

# Religious Education Parent Handbook

*Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

*Matthew 19:14*



**St. Mark Catholic Church  
2727 W. Tangerine Road  
Tucson, AZ 85742  
520.469.7835 Parish Office  
Ext. 309 for the Parish Hall Entry Phone**

**Mass Times:**

**Saturday, 5:00 pm**

**Sunday-7:30 am, 9:30 am, 11:30 am, & 5 pm Byzantine Liturgy**

**Weekday: Monday - Saturday, 8:00 am**

**Confession: Saturday, 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm in the Chapel or by appointment**

**Parish Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm**

## **St. Mark Mission Statement**

*"We are a Roman Catholic faith family nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist. As a community, we advance spiritual growth through lifelong learning. We share a commitment to living the Gospel of Christ by our welcome to all, our celebration of the sacraments, and our service to others."*

## **Welcome to St. Mark**

Welcome to St. Mark Catholic Church. St. Mark's Religious Education programs are dedicated to providing ongoing opportunities to encounter Christ and the Church to our parish families. Religious Education (RE) is centered on the growth and journey of the family together as a whole. In this, the role of parent involvement and the family journeying together is indispensable.

## **What does St. Mark offer your family?**

### **Our Vision**

Our parish is committed to supporting your family in order for your child to live a life of virtue, consistent prayer, and continued growth in their relationship with Christ and the Church. An active faith life helps us to encounter the challenges of marriage, family, work and the world with hope and a sense of purpose. The life of faith is a vision of what it means to be a human being and the sanctity of our life and the lives of others. The greatest gift that God can give us is the knowledge of who he made us to be. We receive that gift with gratitude when we seek to live as children of God. We live that vision most faithfully in the community of the Church.

### **Our Mission**

We will work with you to create opportunities to help your children learn to live a life of virtue. We will teach prayer and assist your family to continue to grow in the habit of prayer. Our hope is for us all to grow as disciples. To make this possible it is essential that we help each other develop spiritual habits that will lead us all into a deeper relationship with God.

### **Our Values**

We aim to establish a partnership with parents to support their efforts to nurture their child's faith formation. To achieve this end, we will assist you in your efforts to live as disciples in your homes. We also commit ourselves to continue to develop our own personal and public relationship with God and the Roman Catholic Church. As we learn to love each other better through our common love and worship of God, we too learn to love God better by our love and support of each other's faith.

## **What we expect of Parent(s), Students) and Catechist(s)**

### The Plan

Our parish uses the "We Believe" catechetical program published by Sadlier. Our program has three components that work together. Each component plays an indispensable role and in this, the commitment of each is required to ensure success of the learner. The essential components to ensure faith growth of the student are: the commitment of the parent, the student, and the catechist.

### What our Catechists Promise

Catechists will care for each student with dignity and respect. Catechists will keep open communication with the parents and/or the Director of Religious Education (DRE) about the progress of each



student. Catechists will follow the attached schedule for class material and will not deviate from the assigned curriculum to ensure that the parent knows what their child is studying each week.

### What we ask of our Parents

Parents play an essential role in the faith development of their child. Parents are asked to communicate with their child's catechist and/or the DRE about the progress of their child. Recognizing that parents are the primary educators of faith for our students, parents are responsible for reinforcing the classroom lesson at home each week. Grades 1 through 5 use vocabulary, as each lesson is built around one to five specific "keywords". Kindergarten does not have "keywords". To encourage the use and practice of keywords parents are asked to:

1. Download our parish app from the internet.
2. Signup for a weekly push notification containing the keywords.
3. Seek to use the keywords in conversation with the students at dinner, in the car and at home.

### What we ask of our Student

Religious Education is centered around the well-being of the student. While catechist and parent commitment is necessary, the commitment of the student is absolutely crucial for learning to happen. We ask for the cooperation of the student in the following tasks below.

The student will:

1. Complete in class work
2. Have access to and be encouraged by the parent to play the online learning activities through our curriculum website that are appropriate to the grade level.
3. Use the keywords in conversation with their parents
4. Bring their workbook to each class.

