

St. Michael the Archangel

Religious Education Parent Handbook



Catechetical Year: 2020-2021

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Introduction

The Child/Youth Religious Education program at St. Michael is built on the premise that parents are the primary instructors in the Catholic Faith and catechists are here to reinforce the teachings and sacred traditions of this faith. Catechists promote the Catholic faith through traditional classroom instruction, sacramental preparation, and extracurricular projects. This year ushers in fundamental changes in the way we will physically operate; however, our mission remains the same.

Our overall mission is to:

- ❖ Teach children and youth to worship God in Spirit and truth especially through the Sacraments
- ❖ Nourish Christian community
- ❖ Proclaim the Good News to all persons, inviting children to carry on the Great Commission
- ❖ Teach the saving message of Christ
- ❖ Teach compassion toward our brothers and sisters, particularly the poor

Administration

The pastor is ultimately responsible for all parish religious education and sacramental preparation. Under his guidance, the Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) oversees the catechetical programs for children and the Youth Ministry Leader (YML) directs programs for grades 7-12. The PCL is responsible for recruiting and supporting catechists, selecting textbooks and other resource materials approved by the Archdiocese and the pastor, planning and executing Sacramental preparation programs, and conducting parent meetings and communications. The YML does the same for families of youth. Finally, catechists and core-team college student mentors serve as the backbone of the religious education programs at St. Michaels. They are volunteers who recognize the call to help spread the Word of God to children and youth. They come from a variety of backgrounds and vocations and are actively involved in parish life.

Role of Parents

Parents are the primary educators and role models for their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church: CCC 2221-2226). Parents introduce children to Christ and shape their beliefs about God, the Church, and our faith in Christ. It is crucial that parents or guardians maintain an active role in children's religious education. Please consider volunteering or substituting in the classroom or offering your assistance to catechists through other means. Prayer is also vital for the spiritual well-being of families. To build an enduring faith, parents are advised to read the scriptures with children (like the readings before Mass or references in children's texts) review classroom texts and activities, and bring children to Mass. By showing your commitment to the Church, its teachings, and your child's religious education, your child will grow in faith and in the fruit of the Spirit.

For parents who select the homeschool model or online religious education, your interest and involvement will make all the difference in your child's Catholic faith formation. You will be supplied with resources to navigate through the textbook with your children to help them understand the call of Christ to love one another as He has loved us.

Protection of Minors and Adults

In accordance with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Mobile, all priests, deacons, school administrators, teachers, youth ministers, parish catechists, support personnel, and volunteers who have substantial contact with children are required to participate in an annual education program on child protection and abuse. Background checks are initially conducted prior to contact with children and training must be completed within 30 days after background clearance and the assumption of duties. Additionally, the Archdiocese of Mobile requires that instruction on safe and unsafe environments be given to children in all grades during the month of October. Materials are available online for parent review. Please refer to the Child Protection Policy and curriculum materials on the Archdiocese of Mobile website for additional information:

<http://protection.mobarch.org>

Communication

Parents can stay abreast of events, calendar updates, and other items pertaining to religious education programs by reviewing the church bulletin each week. The bulletin is also available online at the church website: <http://www.stmichaelsauburn.com> Additionally, the Religious Education webpage on the St. Michael Parish website is frequently updated with events, documents, and other important information. A weekly communication is offered through *Flocknotes* and parents can sign up for this on the front page of the Parish website.

Catechist and PCL communication with parents is generally by email. Please notify the church office and specific ministry leaders if you have changed your email after registration is completed.

If parents are concerned about a reported problem in the classroom, please contact the catechist first. Catechist volunteers know firsthand what goes on in the classroom since most issues are merely misunderstandings that can be quickly resolved. If the issue is not resolved with the catechist, parents should speak with the PCL. If the issue remains unresolved, parents are welcome to contact our Pastor, Fr. Farmer, for resolution. When communicating by email, please CC to appropriate parties so that communication remains open and benevolent because we are all a part of the body of Christ.

