the incident (Ohio Revised Code 2151.421). Ohio Revised Code Section 2921.22 also requires any person who knows that a felony has been or is being committed shall report such information to law enforcement officials. The Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately if there is any "reason to believe" (Ohio Revision Code 2151.421) that sexual abuse has or violence has occurred involving a child less than eighteen years of age. The Diocesan Legal Office will be contacted immediately in these situations.

All staff members and volunteers have agreed to be in compliance with *The Diocese of Cleveland: Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse*. This policy is available online at http://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/virtus/virtus_index.htm. A printed copy is available from the Religious Education Office upon request.

This policy includes, but is not limited to, each person with access to children completing the *Virtus: Protecting God's Children* educational program as well as undergoing a background check with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

How to Report Suspected Abuse

We encourage people to report any suspected inappropriate behavior to the Diocesan Response Office, which is staffed by trained counselors and was established to respond to all allegations.

response_services@dioceseofcleveland.org or (216)334-2999

Prayer for Healing for Victims of Abuse

Praise to you, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
source of all consolation and hope.

By your Son's dying and rising
He remains our light in every darkness,
our strength in every weakness.

Be the refuge and guardian
of all who suffer from abuse and violence.
Comfort them and send healing
for their wounds of body, soul and spirit.
Rescue them from bitterness and shame
and refresh them with your love.
Heal the brokenness in all victims of abuse
and revive the spirits of all who lament this sin.

Help us to follow Jesus
in drawing good from evil, life from death.
Make us one with you in your love for justice
as we deepen our respect
for the dignity of every human life.

Giver of peace,
make us one in celebrating your praise,
both now and for ever. Amen.

+ John F. Kinney
Bishop of Saint Cloud, MN
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Protecting God's Children – cont.

WEAPONS POLICY

St. Mary PSR follows the proposed policy of the Diocese of Cleveland. This policy expressly prohibits the use, possession, sales, or discharge of any weapons or explosive devices in the school/parish, on school/parish grounds. This policy shall apply to all students, participants in parish programs, catechists, administrators, and other personnel in the school or parish.

This policy includes, but is not limited to:

- Any firearm
- Knife
- Deadly weapon
- Explosive or incendiary device

As defined by state law, a deadly weapon is "any instrument, device, or thing capable of inflicting death, and designed or specifically adapted for use as a weapon, or possessed, carried or used as a weapon." (Ohio Revised code 2923.11A) Firearms shall include any loaded or unloaded gun of any caliber or type. This prohibition also includes any pistol, rifle, or other device that uses air or gas propelled projectiles.

Violations of this policy will warrant:

- Notification of the police

Or may warrant:

- Immediate suspension
- Exclusion from a parish program

Signing by parents and student of a probation contract that includes all the conditions of the student's retention in the program.

St. Mary Religious Education Office

265 Baker Street

Berea, Ohio 44017

Telephone: (440) 243-8221

Fax: (440) 243-8411

REO Coordinator



St. MARY'S
CATHOLIC PARISH