

Saint Bernadette of Lourdes Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)



Family Handbook

Updated June 2019

Parish Mission Statement

Called by our Baptism to be the People of God, and formed by the Holy Spirit to be Saint Bernadette Roman Catholic Parish, we its members recognize our need to grow as a faith community. We accept God's call to:

- Worship together at the celebration of the Eucharist, enriched by private and communal prayer and graced by the Sacraments;
- Recognize Christ within each other and respond to His Presence with charity, justice and peace;
- Witness with our lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- Teach the good News proclaimed by Jesus to love God and others;
- Minister to the spiritual, physical, emotional and material needs of one another.

In union with the Shepherd of the Universal Church, the Successor of Peter, and mindful of our mission, we resolve to live with Christ as the center of our lives. We pray, through the intercession of the Blessed Mother and Saint Bernadette, for guidance from the Holy Spirit to carry our mission as faithful members of Saint Bernadette of Lourdes Parish.

We, therefore, strive to develop a Religious Education Program which:

- Teaches the basic truths and traditions of our faith.
- Builds a community of faith among faculty, students, and parents.
- Develops a sense of prayer and worship which leads to Christian service.
- Provides parents with necessary helps to fulfill their role as the primary religious educators of their children.
- Encourages full participation in the spiritual, liturgical and social life of the Saint Bernadette Parish Community.

Parish Information

Parish Phone - 610-789-7676

Religious Education Office - Extension 212

Mass Times (Subject to Change dependent on Parish Needs)

Saturday Vigil - 4:30pm

Sunday – 7:00am, 9:00am, 11:00am (Summer Schedule: 8:00am, 10:00am)

Holy Days - Vigil - 7:00pm and Holy Day - 8:30am

Monday-Thursday - 8:30am

Friday – 4:00pm

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday - 3:30 - 4:15pm

Parochial Administrator - Rev. Michael Saban

Resident – Rev. Hugh Dougherty

Permanent Deacons - Frank Burke, Retired and Thomas Fitzpatrick

Director of Religious Education - Marykate Murphy

Parish Administrative Secretary - Helen Kraus

Parish Business Manager - Robert Helmig

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Enrollment

The faith formation provided in our programs involves incremental learning. That is the current year builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program from year-to-year. Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year will be required to make-up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program.

Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for two or more consecutive years will be placed into a grade level that is one below their current school grade level. This could affect the students scheduled reception of Sacraments.

Our program is open to all registered families of the parish with children in grades kindergarten through eighth who do not attend our parish school. Families outside of St. Bernadette Parish must receive permission from their current parish pastor and the Pastor of St. Bernadette Parish to enroll.

Mass Attendance

Parents are reminded that attendance at regular classes is not intended as a substitute for the weekly obligation of participation in the Mass. Attendance at Mass on Saturday night or Sunday morning and Holy Days is required, in addition to classes. Our Religious Education Program is here to support you, as parents, in living out our Catholic Faith. If we, as a parish community, are telling the students they need to attend Mass and you, as their first teachers, are not attending Mass, we are giving them unfair, mixed signals. All parish Mass times are listed at the beginning of this handbook. It is our hope and prayer that we will be partners in faith and example.

Reception of Sacraments

The celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation signify the child's entrance into the Christian Community in a fuller and more responsible way. Since, at the time of the celebration of these Sacraments, a child is not yet mature enough to make a personal commitment him/herself: it requires a

deliberate and serious commitment of parents to renew the faith commitment made at Baptism for the child. It is the active faith of the parents which enables the child to approach the sacred Sacraments at this time.

Students in **Grade 2** prepare to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist.

Students in **Grade 7** prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

If a student has missed the previous level of religious instruction before a Sacrament year, they will be required to complete the year missed. The student will be enrolled into the Sacrament grade the following school year. For example, a student in Grade 7 at school did not attend Grade 6 of religious education. The student will be placed into Grade 6 class for a full school year. The following school year, the student will enter Grade 7 and prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Preparation for the reception of a Sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A participant's desire to receive the Sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus proper attendance and behavior are expected.

In order to help prepare the child in a prayerful manner to receive the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation they are required to attend a time of retreat and the scheduled practices.

For each child who is preparing to receive any of the Sacraments in the present year, his/her parents are required to attend parent meetings. You will be notified in advance the date of the parent meetings.

PARTICIPANTS EXHIBITING CHRONIC ABSENCES, LATENESS, OR WHO ARE A PERSISTENT DISCIPLINE PROBLEM MAY HAVE THE RECEPTION OF THEIR SACRAMENTS DEFERRED UNTIL THE FOLLOWING YEAR OR LATER.

Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) in the parish where their family is registered. In order to receive any Sacrament in another parish you must have the permission of both Pastors.

