



**St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish School of
Religion Parent/Student Handbook
2021-2022**

Information Sheet

Religious Education Office
Mrs. Christine Brooks, Director of Religious Education
Address: St. Mary Parish School of Religion
2680 Stoney Ridge Rd. Avon, OH 44011
Phone number: (440)934-6246
Email address: cbrooks@stmaryavon.org
Classes are held for grades:
1-4-Tuesday evening from 6:30-7:45pm
5-8- Monday evening from 6:30-7:30pm

Dear PSR Families,

We are excited to have you as part of the St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception parish family! St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish School of Religion (PSR) is a part of our Parish's Religious Education process and its purpose is to instill our Catholic faith and traditions into the lives of the children who attend public or non-Catholic schools. It is the goal of the program to help the parents of the children in PSR to fulfill their responsibility "to give religious training (by word and example) to ones' children and to use parish schools and religious education programs." (Precepts #4 of the Catholic Church) We make every effort to help fulfill the mission of the Church by passing on the message of God, forming a community to build up the kingdom of God, worship together as one body in Christ and providing service opportunities to our local community and the world through the PSR program. The family is a vital piece in the faith formation process. The PSR program is established at St. Mary's to help the parents in their efforts, but cannot substitute it.

This handbook has information about the program and the policies that guide it. This is a good reference should you have any questions throughout the year. These policies will be strictly followed to help maintain an organized and safe environment. We look forward to collaborating with you this year in the religious training of your child/ren!

Sincerely,
Mrs. Christine Brooks
Director of Religious Education

Philosophy

Our PSR is part of our Parish community specifically committed to sharing the Roman Catholic faith with the children of our parish who attend public and non-Catholic schools. The ministry of teaching is a gift and calling from God. It is also a calling from the community and by the community.

Our program is staffed by parishioners who have responded to this call. The parish community supports these teachers and aides through prayer. Together with the Diocese of Cleveland, we encourage them to take the necessary catechist formation classes to foster their professional competence and personal confidence. They are dedicated to working with you, the primary educator of your child, to strengthen our parish community and to foster family life through catechesis, service and community worship. The textbook series we employ in the catechesis of your child is **Christ Our Life** for grades 1-7 and **Confirmed in the Spirit** for grade 8 these are religion series of Loyola Press.

Goals and Objectives

The Saint Mary Parish School of Religion seeks to:

- Communicate the Gospel message of Jesus.
- Lead the children to a personal relationship with Jesus.
- Provide opportunities to build and experience a faith community.
- Teach the children personal prayer and encourage opportunities for growth in prayer.
- Encourage participation in the sacramental life of the Church.
- Orientate the children to the responsibility, challenge and experience of service required by the membership in the larger Catholic Christian Community.
- Provide a Catholic moral basis for decision-making.
- Provide instruction in the religious truths and values in such a way that they become an integrated part of the children's lives.

Responsibilities

Teachers

You can expect that your child's teachers will:

- Be prepared for their classes so that they are able to communicate the Catholic faith to the children.
- Be sure that the information presented to the children is wholly in accord with Catholic teaching.
- Give the children a deep knowledge and love of Scripture as the guidelines for living their faith.
- Establish a welcoming and positive learning environment that respects every child.
- Instill in the students the practice of prayer and love of the Mass and Church.
- Evaluate student progress by oral and virtual evaluations.
- Pass down the traditions of the Catholic Church
- Foster a sense of Christian care and service.
- Assist students in making mature moral decisions.

Parents

The primary responsibility for the education of your child belongs to you, the parent. The greatest single factor in building your child's spiritual, intellectual, cultural and moral attitude is the example provided in your home. Therefore, in the PSR program we will expect you:

- to ensure that your child is in attendance and on time to each class session.
- to ensure that your child has his/her textbook and supplies for each class session.
- to encourage your child to participate in class, parish and service projects.
- to encourage your child to complete assignments given to them.
- to monitor your child's progress throughout the year.
- to support the principles of good behavior and insure that your child understands the Student Code of Conduct expected during class.
- to model and support your child's practice of the Catholic faith.
- to participate with your child at mass and regular sacramental reception.
- to attend and participate in parent meetings.
- to teach your child the traditional prayers appropriate for his/her grade level. These prayers can be found on the inside covers of the textbooks.

Registration

Information regarding registration will be available in an email distributed by Mrs. Brooks, the parish bulletin and on the parish website.