Class Time and Absences

The Archdiocese of Mobile requires that religious education programs consist of 30 hours of catechetical instruction and other related events during the year. Thirty hours devoted to religious education spread across a school year is less than 1% of your child's life and it is worth your effort to make it important to yourself and to them to be there on time each Sunday. Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we have had to shorten our meeting times this year but still plan to cover the material; for this reason it is even more important to keep up with attendance. The education of our children is a ministry of the church that Christ calls all of us to. Class attendance matters. Imagine how behind your child would be missing a week of school. That is the reality of missing one religious education class. Not only do children miss important life lessons but the attitude that our spiritual life doesn't really matter can become well-established.

Class Times:

Grades K-6: Sunday mornings from 9:00-10:00 p.m.

Grades 7-12: Sunday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

To ensure classes begin on time, parents can drop off children ten minutes before class but no earlier than that. Refer to the religious education calendar at the end of the handbook for days off, holidays, and special events.

If a child is absent, please ask the teacher about make-up material. The class curriculum guide, available in classrooms and on the parish website, provides chapters covered each week. Parents, should call or email the PCL to report children's absences.

Class Control

Catechists do their best to maintain control in the classroom by engaging student attention and by treating all with respect. If a student's behavior is disruptive during class, the catechist will speak to the student privately or contact the PCL to speak to the student. Corporal punishment is never allowed. If the instructor/PCL is talking to the child privately, he/she will do so either in a public place (such as a hallway) or in a room where the door remains open. For serious or chronic misbehavior, a student may not be allowed back into the class prior to a meeting of the student, parents or guardians, catechist, the PCL and the Pastor if warranted. The following will not be tolerated: possession of weapons, sexual harassment, racial slurs, fighting, bullying, or other inappropriate conduct. Violations of these rules warrant immediate notification of parents or guardians and may lead to dismissal from the program as well as a written report to the Archdiocese.

Guests

During the pandemic, guests are not permitted unless cleared with the PCL. Catechists prepare only for students on their rosters and class size matters in our limited space. If and when the pandemic ends, visiting family and friends who are guests need to provide emergency contact information prior to participation in class, and this must be cleared with the PCL before the day of visitation.

Sacramental Programs

Both parent and child participation in Sacramental programs at St. Michael is vital to preparation for the Sacraments. Expectations include weekly class attendance for children and adolescents registered for live attendance. Children enrolled in online learning or homeschooling can follow the lesson schedule posted on the Religious Ed. webpage on the Parish website and youth should complete lessons on a regular basis. Sunday Mass attendance and parent attendance at meetings (in person or through Zoom) are also important. Participants in these programs must be Baptized prior to receiving any other Sacraments, and a certificate of Baptism must be on file in the PCL office.

Participation in rehearsal(s) for First Communion Mass and Confirmation Mass is important to ensure a smooth celebration of the Sacraments. Specific dates or times not found on the Rel.Ed. calendar

(pg. 9) will be communicated in the bulletin, on the church website, and by email or text message as the days approach. Please contact the PCL or YML with questions if you need information.

Children traditionally receive the Sacraments of **Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist** in grade two if they are 7 years or older and they have had one year of formal religious education prior to entering the sacramental preparation class. Attendance is expected in class and parents are asked to review Sacrament Preparation packets to help prepare children for the Sacraments. The First Communion calendar has a complete schedule of lessons covered. Children will receive paper copies, and they are available at parent meetings. Additionally, they are on the parish website. Alternate classes are offered to older children and adolescents who desire these Sacraments. Catechesis is determined on an individual basis for special cases. Additional questions regarding the responsibilities of parents/guardians and godparents, catechetical program details, and administrative tasks should be directed to the PCL.