Attendance

If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, a parent must complete the following procedure:

1. Call or e-mail the office (610-789-7676 ext. 212, mmurphy@stbl.org) to report the absence. Please be sure to leave your child's name and grade level.
2. Consistent attendance is required for the understanding and religious growth of each student. Absence should only be for serious reasons. A student with a number of absences may be required to repeat the level. Students preparing to receive a sacrament, who have an excessive number of absences, may be delayed in receiving the sacrament. If there are extenuating circumstances, a parent should make this known to the Faith Formation Office in advance.
3. When a child is absent from class, it is the parents' responsibility to see that the child keeps abreast of the lessons missed. We encourage you to work with your child at home.
4. If your child fails to report to a session and no phone call is received, then the absence will be recorded as unexcused unless a doctor's note is provided upon returning to the program.
5. After the third unexcused absence the program director will contact the parents to notify parents that the child may be required to repeat the grade level and that dismissal from the program could result should unexcused absences continue.
6. ANY PARTICIPANT ACCUMULATING SIX UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL REQUIRE A MEETING WITH THE DRE TO DISCUSSS THEIR FUTURE IN THE PROGRAM. The participant may re-enroll the following school year. Upon re-enrollment the participant will be required to repeat the previous grade level that was not completed. This proceeding may delay the reception of sacraments.

7. Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to the program. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child's formation up-to-date when possible.

Lateness

Students are required to be on time. Difficult situations which may cause a student to be late should be put in writing and given to the catechist. Repeated lateness may result in the student having to repeat the grade level the following school year.

Early Dismissal

Early dismissal is an exception, not a routine practice. Early dismissal for sports is highly discouraged. We are only in session 1 hour and 15 minutes each week. Early dismissals disrupt the class limited class time. Early dismissal requests must be presented to the Director in writing BEFORE the start of class. No student will be permitted to leave the building unaccompanied. A parent must come and pick up the student.

Transfers and Withdraws

If you wish to attend another Parish Program you need to get permission from our Pastor and the Pastor of the Parish you wish to attend. Please notify the Director of Religious Education if you wish to transfer your child. This will enable us to keep our records updated. Upon request, a letter will be sent to the new parish containing any enrollment and sacrament information needed.

Registration

Preparation and planning require that registration for the next year take place in the spring. Exact Baptism dates are required. Any student not baptized at St. Bernadette is required to submit a copy of their baptismal certificate. We ask that you let us know of any changes in student information if it changes throughout the school year. (i.e., change of address, new phone number, school, e-mail, health or learning issues

etc.). The program's main form of contact will be through email. The Religious Education Office requires a current email for each registered family.

Registration Fee

Fees are payable at the time of registration or as soon after as possible. The general fee is used to defray the cost of textbooks, materials used in class and the use of the school building. Checks should be made payable to St. Bernadette Parish. The fee will be announced in the spring, prior to registration. There will be a late fee if the registration fee is not paid by the deadline. All fees are expected to be paid in a timely manner. Please contact the Religious Education Office with any questions about the registration fee. All conversations regarding finances will be held in confidence. All registration and sacrament fees must be paid for the previous year in order to registration for the upcoming year

Non-Custodial Parents

It is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the Parish with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. St. Bernadette Parish will request these documents in the beginning of the year. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide that document to the Parish immediately.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official and latest copy of the court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

Discipline Policy

The Parish Religious Education Program offered by St. Bernadette is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching. The program has **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The parish determines what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior, both in and out of the classroom, in the school community generally, and outside the school community where such improper behavior affects the school community.

Conduct by children or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic, by a child against any member of the school community, the child, if suspended but not dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance before returning to school.

In the event a participant engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, and has failed to respond to a catechist's attempt to stop or correct the behavior, the following action may be taken and at the discretion of the Pastor or Director of Religious Education:

First Incident: The student will be removed from the session and the parent or guardian will be immediately notified by phone by the program director.

The program director will schedule a conference with the parents/guardians, student, and catechist to discuss the matter.

Second Incident: The student will be removed from the session and be suspended from the program for a period of one session. The parents/guardians will be immediately notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Prior to returning to the program the program director will schedule a conference with the parents, student, and catechist to further discuss the matter.

Third Incident: The student will be removed from the session and dismissed from the program. The parents or guardians will be immediately notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Following a conference with the program director, parents, student, and catechist, the parents will be provided with the option of having their child repeat his or her current grade level the following school year or opting to complete the current year's material by home-schooling their child. In either case, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made.

However, St. Bernadette Parish reserves the right to supersede the forgoing course of action depending on the particular circumstances of any given situation.