Fees

There is an annual fee to cover the cost of the books and supplies for Grades 1-8. This amount reflects publisher and vendor costs and varies yearly. There is an additional fee for students in Grades 2 and 8 in preparation for sacramental reception. Current fees are published with registration materials.

Attendance and Punctuality

Regular class attendance and punctuality are important in developing habits and attitudes of responsible behavior. Therefore, parents are encouraged to do the following:

- Make every effort to ensure regular attendance for your child. Consistent, year-to-year attendance is necessary for your child to achieve full growth in the Catholic faith.
- Advise the Director of Religious Education of any extenuating circumstances regarding attendance or tardiness.
- Email the PSR office if your child is ill/will be absent for a particular class/es.

In the event that your child is frequently absent, the Director will make every effort to contact you to make sure you are aware of the situation. We adhere to Diocesan guidelines in regard to

attendance for sacramental reception. Students missing a significant number of classes may not be considered for sacramental candidacy.

Early Dismissal

Should the occasion arise to remove your child from class before the normal dismissal time, please email Mrs. Brooks prior to class at cbrooks@stmaryavon.org.

Inclement Weather School Closings

In the event of inclement weather, it may be necessary to cancel PSR classes. If the Avon public schools are closed due to a snowstorm/other extreme weather conditions, PSR classes are cancelled. If the weather becomes inclement later in the day, please use your best judgment before venturing out. Every effort will be made to notify you through the major TV and radio networks, as well as the website. Please do not call the St. Mary School Office.

Parish School Safety

PSR takes normal precautionary measures (reasonable care) to insure the safety of all students. Supervision of students in the classroom and on school property in general, is provided. Should accidents occur on the school property, parents/ guardians assume the responsibility for the accident.

Building Safety

For the protection of all students and to prevent unwelcome strangers from entering the building, certain precautions will be taken. All of the doors on the North side of the School building will be locked during class sessions. To gain entrance, you must ring the bell at the door nearest St. Mary School cafeteria or call the School Office. **DO NOT ENTER PSR CLASSES FROM THE PARISH CENTER DOORS, (south side of building), AT ANY TIME!**

At dismissal time for both sessions you may pick up your child at the door nearest the school cafeteria.

Parking Lot Safety

In order to insure your child's safety when dropping off and picking up from classes, we have an established traffic pattern. For both evenings, the traffic guidelines are attached in the email with registration information. For both evening, please observe the following traffic pattern: Enter our property through the Church Street driveway and exit the property through the Stoney Ridge driveway. **DO NOT ENTER THE PROPERTY BY THE STONEY RIDGE ROAD DRIVEWAY AT ANY TIME!**

Emergencies

On Meet and Greet you will be given an Emergency Medical Form. This is an important precautionary measure that, it is hoped, will never need to be used. **PLEASE BE SURE THAT**

YOUR CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS on that form are always accurate and current. In the event of a non-life-threatening emergency, we will make every effort to notify you or your designated contact person prior to taking any action. If a life-threatening emergency arises, we will call 911 first, then notify you or, if necessary, the designated contact person.

Class Work

The textbook, folder and pen/pencil should be brought to each class. In those cases where teachers give homework assignments, they should be completed as instructed and turned in on time. Report Cards will be sent home twice during the year in January and May. Please review these with your child and discuss areas that may need improvement. When your child misses a class(es), she/he should meet with the teacher and make up the work missed.

Sacrament Programs

Sacramental preparation before the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Communion takes place in Grade Two. Preparation before the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place in Grade Eight. Both Diocesan and Parish Guidelines are observed in these preparations. Parents are expected to attend meetings for these sacraments, which are intended for adult education as well as coordination between the parish and home celebrations of these very significant milestones in your child's spiritual development. We cannot be responsible for communicating details if parents absent themselves from attending these sessions.

Student Code of Conduct

In all areas of Christian formation, the infusion of Gospel values in the PSR environment is a priority. Using the Gospel as a guideline, the PSR community is strengthened by a Student Code of Conduct which has as its goal:

- to bring about self-discipline
- to provide an atmosphere that helps students learn,
- to protect the rights of each individual
- to form children who respect life, property and authority.

In support of these goals, students are expected to:

- conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner,
- exhibit behavior which reflects their own self-worth and self-respect,

-show respect for their teachers and classmates at all times,

-speak with respect to adults and to one another

It is not acceptable behavior to:

Interrupt or disrupt the class, eat or drink in the session, use profanity or verbally abusive language, chew gum, smoke, drink alcoholic beverages or use drugs during a PSR session.

Personal Electronic Devices

All electronic devices are **PROHIBITED during PSR session**. These include cell/smart phones, iPads, laptops, etc., as well as any other electronic devices. Parents who feel that there is a compelling safety reason for a child to have a cell phone must communicate that **in writing regarding this matter**. **St. Mary PSR will not be held responsible for any loss or damage to a child's electronic device.**

It is impossible to foresee all problems which may arise, the director and the PSR staff reserves the right to take disciplinary action for any behavior which violates the spirit and philosophy of the St. Mary Parish School of Religion, even though not specified in this Student Code of Conduct and Manual.

Disciplinary Procedures

These disciplinary procedures are designed to enforce the Student Code of Conduct and to create an environment in which each child is cherished and respected. The process anticipates the full cooperation of all parties.

Teachers will handle minor, routine discipline matters within their classrooms. If a student's behavior continues to disrupt learning, the uncooperative or disruptive student will be sent to the PSR Office. Parents will be contacted and a plan will be established to prevent future conflicts. With the good of the child as our objective, future appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

Major offenses warrant immediate referral to the director and, where a crime is involved, notification to the police. The parent will be contacted to discuss the offense and its resolution. When the offense involves a crime, threats, abuse, violence or harassment, alternative options for the child's religious education may be suggested.

Medication Policy

Students may not possess or administer any medication to themselves or others during PSR class hours or while on parish property.

Any student who has a medical condition which requires the taking of prescribed medications during PSR class must have the basic facts noted on her/his Registration Form and must have all of the specific details noted on her/his Medical Authorization Form, including:

*the name of the condition, the names of all medications prescribed, the dosages to be taken and the times that are to be taken.

Such medications **shall not be self-administered; if the student needs to take the medications during the class time, they should be brought and administered by her/his parent/s/guardian. The PSR STAFF CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ASPECT OF THE MEDICATION POLICY AS STATED ABOVE. ALL INFORMATION IN REGARD TO THIS POLICY MUST BE SUPPLIED AND ACTED UPON BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN. This includes all Prescription and Non-Prescription medications.**

Substance Abuse Policy

As educators in the Church, we in an effort to provide a drug free environment, call ourselves to charity and compassion for the sick and concern for each child. We on the PSR staff acknowledge that the health and social problems of children are primarily the responsibility of their families. We also recognize that we have an obligation to the common good as well as the individual welfare of our students. Therefore, the parent/guardian will be notified immediately if a student is found to have or be under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia in her/his possession during PSR, activities sponsored by PSR or on parish property. At that time, a conference with the student, both parent/s/guardian and the director will be arranged. Attendance at such a conference is mandatory before the student returns to the PSR program. Intervention by trained professionals may be required as a condition for the student to remain in the PSR program. Lack of cooperation by either the student or parent/s/guardian in this matter will result in the student's removal from the PSR Program. If a student gives evidence or displays signs of tobacco use or substance dependency, the director and teachers will contact the parents and an appropriate course of action will be decided upon. Appropriate sanctions will be imposed on those who violate any of the provisions of this policy or any local law or statute concerning illegal substances. If an illegal substance is actually seized, the principal must contact the police, report the incident and give the illegal substance to them.

Weapons Policy

In furtherance of the overall philosophy, goals and objectives of the Catholic educational experience, the Diocese of Cleveland has proposed a policy that expressly prohibits the use, possession, sale, display or discharge of any weapons or explosive devices on parish property or at parish-sponsored activities. This policy shall apply to all students, participants in parish programs, teachers, administrators and other personnel in the parish.

This policy includes, but is not limited to, any firearm, knife, a deadly weapon, or explosive or incendiary device. As defined by (ORC 2923.11 A), "deadly weapon" means any instrument, device or thing capable of inflicting death, and designed or specially adapted for use as a weapon, or possessed, carried, or used as a weapon." By definition, (ORC 2923.11 B) states that "firearm means any deadly weapon capable of expelling or propelling one or more projectiles by the action of an explosive or combustible propellant. Firearm includes an unloaded firearm, and any firearm that is inoperable but that can readily be rendered operable."

Violations of this policy may warrant notification of the police, immediate suspension and possible expulsion. If possession of a weapon is suspected, the principal or other administrator will immediately contact the police department and the Diocesan Legal Office before confronting the individual. If it is determined that this policy has been violated, the parents of the offender shall be immediately contacted and must cooperate with the disciplinary process.

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy

The administration and staff of the Saint Mary Parish School of Religion believe that all children are entitled to study in an environment that is safe, positive and Christ-Centered. For this reason, and in keeping with the goals and objectives of Catholic education, Saint Mary PSR will not tolerate harassment of any type. For the purpose of this policy, sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- verbal sexual abuse,
- disseminating obscene or sexually explicit material, whether in the form of music, written lyrics, pornographic pictures or other literature, or having such material in one's possession during PSR or on parish property;
- obscene or sexually explicit graffiti,
- continuing and unwanted written or oral communication directed to another of a sexual nature;
- spreading sexual rumors/innuendoes; obscene clothing, hats or buttons; touching oneself sexually in front of others; obscene and/or sexually explicit gestures; and any other inappropriate behavior of a sexually explicit or obscene nature that demeans or offends the recipient.

Allegations of sexual harassment as described above are to be reported immediately to the teacher and the director. Parent/s/guardian 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. All parties will be obligated to cooperate in remedying the situation. Appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken when harassment has occurred, and appropriate efforts shall be taken to prevent reoccurrence of the harassment.

Sexual violence is handled separately because of its potentially criminal nature. If an incident of sexual violence occurs, the principal/administrator is required under state law to report the incident (ORC 2151.421). The Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately if there is any "reason to believe" that sexual abuse or violence has occurred involving a child less than eighteen (18) years of age. The Diocesan Legal Office will be contacted immediately in these situations.

Generally, sexual harassment should be construed as sexual violence when the recipient:

- is physically touched without her/his consent in a sexual manner;
- is expressly threatened or perceives a threat of physical harm for purposes of the offenders sexual gratification; or is the victim of sex offenses under the Ohio law (ORC 2907.05 et.al).

Appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken when harassment has occurred and efforts shall be taken to prevent reoccurrence.

Sexual Abuse Policy

Protecting God's Children

Students and/or parent/s/guardian/s need to report abuse to a teacher or director. State laws mandate that certain persons report suspected incidents of child sexual abuse to civil authorities. All clergy, staff and volunteers, even those not mandated by state law, must report knowledge or belief that a child is the victim of abuse to child protection or law enforcement authorities and the appropriate Church official or supervisor.

In order to enhance the ongoing efforts of the Catholic Church regarding the protection of children and the creation of safe environments, the Diocese of Cleveland has adopted a training program entitled Called to Protect. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has mandated the implementation of this program. In order to comply with the Catholic Bishops' national charter for the protection of children and youth, this program has been incorporated into the PSR curriculum. The Called to Protect program presents current abuse-prevention information for parents, children, youth and young adults. Before it is presented in the classroom, all pertinent information will be published to all families.

Youth Gangs and Gang Related Activity Policy

Youth gangs and gang related activities are prohibited. A gang is defined as any non school

sponsored group, usually secret and/or exclusive in membership, whose purposes or practices include unlawful or anti-social behavior or any action that threatens the welfare of others. Saint Mary PSR follows the Diocesan policy in regard to gangs and will take appropriate action.

Search Policy

Saint Mary PSR is firmly committed to providing a safe learning and working environment for all adults and students. To this end, all parish property may be searched by the director/administrator at any time. The director/PSR staff have the right to search any containers, book bags, backpacks, purses etc., or articles of clothing that are left unattended on parish property. The search of a student's personal property is permissible upon request and will be conducted according to Diocesan guidelines.

The information contained in this manual is solely for the benefit of the members of St. Mary Parish School of Religion. Any other use is expressly prohibited. The administration of St. Mary PSR reserves the right to amend this manual and any/all policies at any time and will notify parents in writing of any changes in policies or practices.

Parent/Student Handbook**2021-2022 PSR Year**

I have read the Parent/Student Handbook for the 2021-2022 PSR year and agree to comply with and support the procedures and policies of the St. Mary PSR program.

Student Signature _____ **Date** _____

Student Signature _____ **Date** _____

Student Signature _____ **Date** _____

Student Signature _____ **Date** _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ **Date** _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ **Date** _____

***Please sign and return to the PSR Director. Thank you!**