## **The Class Day Prayer-Snacks-Study**

- Snacks are provided to students on a discretionary basis by the RE department. Snacks provided by St. Mark are pre-packaged.
- It is the parent's responsibility to notify the teachers of dietary restrictions and food allergies of students. Parents will be asked to provide alternate snacks for children that are not able to eat the snacks provided by the RE department.
- Birthdays, holidays, and special occasions may be celebrated in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to bring party favors or a special snack for the celebration. In ensure the health of each student parents need to discuss additional snacks with the catechist and/or DRE.
- Every RE session starts with group prayer. Parents are encouraged to stay and pray with the group. Taking time from your busy day to pray is a great example to your child and is a wonderful way to support their faith growth.

## **Safe Environment**

In accordance with the Diocese of Tucson Safe Environment program as mandated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, St. Mark's sponsors educational programs on child safety for parents at least once per year. The purpose of the session(s) is to provide you with information about personal safety



for children that you will then be able to share with them at home. We hope that you will make it a priority to attend this session when it is scheduled.

Additionally, during the course of the year we will provide education to your child about how to be safe. This training includes grades Kindergarten through Life Teen. This education will be conducted in a manner appropriate to the age of the student and in the context of our faith. If you do not want your child to participate in personal safety education, you may sign a Refusal of Permission form and return it to your child's teacher. We will, in turn, involve your child in another activity during this time. We want to assure you that all adult volunteers directly involved with your children have received a criminal history and background check as mandated by the Diocese. If you have any questions or concerns, you may speak with our Compliance Officer, Shantell Kubat.

## **Child Abuse**

The State of Arizona regulations, Diocesan and Parish policy requires us to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Child Protective Services or local law enforcement agencies. We assure you our desire to protect your children and we will involve law enforcement when a situation calls for reporting.

## **Religious Education Schedule**

Our RE schedule can be found on our parish website or can be downloaded through our parish app.

### **K-5th Grade**

Tuesday from 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm  
Sundays Family Faith Formation from 10:00 am to 11:45 am

### **6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Wednesday from 6:30-8:00 pm

### **9-12<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Sunday from 6:30-8:00 pm

## **Student Transfers**

Any student not baptized at St. Mark must provide a recent Baptismal Certificate at registration and copies of any other Sacramental records no later than **October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018**. We request that the parents inform us of their child's previous Religious Education so that we can best meet your needs.

## **Financial Obligation**

St. Mark Parish relies on parents for their financial support of our Religious Education program. Our volunteers can only do so much. We request that you fund this program and the materials provided:

One child \$65  
Two children \$100



Three or more children \$145

You can pay online through online giving or at the parish office by cash or check. If you have financial circumstances you would like to discuss with us, please contact the DRE, Stephanie Rambaran.

## Diocesan Sacramental Requirements

It is the responsibility of parishes to provide programs for all children and parents preparing for the celebration of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Children in home school settings are required to participate in the immediate preparation for the sacraments including parent preparation, interviews for sacramental readiness and practice for sacramental celebrations. Ordinarily, the celebrations of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist should occur in the child's home parish. In special circumstances, permission may be granted (in writing) by the pastor of the home parish for the celebration to take place elsewhere.

The rights of children to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist can best be served when pastors, parents and catechists offer formation for these sacraments appropriate to the level and development of the child. Normally a full year of catechesis should precede the celebration of these sacraments. Parents have the responsibility to participate in their own catechetical formation so that they will be able to prepare their child for these sacraments in collaboration with the parish community. Parents, in consultation with the catechetical staff, discern the readiness of their child for the sacraments.

The preparation and celebration for the sacrament of Reconciliation is separated from and precedes the preparation for and celebration of the sacrament of Eucharist. The age of discretion both for Reconciliation and the sacrament of the Eucharist is the seventh year. From that time on begins the obligation of fulfilling the precept of both Penance and Eucharist.

## Attendance/Tardiness

We ask that out of respect for our catechists, students, and parents that all students arrive on time. Each teacher aids the pastor who is responsible for assessing whether students are ready for the reception of the sacraments. As respect for others is the keystone of living a life of virtue, tardiness as well as the number of class absences will affect the teacher's assessment of a student's readiness for the reception of the Sacrament. ***Please note: if a child misses more than 25 percent of scheduled classes the child will be dropped from the class and no credit will be given.***

## Observing and Visiting

Parents are welcome to observe classrooms and assist at the catechist's discretion. All visitors are required to schedule visits in advance with the catechist and/or DRE.

