



# 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Family Program Information Packet



The Precepts of the Church describe *the minimum effort* we must make in prayer and in living a moral life. All Catholics are called to move beyond the minimum by growing in love of God and love of neighbor (see Matthew 22:36-40).

1. Attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. Confession of serious [mortal] sin at least once a year.
3. Reception of Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter season.
4. Observance of the days of fast and abstinence.
5. Providing for the needs of the Church [through time, talent, or treasure].



# CHURCH OF ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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Dear First Grade Parents,

It is with great joy we welcome you and your child into our First Grade Family Program! This at home family program allows you as the parent, guardian, or family member to build a positive faith-filled foundation for your child. Every consecutive year your child is enrolled in the parish religious education program, they will be more and more prepared for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation.

This program is the beginnings of ultimately a family-based religious education program. This means that our program will not only focus on the children in a traditional classroom setting, but rather on the family as a whole. There will be more opportunities for families and children to experience the faith in a new and exciting way. What better time to start this than in the first-grade year?

There are some expectations this year that include completing the Finding God Grade 1 workbook (Loyola Press), completing online chapter reviews, attending Mass, one mini retreat, and finally, completing a final project or taking the oral exam.

The enclosed information in this packet will help explain the many components of our First Grade Home Preparation Program. May God bring an abundance of blessings to your family during this time!

In Christ,

Ms. Nicole M. Coscio  
Director of Religious Education

## Setting the Foundation- The Domestic Church

Our first-grade religious education program setting is completed within the home setting. This year is a foundational year for your child, as she/he begins/continues to learn and practice the Catholic faith. As it has been proven time and time again, children learn from their parents or lack thereof. There are so many different family structures today and we respect it no matter what yours is like! We do ask that regardless of your situation, to spend time with your child on the material and faith activities. If that is difficult at times; we recommend linking up with your child's God Parent, Grand Parent, or really any trusted adult.

### **What is the Domestic Church and family?**

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church. "It is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament." (CCC 2204).*

A simpler way to look at this is that each family is viewed at as a "mini version" of the greater Apostolic Church and models the Church on a smaller scale. Sometimes we don't always reflect that, and we know we don't always live up to that. Sometimes we're not even sure what it should look like! No worries though, I want to share with you a couple of beautiful examples. Remember that when we are Baptized, we are also called to be priests, prophets and kings, similarly to Christ! We are made in His image and likeness after all. We are called as Christians to be Christlike, so this only makes sense.

### **Three is a Holy Number!**

*"The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task." (CCC 2205).*

First you can see, that the family is modeled after the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Trinity is certainly one of the most central mysteries of our faith, and no one person can fully fathom the beauty of it. What we do know is that God the Father existed and created us out of love. We then sinned through Adam and Eve, and eventually God sent us Jesus His Son (*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16) through the Blessed Virgin Mary. Most of all, He sent us Jesus out of love for us. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus then told us that He

is sending us a consoler, an advocate, (*And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever.* John 14:16) the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus is no longer on earth as a physical person, we will be able to reach God through the Holy Spirit as well.

St. Augustine implies: “God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is both the Lover and Beloved and the Love between them.” (Quote: <http://wcuccm.blogspot.com/2016/05/the-trinity-lover-beloved-and-love.html>)

Lastly, the next best way to describe the Domestic Church is through the Holy Family, of course! Jesus, Mary, and Joseph also reflect a trinitarian family as God is. Mary says “yes” to God out of love when the angel appeared to her to deliver the Good News. Joseph said “yes” to God as He appeared in his dream and told him he will have a Divine Son. Jesus was born through Mary, a human. Jesus was born out of love not just of the Father, but of His mother, Mary as well. Love is the underlying element to family and domestic life. God is Love.

Of course, many our families may consist of more than 1 child! This isn’t to be taken totally literally, but spiritually and symbolically.

**Reflection:**

How does our family reflect the Holy Family and Trinity?

## A Family Experience

Our first-grade year was previously called a “home study,” but a “family experience” takes on a whole new connotation. Catholicism is a *lived experience*. There are certainly important learning and knowledge to be acquired, but really what it is, is an *experience*. The Mass is an experience. The purpose of religious education in general is to become an active part of the Church community and to *experience* the graces of Mass and bring them out into the world.

Your children will see this first through you! Our first-grade year allows you as the parent to share a special moment with your child and to teach them to practice their faith and put it into action.

This also means that the first-grade year will become *more* than just completing a workbook and studying for a test. Our kids do enough of that in regular school! I do believe we can show them that the Catholic faith can also be fun. If we show and grow in authentic love for Christ, we can see the areas of our faith that are “fun.”

However, while the learning part is taking place at home, we will have a twice a year retreat component around Advent and Lent each year. This opportunity will be a great one for you to bring your first-grader to the church and attend a fun faith formation event. This will consist of an activity related to the liturgical season. It will also be a good time for your child to see any other friends in the program as well. This component will help build a *community of believers*. After the first-grade year, classes are all at St. James site, so this will give them more familiarity with the others kids enrolled in the program.

Additionally, having faith formation opportunities at the church during this year will also give you an opportunity to talk to other parents and the Religious Education staff if you have any questions. Our faith is relational and I firmly believe that being present for your family and children are extremely important in helping to pass down the faith.

### **End of Year Assessment:**

You and your child will have a choice of completing an oral exam/testing or a family project to hand in, in addition to completing the workbook.