Confirmation is the final Sacrament of Initiation. Preparation begins in the 9th grade with weekly instruction in conjunction with CYO on Sunday nights. As we transition to a new structure, the Junior class will also meet on the second Wednesday of the month until the end of the first semester in December. Preparation for Confirmation includes class attendance, service hours to the church and community, Confirmation retreats, and attendance at Sunday Mass and other Holy Days. Additional questions regarding eligibility, the role and responsibility of parents/guardians and sponsors, and the Confirmation catechetical program should be directed to the youth director who works under the direction of the pastor to implement policies of the Archbishop of Mobile. An annual parent meeting for high school and junior high school students is conducted at the beginning of the new school year through the bulletin, via flocknotes, and through direct communication with families who register students annually.

Safety

St. Michael volunteers and staff use resources and information made available by parents to provide a safe environment for all. If a parent, teacher, volunteer, or child becomes aware of a situation that may lead to injury, he or she should bring it to the attention of the PCL or other staff member. Good judgment and intervention are the best ways to avoid the risk of injury; however, minor cuts, scrapes, etc. may occur even under diligent supervision. The PCL will evaluate the seriousness of injuries and provide first-aid. A parent or guardian will be informed if it is beyond superficial. Medication will not be administered to any child without the written consent of a parent/guardian.

Special Needs

Children with learning disabilities or physical impairments are fully welcome to participate in the regular classroom environment. Assistance and accommodations are provided on an individual basis. Should a child require homebound assistance, the PCL should be notified and a religious education program will be incorporated with the guidance of the pastor.

Toys and Food

Please advise your children to not bring toys or other distracting items that are not part of a class activity. Catechist volunteers need parent help and support to maintain a class atmosphere conducive to learning. Items will be confiscated and returned to the parent at the end of class. Also, please ensure that children have eaten breakfast before class rather than snack in class.

Traffic

Because of the presence of children, all drivers should drive in the parking lot with extreme caution. Please use the drop off circle at the Sacred Heart Hall entrance to drop off or pick up your child. Please be aware of traffic flow patterns designated by signs and arrows on the pavement. Do not park along any yellow curb or in any undesignated drive-through lanes, nor leave your car in any traffic circle. Please allow extra time if your child has to walk some distance to get to class. External entrances to Sacred Heart Hall will remain locked during pandemic times but they can be used as exits. The reason for this is to minimize close contact in hallways.

Field Trips

No field trip, overnight retreat, or other activity that involves leaving the church property will occur without parental notification and permission. Students who cannot produce a permission slip and a current medical information form signed by parents will not be allowed to join the activity. Children may, however, be taken outdoors or into the sanctuary to participate in class activities without need of written consent. (See last page of handbook for this form.)

Covid-19 Changes

All Children in grades K-12 as well as catechists will need to sign a waiver indicating that they understand the risks associated with the virus in choosing to have their children attend live classes (see second to last page of handbook.) Children and youth attending morning classes (grades 3-6) should wear face protection while walking in hallways and within classrooms while the pandemic continues. St. Michael staff will keep a careful eye on Alabama state and CDC directives to protect vulnerable adults and children from the novel virus.

We will check body temperature with no-touch thermometers each Sunday at the entrance to the preschool and ask that parents not enter the hallways so that we can avoid crowding in small spaces. Parents of Kindergartners are the exception, but the classrooms are near the entrance so that they can safely drop off young children and return to pick them up afterwards. Children who register 100.4 degrees will not be allowed to enter the classroom area and parents will be notified to return for their child. Dismissal will be by class, but siblings can retrieve younger brothers and sisters to wait in exit areas. (Detailed dismissal procedures are on page 8.)

Many of our classrooms can accommodate small groups of children at tables with safe social distancing. About 9 students and one or two catechists can fit comfortably in most classrooms. For

groups that grow too large, we will have alternating week schedules or use larger rooms when available. Children will be encouraged to wash their hands, use hand sanitizer in classrooms and materials will be kept in individual bags rather than shared containers.

Confidentiality of Records and Personal Information

Parents are asked to notify the religious education director if they or their child have been exposed to a confirmed carrier of the novel coronavirus so that families can be notified of contact with infected individuals. Children and family privacy are a priority and no volunteer or staff members will disclose the names of those who notify the pastor or director in confidentiality.