## Curriculum

### K-5

- St. Mark's Religious Education Program K-5 uses the "We Believe" Religion Series published by Sadlier <http://www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve/>
- This series presents Catholic teaching using time tested methods of catechesis and faith formation, in a beautiful, student friendly, format.
- Each student receives a full-color textbook that is theirs to keep and to write in.



- If the textbook or activity books are damaged or lost during the school year, it is the parent's responsibility to purchase a replacement book through the Religious Education program.

## 6-8

- St. Mark's Religious Education Program 6-8 uses ongoing resources from the Center for Ministry Development <https://www.cmdnet.org/>.
- Students do not use a specific textbook for Jr. High Youth Group

## 9-12

- St. Mark's Religious Education Program 9-12 uses ongoing resources from the Center for Ministry Development <https://www.cmdnet.org/>, as well as from Lifeteen International <https://lifeteen.com/>
- Students do not use a specific textbook for High Youth Group

### High School Confirmation

- St. Mark's Religious Education Program for High School Confirmation uses "*Called to Mercy*" published by Saint Mary's Press <http://www.calledtomeracy.com/>.
- Students and parents will be given online access to their personal copy of their e-textbook.
- Assessments are required for each module, and the schedule of assessments is communicated to Confirmandi and parents by our Confirmation catechist Mayra Fernanda Carpena.

### Assessments

In order that we may frequently assess the progress of the growth of each of our students assessments are may be taken. The purpose of the assessments is to assess how our partnership between parent, student and catechist for learning is improving the faith life of our students and families.

How can your student prepare? Each question is drawn from the keywords that you have reviewed with your student each week. The weekly study guide for the weekly chapter is published at <http://www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve/>. Before taking an assessment students may run through the study guides, as they are self-correcting learning guides. Results of assessments are available to the student; parent, pastor and catechist. Contact Stephanie at [DRE@stmarkov.com](mailto:DRE@stmarkov.com) for the results.

### Discipline/Problem Solutions

In order for learning to happen and in the best interest and safety of the St. Mark community there are certain boundaries that must be respected in regard to the behavior of students, parents, and catechists. If it becomes necessary, disruptive people will be asked to exit our program. This is regrettable, but necessary.

- Discipline is used as a means of teaching self-control in a child's relationships to others and his/her environment.
- Redirection is used as a first step. When age appropriate, the child will be guided through what happened, his/her feelings will be discussed, and alternate ways of handling the situation will be looked at.
- A child may be separated from the group, within the confines of the classroom for a time-out. When time-out is used, a guide of one minute for each year of age will be used.
- In repeated offenses, time-out in the office in the presence of the DRE and/or conferences with the parents will be used.



- Parents may be called to pick up their child in the event of biting, kicking, hitting or as deemed necessary by the catechist and/or DRE.

## **Safety Policies & Procedures**

St. Mark Religious Education department holds a strong commitment to the safety and well-being of all its students. Safety policies are strictly enforced for the good of your children and all students of the Program.

### **K-8**

1. Students may arrive 15 minutes before the start of class. Parents are required to come in with their children and sign in their students. Students are not to be dropped off on the street and sent into the building.
2. At the end of class parents or guardians are required to come into the child's classroom and sign them out. Out of respect of our catechists please be prompt when picking up your child.
3. Please leave a phone number where we can easily reach you. Only adults with prior written or verbal authorization will be allowed to sign children in or out.
4. Proof of identification may be requested. Children not picked up within 10 minutes of the end of class presents a concern to the teachers. If this becomes a habit, you family may have to withdraw from our program. If an adult cannot be reached within one-half hour after the close of the session, the Oro Valley Police will be contacted under parish policy.
5. If a student is unaccounted for during the session, a thorough search of the school grounds, inside and outside, will be conducted. If a child is not located within 15 minutes, parents will be notified along with the Oro Valley Police department.
6. Catechists will verify that all children are picked up at the end of the day by reviewing the sign-in sheet and inspecting the classroom. Telephone calls may be made to verify sign-out if signatures are omitted.

### **9-12**

1. Students in high school age Religious Education are responsible for checking themselves in and out.
2. Students may drive themselves to and from High School youth group with permission of parents.
3. Students may be dropped off from family members or friends with permission of parents.
4. Due to child safety rules, a student may not receive a ride to or from St. Mark with a Church employee without a signed parent permission slip.

## **Illnesses, Accidents, Injuries and Emergencies**

If a child is not well enough to participate in class, they should not be brought to Religious Education. Children should be free of fever, diarrhea, and vomiting for 24 hours before attending school. Children with green or yellow runny noses are considered contagious and should not be at school. Please inform the office of any contagious diseases such as strep throat, chicken pox, or pink eye.

Children, who are taking antibiotics, must be on them for 48 hours before returning to Religious Education. Medication will not be given during Religious Education. This includes the use of cough drops. If your child cannot attend school without medication, please keep him/her home. Should a child become ill at Religious Education, he/she will be separated from the other children and parents will be called. Should a parent not be reached within 15 minutes, the emergency numbers listed on the up-date form will be called. An ill child must be picked up immediately.

Should a child be injured, the wound will be washed with water and a Band-Aid applied. Parents will be notified immediately and depending on the severity of the injury, may be required to pick up the child. Emergency medical support may be called at the discretion of the teacher.



## Homework Assignments

Students will be held responsible for completing homework assignments online, assessments, and reading. It is the parent's responsibility to stay informed of your child's assignments by assisting and or overseeing them, and speaking to their Catechists whenever necessary.

## Communication

Our Catechists make every effort to keep you well informed about what is going on in your child's classroom, what their assignments are, as well as important notices and reminders. You are always welcome to take the time to discuss your child's progress with their Catechist in person or via phone or email. Any Catechist can also be contacted through the DRE, Stephanie Rambaran. Notes and emails will be sent home with your child to keep you informed of all upcoming events. Check when signing your child in/out for any additional flyers/handouts. Mailings email, and phone calls are also used to keep you updated and informed.

## Cancellation of Classes

In case of severe weather the Religious Education Staff and Catechist will do their best to notify you via email, parish app or a phone call in the event that classes are cancelled. Please make sure the office has your current contact information on file.

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## APPENDIX

### Devotions

We place great value in teaching your child some of the great devotions of our Faith. A portion of each class is devoted to teaching the students how to pray. Your children will learn their prayers by practicing with you and at the back of each of the text books as well as at <http://www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve> select grades, select visitor, click on resources, then prayers.

### Sunday Worship

Attending Mass every Sunday (or Saturday vigil) and Holy Day of Obligation as a family is of first importance. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that missing Mass on a Sunday or holy day without serious reason can be a mortal sin: "Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." (CCC 2181-82)

### Parish Website

To check on the latest St. Mark Parish news, view the weekly bulletin, or other parish news, parents can visit our website at [www. http://www.stmarkov.org/familyministry/](http://www.stmarkov.org/familyministry/).

## Miscellaneous Resources





We suggest every Catholic home should have:

- Holy Bible. Be sure you have a Catholic Translation. *The New American Bible* is recommended. The text of scripture can also be accessed online at [www.usccb.org/nab/bible](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible).
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC): the universal and official explanation of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Find it easily on amazon.com by searching “the catechism” (get the 2nd edition). Complete text is also at [www.usccb.org/catechism](http://www.usccb.org/catechism).
- Crucifix in a prominent place. Search “Catholic gifts” to buy online.
- Holy Water. Bring a small, clean bottle to church and fill it with blessed water from the baptismal font.
- Rosaries.
- Statue(s) of the Blessed Mother. Search “Catholic gifts” to buy online.

## **Guidelines for Parents Maintaining a Safe Environment for Your Children**

We sponsor educational programs on child safety for parents at least once per year. We hope that you will make it a priority to attend the session when it is scheduled. In the meantime, we hope these points will be helpful to you in talking to your children about personal safety. Please do ask about any point that you would like to discuss.

During the course of the year, we will provide education to your child about how to be safe. This education will be done in a manner appropriate to the age of the children and in the context of our faith. In the annual education for parents, we will talk more about the program that will be offered to your child. When you understand what we are doing, we think you will appreciate very much the value of personal safety education. Please ask for as much detail as you desire. Nevertheless, if you do not want your child to participate in personal safety education, all you need do is give us in writing your instruction not to provide personal safety education to your child. We will honor your instruction.

