

St. Ambrose Catholic Homeschool Co-Op

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a co-op?

A homeschool cooperative (co-op) is a group of like-minded families who meet together and work cooperatively to achieve common goals. Co-ops can be organized around academics, social time, the arts, activities, crafts, service work, or projects — or some combination of these. As St. Ambrose Catholic Homeschool Co-op is an enrichment co-op, children attending St. Ambrose must complete their core subjects at home or in another program as it does not provide the full slate of state-required subjects.

Where and when do you meet?

St. Ambrose Catholic Homeschool Co-op meets at the Basilica of Sts. Peter & Paul from 8:30 to 11:45 a.m. on Fridays, from mid-August until mid-May, primarily utilizing the St. Dominic Religious Education Building. Morning assembly begins promptly at 8:30 a.m., morning classes are 8:45-11:45 a.m., and Mass is at noon for those wishing to attend. We follow the local Catholic school calendars for Fall Break, Christmas Break, and Spring Break and/or Easter (when they are different).

Who can join?

Families committed to homeschooling their children in the Catholic faith are welcome. They must be practicing Catholics and registered parishioners of a Catholic parish near their home in the tri-state area.

What is a practicing Catholic?

A practicing Catholic is someone who at a minimum attends Sunday Mass every week and is a registered parishioner of a local Catholic parish. A practicing Catholic makes a religious assent of the mind and intellect to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, which is summarized especially in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

What if my spouse isn't Catholic?

As long as one parent is a practicing Catholic (see above) and the children are being raised Catholic, the other spouse does not have to be Catholic.

What is Safe Environment Training? Why do I need to do it?

The Diocese of Knoxville requires all adults ages 18 and older to complete online youth protection training through CMG Connect, a series of videos called "Safe Haven." The Basilica and core committee each require a copy of the certificate once training has been completed. Volunteer paperwork and background check paperwork are also required by the Basilica. For more information please visit www.dioknox.org and then click on the Safe Environment Training links.

What is expected of me?

At least one parent or guardian must attend co-op the entire time their children (grades 8th and younger) are at co-op for classes. High School students may choose a drop-off option if parents don't have other children enrolled in the co-op. Parents can volunteer to teach a class that fits their talents or will be assigned to assist in a classroom or work in the nursery each period as the needs of the co-op dictate. Per youth protection requirements, at least two "Safe Haven"-trained adults must be present in a classroom at all times. Each parent will be assigned cleaning duties multiple times per year.

Families also are expected to volunteer to help implement our two fundraisers, selling Advent candles after Masses in the fall and a bake sale in the spring. Families who do not sign up and show up to help sell at those fundraisers will be invoiced \$100. Money from fundraisers is used to offset co-op operating costs, pay for parties, and to give back to the Basilica community depending on the needs each year. (In the past, St. Ambrose has donated proceeds to the organ restoration fund, bought a basketball hoop, replaced toys in the nursery, etc.)

Do I have to stay at co-op?

Each child at co-op must have a "Safe Haven"-trained parent/guardian on campus the entire time they are attending co-op classes. Parents may not necessarily be assigned to the classroom(s) their child(ren) are in. High School students may be dropped off for classes if that option is desired.

Who will be teaching my children?

Most of the teachers are homeschooling parents with an interest or training in the subjects they teach. Some classes are taught by other members of the Catholic Church community who have expressed a desire or offered to help, and they also must be "Safe Haven" trained.

What classes do you offer?

Classes vary each school year, but the core curriculum St. Ambrose Co-op focuses on for students in grades 1-8 is Latin, Theology, Science, History, and the Arts. Past courses have included public speaking, drama, art, music, history, STEM, astronomy, anatomy, chemistry and physics. Children ages 3-6 (including Kindergarteners) attend a class called Little Lambs focusing on school readiness, reading skills, arts & crafts, and age-appropriate religious instruction.

What about high school?

High school age students take courses in Latin, Theology and Science (such as Biology, Physics, or Chemistry), Social Studies (such as Personal Finance, Government, History, or Economics), or English (such as Literature or Grammar & Writing) depending on what registered students need.

What about babies and toddlers?

St. Ambrose Co-op is blessed to be able to utilize the Basilica nursery during co-op hours. Per State of Tennessee rules, nursery size is limited to 8 if a child younger than 7 months is present, and 12 if children are older than 7 months but younger than 2 years. Mothers with babies and toddlers will not be asked to lead teach but may be asked to assist in a classroom and will need to leave their little ones in the nursery during that time.

How long are classes?

All elementary and middle school classes are 45 minutes long, with 4 classes in the morning. High school classes typically last 1 hour, with 3 classes each morning.

Do my children have to take all courses offered?

St. Ambrose Co-op requires all students in pre-K to 8th grade to attend all morning courses offered for their grade level. High School students may choose which classes they attend.

How is my child placed in classes?

Little Lambs (ages 3-5, pre-K/Kindergarten) must be 3 by Sept. 1 and potty-trained. Kindergarteners must be 5 by Sept. 1. Children in elementary-age classes must be 6 by Sept. 1 and be

able to read and write. Latin class placement will depend on previous Latin experience and/or a teacher recommendation.

How do I register?

Early Registration is open March 1-April 30 for a \$50 discount on registration fees. Registration continues through June 15. New families must plan a virtual visit with Core Committee members before June 15. All families must complete an application. When the application has been approved and the family is committed to joining St. Ambrose Co-op, they must complete a registration form for each child (babies through high schoolers), read and sign a copy of the handbook, sign all waivers, and pay the registration fee. Then they will be invoiced for all class fees.

Why do you not accept late registrations?

As the St. Ambrose co-op is run by a core group of five homeschooling mothers – with a total of 30 children and 70-plus years of homeschooling experience -- who are volunteering their time and talent to run the co-op, they need ample time to set class sizes, find teachers, choose curriculum, and purchase supplies in order to be ready to start on the first day of classes in August. For those families moving to the area after June 15 (including during the school year), or those families who are new to homeschooling after that deadline, the Core Committee will decide on a case-by-case basis and available space whether they will be able to join.

How much does it cost? When is money due? Whom do I pay?

Co-op registration fee is \$150 per family due at registration for the following school year, with an early-bird discount of \$50 off for those paying in full by April 30. Checks should be made out to Joseph Pricer (co-op treasurer), or contact him to arrange payment by credit card. These fees cover building rental, insurance, cleaning supplies, T-shirt for each student (age 3 and older) and teacher, community outreach, service projects, and an appreciation dinner for our priests.

Co-op class fees vary depending upon the class, ranging from \$5 to \$60 per child per class. Class fees are due by July 15. St. Ambrose provides all books, materials, teacher books, and school supplies needed and therefore the core committee needs time to be able to purchase these materials over the summer. For those unable to pay in full by July 15, they must contact Treasurer Joe Pricer well in advance to work out payment options.

Why can I not get a refund if I leave co-op?

As our classes are set and books and materials are obtained well before classes start, we cannot issue refunds for those materials after July 15.

How do I keep up with announcements and information?

The primary means of communication is a platform called Slack, available as a phone/tablet app and as a website on a personal computer. The Core Committee will ensure your family is connected to Slack. Families are expected to check Slack regularly (as least weekly) as this is where announcements, homework, questions, and other information is posted. Weekly announcements are also made at 8:30 a.m. on Fridays during morning assembly.