Cell Phone/Electronics Policy

We understand there is a need for students to carry cell phones with them for safety reasons. Any student who needs to have a cell phone with them during program hours must turn off the cell phone upon entering the building. Any student who uses their cell phone (calls, texts, emails, etc.) during program hours will be asked to turn in their phone to the catechist or the program director. The phone will be returned to a parent at the end of the class session. The Catechist may collect phones and return them at the end of the session. This also applies to any other electronic devices or games that are seen as inappropriate for use during program hours. St. Bernadette parish is not responsible for any lost or damaged cell phones and electronic devices.

Dress Code

Appearance is conducive to learning and leads to a level of self-confidence and respect. How a student dresses directly impacts the way they think and act. As adults, we are their role models (for example, an adult would not wear a swimsuit to a wedding and no parent would send their child to school in their pajamas). Every child has an expected dress code for their elementary or middle school. Religious Education is no different. It is expected that all students dress in an appropriate manner for class, as they would for a regular day of school.

Students are expected to come to class neat and clean. **Pajama pants and flip flops are strictly prohibited.** If children are attending church for a sacramental celebration or a prayer service, they should dress appropriately.

Use of Bathrooms

The students are encouraged to use the bathroom before they come to class. **The session is only an hour and fifteen minutes long.** Bathrooms in the school should only be used for emergencies. Use of the facilities during class takes important time away from instruction. No student will be permitted in the hallways unsupervised.

Emergency Closing

In the event of a snow closing or weather emergency, we will follow the actions of St. Bernadette School and Upper Darby School District. If the school is closed due to a weather emergency, PREP will be cancelled. The Religious Education Office will send an email to all parents as soon as a decision is made.

Assignments

In some classes assignments are given out to be completed at home. These assignments serve to reinforce a lesson taught, or prepare for a lesson to be taught. Please check with your child each week to be sure such assignments are done.

Although faith formation includes an academic nature, faith must also be experienced, witnessed, and lived. The participants are expected to learn certain prayers each year.

It is expected that parents will help the students to memorize these prayers. Consideration is given to those with special needs. When a participant is absent it is the parent's responsibility to complete the work missed. In the Levels where the participants are preparing for Sacraments additional assignments are necessary (e.g. Study of Confirmation questions – Act of Contrition – Form for Confession).

Supplies

All children are issued a workbook and a folder at the beginning of the school year. Please see that your child's name and grade level are written in the front of their workbook. Each student will need a pencil or a pen at each class. The individual catechist may require other supplies. If the book is lost, payment will be expected for a replacement book.

Arrival and Dismissal

The Gym doors will be the only doors used for Arrival and Dismissal.

The Gym Doors will open at 6:30pm for student arrival. All students are to enter the door that is marked GYM ENTERANCE which faces Harper Avenue. Cars are to enter the parking lot by the Harper Avenue entrance (closest to Bond Avenue). **Please BE RESPECTFUL OF ALL IN THE PARKING LOT** and wait until you are closer to the school building to drop off the students. All cars are to exit the lot by the Harper Avenue Exit closest to the gym doors. **To help with the traffic flow, we ask that all PREP traffic on Harper Avenue is one way towards Bond Avenue during arrival and dismissal. Please follow the parking lines that are clearly marking in the parking lot.**

Once in the gym, students will sit in lines according to their grades and wait to be dismissed to their classrooms with their catechists.

All students will return to the Gym with their catechists for dismissal. The Gym Entrance will re-open at 7:55 pm for parents to pick up their children. Parents are to enter the gym to pick up their children. Please inform your child's catechist, in writing, if someone else is picking up your child/ren or if your child/ren have permission to walk home. If parents park in the parking lot, please use the same procedure as above and adhere to the parking patterns of the lot. Please be patient as the traffic leaves the parking lot. These procedures are for the safety of all our children.

Prayer Services

Throughout the year we gather all the students together to pray as a faith community in Church. Parents are invited and are welcome to come and pray with us. When the students attend Mass regularly, they will be familiar with acceptable behavior in Church. Students will not be permitted to walk to the back of the Church to use the bathrooms unless it is an extreme emergency. The dates and times for any Prayer Services will be given out in advance.

Service

To be a Christian is to be one who serves. In order to make the students aware of the poor and disadvantaged in the Body of Christ we offer several opportunities for service throughout the year.

Communications

A yearly calendar will be provided to each family at the start of the program. Updates will be provided throughout the year as needed. Each student is required to have a folder. This folder is used as the means of communication. The assistants put important papers in the folder, so please check it weekly. Parents should feel free to contact the program director regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. The program director may be contacted using any of the means listed below:

- Phone, [610-789-7676 ext. 212](tel:610-789-7676)
- E-mail, mmurphy@stbl.org
- Or please stop at the Religious Education Office in the Wright Center

Confidentiality

Matters of a confidential nature are often disclosed to a catechist for the purpose and only for the purpose of his/her work in the Parish Religious Education Program. This information may not be disclosed beyond the purpose of his/her work in the Parish Religious Education Program.

Content

The content of our Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) is taken from the official Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines.