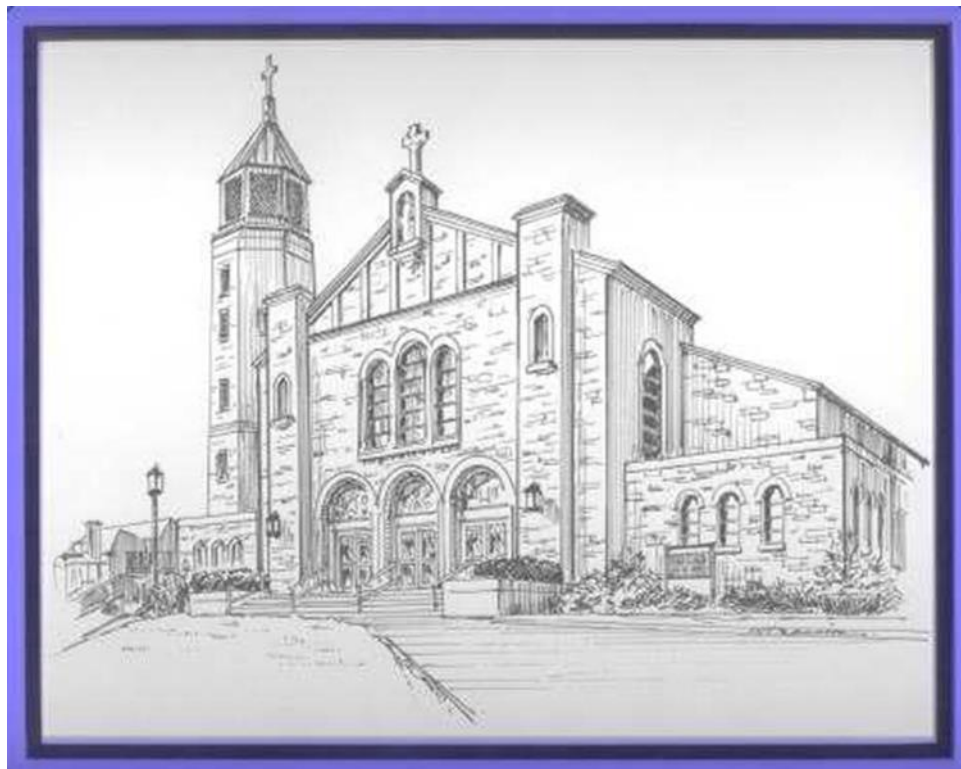


St. James School of Religion Woodbridge, NJ

POLICY HANDBOOK



September, 2021

**Mission Statement
“Faith and Action”**

(St. James 2:14)

In union with the Holy Trinity and with one another, we, the people of the St. James School of Religion, are called by God to pass on the gift of faith by word and deed with our parish community. In the words of St. James, we work at being true witnesses of Christ through “faith and action”.

By fostering the love of Jesus and following His teachings, we welcome all children to our program regardless of family economic status. By living the example of the Holy Family, we understand the need to nurture and support each other in our family of faith.



“My brothers and sisters, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it?”

You, as parents, have selected a Roman Catholic School of Religion Program (Religious Education/CCD) for your child/children. The St. James School of Religion Program is faithful to the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Our Program utilizes Diocesan programs to train our catechists. Please sign the attached agreement page of this handbook and return your signed agreement on the first day of religious education classes (or during your scheduled textbook pickup for virtual learning, if applicable). **If the School of Religion Office does not receive the signed agreement page of this handbook and your child(ren) continue to attend religious education classes, the School of Religion will accept your child's enrollment in classes as your formal agreement and acceptance of all policies and procedures as set forth in the handbook.**

We would appreciate your cooperation in the following areas to insure a productive and successful year for your child:

1. ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is essential. Religious education classes must be given first priority. Athletic and social activities are not an excuse for continuous absence or early dismissal. We have approximately 26 hours in which to help educate your child. Please do not allow him/her to miss class without good reason. All children are required to pass an end-of-the-year test. If three (3) or more unexcused absences occur for grades 1 to 8, the child will either need to be tested or interviewed in order to move up to the next grade level, or may need to repeat the year. Please call the School of Religion office **(732) 634-3026 X352 or X351** if your child is going to be absent, in order to make us aware of the situation. Instructions will be given to you about making arrangements for missed class work and homework. Religious Education is a continuous program. Grades 1 through 8 are required.