## An Overview of the Year

- Parent meeting in the beginning of the year (where you have received this material).
  - Distribution of workbooks, prayer books, Guidelines, and other materials
- Calendar year begins in September through April.
- Each chapter includes an online quiz and supplemental materials that can be submitted as “home work.”
- Advent Mini-Retreat (December) – There will be a short retreat ending with Mass
- Lent Mini-Retreat (March) – There will be a short retreat ending with Mass
  - You may choose ONE retreat to attend.
- April – Chosen Oral Exam or Project due
  - Workbook must be completed
  - Must know the basic prayers
  - Cannot move on without this completed
- Congrats, you are now prepared for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade!

## End of Year Exam or Project

We recognize that every child has different ways of learning and different comfort levels. While just about all of our first-graders have done a wonderful job on their oral testing in the past, I want to offer more variety, flexibility, and fun in assessing preparedness for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade religious education year.

You will have the opportunity to decide with your child whether you want to take the exam or if you want to hand in a project instead. See below for a brief overview on what the test will consist of and what the project will consist of. Please pray about this and help prepare your child best, whichever you choose.

### **First Grade Theme and Objective:**

- God is our Father who loves us. Jesus is the Son of God who tells us about our Father. The Holy Spirit helps us to be holy.
- To develop awareness of God the Creator, who gives us life and grace and promises us eternal life through Jesus.

### **Oral Assessment:**

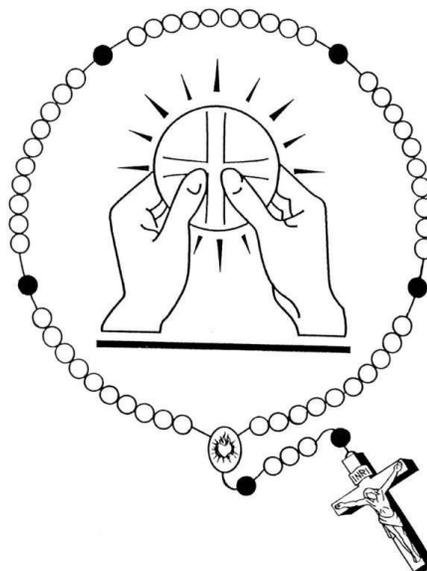
1. Make the Sign of the Cross.
2. Know who God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are.
  - The Holy Trinity
3. Must recite the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.
4. What happens during the Sacrament of Baptism?
  - We become members of God's family
5. Know who Mary and Joseph are.
  - Jesus' parents
6. What we celebrate during Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.
  - Preparation for Jesus' birth and resurrection.
  - Jesus' birth & resurrection
7. What is prayer and examples of ways to pray.
  - Prayer is talking to God, and there are many ways to pray (formal, in our heads, free praise, spontaneous prayer, devotional prayer etc...)
8. What is the Bible?
  - The Word of God speaking to His people.
9. Why do we attend Mass?
  - To become closer to Jesus and others and receive Communion.
10. What is important about Communion?
  - We receive Jesus' Body and Blood

## Final Project: Church & Mass Treasure Hunt, Coloring Book

- Using the worksheet, attend Mass at your church of choice and during/after Mass check off what you find (try to find everything and ask the priests to help if you need!)
- Take pictures of each item in the church you went to.
- Create a decorated poster board with the pictures and names of everything you found in the church.
- Complete the coloring pages of the prayers and holy family and make them into a new prayer book to pray with your family. These prayers still need to be practiced.
- Project is due in March and will be hung up for display 😊 Good job on the hard work!

### Tips for successful growth in this program:

- Familiarize yourself with the Archdiocesan guidelines
- Pray together as a family – model the faith for your child(ren)
- Attend Mass together as a family (**HAND IN ENVELOPES**)
- Be consistent in completing the workbook each week
- Stress Jesus' love for your child, foster a relationship between your child and Jesus
- Don't worry if you don't know everything! We aren't theologians- if you are unsure of something, stop on by the Parish office and meet with a Priest or Deacon 😊
- Think Sacramentally – This is setting the foundation for their religious education and beyond
- Teach them in both Truth and Love. God is both Truth and Love.
- Schedule meet up time with other families/friends in the program and talk about faith
- Call the office if ever you have questions or would like additional resources!
- Finally – HAVE FUN! Faith can be fun too.



## Mass Attendance is Now Required

Mass attendance is always required no matter what grade, but we will be receiving envelopes from 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade families as a required preparation for Communion in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. It is best to have your child familiar with going to Mass even prior to the Communion year (most of you are already doing this). Please do your best to hand in envelopes and to attend Mass.

### 10 Quotes That Will Change the Way You Attend Holy Mass

by [Dr Taylor Marshall](http://taylormarshall.com/) - <http://taylormarshall.com/>

1. When the Eucharist is being celebrated, the sanctuary is filled with countless angels who adore the divine victim immolated on the altar. ~ St. John Chrysostom
2. The angels surround and help the priest when he is celebrating Mass. ~ St. Augustine
3. If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy. ~ Saint Jean Vianney
4. The celebration of Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the cross. ~ Saint Thomas Aquinas
5. Once, St. Teresa was overwhelmed with God's Goodness and asked Our Lord "How can I thank you?" Our Lord replied, "ATTEND ONE MASS."
6. "My Son so loves those who assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that, if it were necessary He would die for them as many times as they've heard Masses." Our Lady to Blessed Alan.
7. When we receive Holy Communion, we experience something extraordinary – a joy, a fragrance, a well-being that thrills the whole body and causes it to exalt. ~ Saint Jean Vianney
8. There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us. ~ Saint Jean Vianney
9. When we have been to Holy Communion, the balm of love envelops the soul as the flower envelops the bee. ~ Saint Jean Vianney
10. It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass. ~ St. Pio of Pietrelcina