Medical or personal information is not published or released. It is kept on file and will be shared with catechists or volunteers if it is necessary for the health or safety of your child or other children in the class. Parent contact information is shared with catechists for safety and communication purposes only.

Dismissal Procedures

The following procedures will be implemented on Sunday mornings beginning at 9 a.m. throughout the pandemic period. I ask that kindergarten parents arrive before 10:00 a.m. to pick up little ones without siblings or wait until after first and second grades dismiss at about 10:10 a.m.

- 1) Children in grades 4-6 who have no siblings are dismissed at 10 a.m. and they will leave using Sacred Heart Hall exits.
- 2) Children in grades 4-6 who have siblings in K-3 may leave to pick up younger siblings at 10:00 a.m. or when their group is called to leave.
Sibling groups can wait for parents
 - a. at the East entrance to the church or
 - b. in another location designated by parents such as the kitchen hall or west entrance.
- 3) Individual children in grades 1 and 2 can leave with catechists using the preschool exit to meet their parents at 10:05 a.m.
- 4) Children who have been dismissed from class are not free to wander about the church. They should wait in the area designated by parents, safely distant from peers and continue to wear masks while the threat of contagion lingers.

When the state safeguards are lifted, we will resume normal pickup procedures and parents will be allowed into the hallways to pick-up children in grades K-3.

Class Calendar 2020-2021

St Michael Religious Education

2020		2021	
<p>Aug 30 Class 1 ODD</p> <p>Sep 6 No Class – Labor Day Holiday 13 Class 2 EVEN 20 Class 3 ODD Catechetical Sunday 27 Class 4 EVEN</p> <p>Oct 4 Class 5 ODD Respect Life Sunday 11 Class 6 EVEN 18 Class 7 ODD Safe Environments 25 Class 8 EVEN</p> <p>Nov * 1 Class 9 ODD Make-up Safe En.1 p.m. 8 Class 10 EVEN 15 Class 11 ODD 22 No Class – Thanksgiving Break 29 No Class – Thanksgiving Break</p> <p>Dec 6 Class 12 EVEN ** First Reconciliation Service 13 No Class – Christmas Break 20 No Class – Christmas Break 27 No Class – Christmas Break</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* Daylight Savings time ends ** Time/date TBD</p>	<p>Jan 3 No Class 10 Class 13 ODD F-Su 15-17 Jr Confirmation Retreat (tentative) 17 MLK Holiday - No Class 24 Class 14 EVEN 31 Class 15 ODD</p> <p>Feb 7 Class 16 EVEN 14 Class 17 ODD W 17 Ash Wednesday Sat 20 Confirmation Mass at 2 p.m. 21 Class 18 EVEN</p> <p>F-Su 26-28 ACYC & Pan y Vino 28 Class 19 ODD</p> <p>Mar 7 No Class - Spring Break 14 Class 20 EVEN 21 Class 21 ODD 28 Class 22 EVEN Palm Sunday</p> <p>Apr 4 No Class - Easter 11 Class 23 ODD 18 Class 24 EVEN 25 Class 25 ODD</p> <p>May (Sa) 1 First Communion Mass 10:30 AM 2 Class 26 EVEN</p> <p>June TBA Catholic Kids Camp</p>		

** Dates to be determined.

- Odd and Even Class dates are for those who have to follow an alternating week schedule due to group size.
- On alternating weeks, parents should cover missed chapters.

Parental/Guardian Covid-19 Waiver

ARCHDIOCESE OF MOBILE
PARENTAL/GUARDIAN COVID-19
CONSENT FORM AND LIABILITY WAIVER

Participant's name: _____

Birth date: _____ Sex: _____

Parent/Guardian's name: _____

Home address: _____

Home phone: _____ Business phone: _____

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is extremely contagious and as a result, social distancing is recommended. _____ Parish/School will follow state and local standards of conduct and has put in place reasonable preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 at its Parish/School activity (including but not limited to summer camp.) However, even though such standards will be followed and reasonable measures put into place. Parish/School cannot guarantee that you or your child(ren) will not become infected with COVID-19. Further, attending the Parish/School activity could increase your risk and your child(ren)'s risk of contracting COVID-19.