2. EARLY DISMISSAL AND PUNCTUALITY

A child will not be released to anyone other than a parent/guardian unless we have explicit written permission from the parent/guardian. A form listing adults that may pick up a child is enclosed with each family's packet. If an adult is not listed on the form, that adult will **NOT** be permitted to pick up the child. If a child is to walk home after class, the School of Religion must receive a notarized Walking Permission Slip before that child may be allowed to leave the building to walk home unattended.

Students are expected to be on time for class. Habitual lateness will not be allowed. Any child who continually arrives late for classes maybe asked to repeat the year or work missed. Please understand that students arriving late to class disrupt the entire class. If a student arrives after their class has gone to their room, the student **MUST** report to the Religious Ed Office. **Parents are NOT permitted to take the child to the classroom. Please**

understand that this procedure is for the safety of ALL the students in the building.

3. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CANCELLATION POLICY

If Woodbridge Township schools are cancelled, St. James Religious Education classes will be cancelled. If Public Schools have a delayed opening, Religious Education classes will be held in the afternoon and evening following the regular schedule. If Public Schools have an early dismissal, then Religious Education classes will be cancelled. If the weather continues to deteriorate after Public School is dismissed, the evening classes may be cancelled. You will be notified by your teacher; however, it is the parent's decision if the weather conditions are dangerous. Please use good judgment and common sense.

4. UPDATED INFORMATION

Please make sure that the parent/guardian emergency numbers are accurate. If phone/cell numbers or addresses change at any time during the religious education year, please contact the office immediately. This is absolutely necessary in the event of an emergency.

5. BEHAVIOR

With the number of children enrolled in our School of Religion, good behavior is essential to the success of the program. All religious education classes will take place in an atmosphere of learning within a Christian setting. Each student is expected to uphold proper decorum showing respect for the catechists, assistants, employees and volunteers and his/her fellow students. This includes entering and leaving the building in an orderly and polite way, as well as cooperation in the classroom. Please emphasize this with your child before he/she arrives to class each week.

Our staff is composed of volunteers that are genuinely concerned about your child. Their only "reward" is your interest and the religious education of your child. **IF YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR CAUSES PROBLEMS IN THE CLASSROOM, THEY WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE PROGRAM.** If they are enrolled in a sacramental year, the reception of the sacrament will be deferred for at least one year. Parents/guardians, we ask for your assistance in solving any discipline issues in the classroom or building. We want your child in class and we will do all we can to assist your family.

6. DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

If a student is disruptive, disrespectful, or acts in any other inappropriate manner, he/she will be immediately sent to the religious education office.* After the student is spoken to, he/she will be sent back to class with the understanding that the inappropriate behavior will not continue. If the behavior continues, the Director will set up a meeting with the parents/guardians. If after this initial meeting the inappropriate behavior continues, the student may be asked to leave the program. Behavior which takes away another student's right to learn will not be tolerated. Examples of inappropriate behavior include:

- Improper language, attitude or gestures
- Destroying property
- Smoking or vaping
- Gum chewing or spitting
- Violence of any type (fighting, name calling, bullying, etc)
- Rudeness, disrespectful of those in authority
- Indifference to the program.

Students and their parents/guardians will be responsible for any damage to school/church property.

*An Incident Report will be filled out by the student's teacher and MUST be signed by the parent/guardian each time the child is asked to leave the class due to improper behavior. In the event that THREE (3) incident reports are taken during the religious education year, the student will be suspended from the religious education program for the remainder of the year. The student may be re-admitted the following year only after the parent/guardian and the student have met with the Director and/or Pastor. It will be understood that the student will repeat the grade and that there will be no repetition of unacceptable behavior.

7. SACRAMENT GRADES – 1ST & 2ND, 7TH and 8TH

The parent/guardians of children in the sacrament grades are required to attend our education sessions. Important dates are listed in your September letter and in the policy handbook. Please read the weekly church bulletin for reminders. Any child who is receiving a sacrament, needs to attend all previous years of Religious Education, i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th, in order to comprehend a total understanding of the faith life they will live out. If any of levels are missed, the child may be tested and placed in their appropriate grade level until they are ready to receive the sacrament. The child will NOT be permitted to “skip” grade levels.