### **Teaching young children in the home about personal safety**

1. Focus on safety rules rather than concepts. Remember all the different areas of safety—traffic, fire, bicycle and the like.
2. Your child will understand the difference between touches or other contacts with adults or other children that feel safe and comfortable and those that feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Reinforce the difference by using examples.
3. A comfortable way to talk about unsafe touches is to teach your child about “private parts.” Private parts can be described as the parts of the body that are covered by the bathing suit. Private parts are touched only by parents or others charged with the care of the personal needs or health of the child.
4. Children sometimes think it is wrong to “say no” to an adult. Let your child know that he or she can “say no” if he or she feels unsafe or uncomfortable, even if the adult is one of the above. A good person will welcome the child’s expression of discomfort, treating it as important feedback and something to talk about.
5. Be sure that your child knows that “saying no” applies to anyone. Most child abuse or maltreatment is perpetrated by someone the child and you know and trust. It is worth repeating, a good person will welcome the child’s expression of discomfort, treating it as important feedback.
6. Children can also understand the rule, “get away,” when you feel unsafe or uncomfortable with what another person is doing. It is a rare situation in which the potential molester will physically confine or restrain a child who wants to leave.



7. Finally, let your child know that it is important to tell a trusted adult if he or she feels uncomfortable or unsafe with an adult. Teach the child that there is never a good reason to keep secrets for an adult about something that feels unsafe or uncomfortable. Help your child name trusted adults and encourage him or her to talk to them until someone takes his or her report seriously.
8. Have these conversations regularly. They will help you build a relationship with your child in which he or she is likely to bring up whatever is troubling. You don't want to be "the last to know."

## **Teaching older children and teenagers in the home about personal safety**

1. As children reach the fourth and fifth grades, they are more able to understand concepts.
2. They are also more vulnerable to being lured in more subtle ways by harmful persons. These lures are often very attractive; those who would take advantage of children are very sensitive to their needs and wants.
3. As they get older still, especially when they reach high school, the number of dangers multiplies, as do the problems our children can get themselves into.
4. Those who would take advantage of older children and teenagers are very good at identifying what will attract or win over the targeted child. They see what the child needs or wants and they try to provide it.
5. At these ages it is even more important to have in-depth discussions and to invite persons from the community with special expertise to help with these discussions.
6. In-depth discussions are important because you do want to develop a relationship with your child in which he or she will feel comfortable to come to you with concerns.
7. Other persons from the community are important because in our rapidly changing world parents are often unaware of the type and nature of the dangers young people face. Internet traps are one very clear example of such new dangers.
8. The basic messages are the same. Help your older children trust their instincts and their consciences.
9. When they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, when they know that they are being asked to do something wrong, remind them that they can be assertive and refuse to go further. They can get away from the situation and they can talk to you or another trusted adult.

## **General information**

1. The mandated reporting law requires any member of the parish or school team to make a personal report to Child Protective Services (CPS) and/or law enforcement if there is reasonable suspicion that is being, has been or is in danger of being harmed.
2. Our personnel are required to make that report regardless of who may have harmed the child. CPS or law enforcement will investigate to sort out the facts of the situation as fairly as possible.
3. All involved realize the trauma for a family at such a time and, within limits necessary for the investigation, will provide support that you may need. Ask for help for your child or the rest of the family.
4. If your child reports abuse to you or to another trusted adult, your reaction is very important. As much as possible at such a difficult time for you as well as for your child, try to remain calm. Do not rush to judgment; neither deny the truth of what your child has reported nor make an interpretation of the facts that might turn out to be wrong. Focus instead on supporting your child for making the report and cooperate with law enforcement or CPS in sorting things out.
5. One of the most damaging thoughts a child can hold in the case of abuse is the belief that it was his or her fault. We know that a child is not held responsible for abuse or maltreatment by an adult, but the child may assume just the opposite. There will be time later for further education about safety rules or



(for older children) avoiding dangerous situations; in the immediate aftermath of a report, focus on simply being there with and for your child.

6. You cannot protect your child from every danger, but you can teach him or her about personal safety. You can collaborate with your parish or school to reinforce that teaching.
7. You can form a relationship with your child in which he or she will have confidence that you are a person who can listen and offer counsel worth heeding.
8. You can, if you have reasonable suspicion of danger, make a report yourself to law enforcement.