By signing this agreement, I acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19 and that my child(ren) and I may be exposed to or infected by COVID-19 by participating in the parish/school activity and that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability, and death. I understand that the risk of becoming exposed to or infected by COVID-10 at _____ Parish/School may result from the actions, omissions, or negligence of myself and others, including, but not limited to, Parish/School employees, volunteers, and program participants and their families.

Consider the foregoing, however, I _____, grant permission for my child, _____, to participate in this parish activity that may require transportation to a location away from the parish site, notwithstanding the risks associated with the COVID-19 virus and group activities.

I confirm that there are no necessary changes to the Medical Information Consent form for my child that I previously submitted. If there are any necessary changes, I will complete another Medical Information Consent form.

I further agree on behalf of myself, my child named herein, and my spouse, our heirs, successors, and assigns, to release, indemnify, hold harmless, and defend _____ Parish/School and The Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Mobile, their members, directors, officers, employees, agents and representatives ("indemnitees") associated with the event arising from or in connection with the negligent acts or omissions of the indemnitees' in relation to prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 virus. I SPECIFICALLY ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE THAT I AM AGREEING TO DEFEND, INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS THE INDEMNITEES' FROM THEIR OWN NEGLIGENCE IN REGARD TO THE INDEMNITEES' NEGLIGENT ACTION AND/OR INACTION IN REGARD TO PROTECTION AGAINST THE COVID-19 VIRUS.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Medical Release Form

This Medical Waiver/Information Form should be completed annually. **It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform the parish of any changes in the child's medical condition during the year.**

GR 7-12 MEDICAL LIABILITY WAIVER

Participant(s): _____ Date of Birth: _____
Parent/Guardian: _____ Phone: _____
Home Address: _____

In the event of an emergency, if you are unable to reach me at the above number, contact:

Emergency contact name (please print): _____

Relationship to participant: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Other Phone: _____

Family doctor: _____ Phone: _____

Family Health Plan Carrier: _____ Policy #: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Emergency Medical Treatment: In the event of an emergency, I hereby give permission to transport my child to a hospital for emergency medical or surgical treatment. I wish to be advised prior to any further treatment by the hospital or doctor. YES ___ NO ___

Other Medical Treatment: In the event it comes to the attention of the parish/school/institution, its officers, directors and agents, and the Archdiocese of Mobile, chaperones, or representatives associated with the activity that my child becomes ill with symptoms such as headache, vomiting, sore throat, fever, diarrhea, I want to be called. YES ___ NO ___

No medication of any type, whether prescription or non-prescription, may be administered to my child unless the situation is life-threatening and emergency treatment is required. YES ___ NO ___

I hereby grant permission for non-prescription medication (such as non-aspirin products, i.e. acetaminophen or ibuprofen, throat lozenges, cough syrup) to be given to my child, if deemed appropriate. YES ___ NO ___

Specific Medical Information The school/parish will take reasonable care to see that the following information will be held in confidence.

Medications: My child is taking medication at present. My child will bring all such medications necessary, and such medications will be well-labeled. Names of medications and concise directions for seeing that the child takes such medications, including dosage and frequency of dosage, are as follows:

Allergic reactions (medications, foods, plants, insects, etc.): _____

Immunizations: Date of last tetanus/diphtheria immunization: _____

Does child have a medically **prescribed diet**? _____ If yes, what is it? _____

Does child have any **physical or other limitations** _____

Is child subject to chronic homesickness, emotional reactions to new situations, sleepwalking, bed-wetting, fainting?

Has child recently been exposed to **contagious disease** or conditions, such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, flu, etc.?

YES ___ NO ___ If yes, list date and disease or condition:

Additional special medical conditions of my child:

I hereby warrant that to the best of my knowledge, my child is in good health, and I assume all responsibility for the health of my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ **Date** _____