8. MASS ATTENDANCE

Attend Mass weekly with your child. No program can take the place of the example set in the home. There will be **CHILDREN'S WORSHIP BULLETINS** at the four side exits of the church. Please assist your child to make use of these bulletins to help them understand the readings at Mass each week. In the event of a State-wide shutdown, a google form for virtual Mass attendance will be required. Grades 6, 7 and 8 will be required to submit a google mass form weekly for mass attendance.

9. GENERAL INFORMATION

The School of Religion office has its own telephone number (732) 634-3026) x350 for Dorothy Zmigrodski, Parish Catechetical Leader; X351 for Linda Donnelly, Secretary; and X352 for Michelle Perez, Secretary). The School of

Religion office hours are: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10:00 am to 3:00 PM. The office is CLOSED on Wednesdays. Our religious education class hours are: Monday 4:15 to 5:30 pm - Grades 1 to 5; 7:00 to 8:30 pm - grades 6, 7 and 8 & special classes; and Thursday 6:15 to 7:30 PM - Grades 1 to 5 & special classes.

10. FIRE DRILLS

For your child's safety, we are required to have two (2) fire drills a year, which will be held in the fall and spring, during regular Religious Education class time.

11. DRESS CODE

Appropriate attire is expected to be worn to religious education classes. Nothing contrary to the Gospel message will be allowed.

12. CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES

We do not encourage your child to bring a cell phone or electronic device to class. If you feel it is absolutely necessary that your child have a cell phone during class, the following rules will apply:

The phone will be required to be turned off for the entire duration of any and all activities including, but not limited to, classroom instruction, church visitation, prayer experiences, liturgies, etc.

Cell phones and air pods must be kept out of sight upon entering the building and until the student has exited the building.

If a student is found to be using a cell phone or electronic device during class, it will be taken away and immediately brought to the Religious Education Office. The student's parent/guardian may then pick up the cell phone/electronic device from the office.

No cell phones may be used for picture taking.

No harassment or threatening of other persons via cell phones, no harassment, threatening, bullying or posting of pictures via social media or otherwise is permitted.

Cell phones may not be used to play games, internet or email access, for conversations, music, gambling or making purchases of any kind.

No pagers, Ipods, MP3 players or other communication devices are allowed.

If a parent/guardian needs to contact his/her child(ren) regarding late pick-up or other issue, the parent/guardian should call the St. James School of Religion. The St. James School of Religion staff will relay the message directly to the student(s) and catechists. This also allows us to keep your child safe and maintain a safe environment.

Once a student has been found to be in violation of the rules regarding cell phones, electronic devices, or other devices, that student will forfeit their privilege of bringing cell phones to religious education.

The St. James School of Religion CANNOT be responsible for any items lost and/or stolen that have been brought into the building by a student/catechist/assistant. All electronic devices, toys, phones, jewelry, etc. should be left at home.

13. TEXTBOOKS

The text series that we use in our Religious Education Program is the Sadlier "Christ In Us" series for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grades; the Sadlier "We Live Our Faith" for 7th and 8th grades. The Benziger Family Life series will also be utilized. The books are consumable and should be brought home each week for homework and for parents/guardians to review the content your child has learned in his/her religious education class. The books are to be returned to class each week. Family Life will be presented during the last three weeks of class.

14. CURRICULUM GUIDELINE FOR BUILDING FAITH

All students will be enrolled in the Sadlier Christ in Us Digital Platform (whether in person classes or virtual) for messaging, assignments, information, etc. Parents are provided with a log-in to the digital portal for their child/children. Parents/students need to log on weekly time to look for any assignments or information from the catechist.

All students in every grade level **must** pass a final grade level test in order to advance to the next level.

15. SCHOOL ARRIVAL

During drop-off, park in the church lot and walk your child to the church for drop off. **DO NOT DRIVE INTO THE SCHOOL YARD, park by the yellow curb or park on Grenville Street.** This is a great safety hazard to all the children. Children are to arrive no more than five minutes before classes and are to be picked up immediately after class.

16. SCHOOL DISMISSAL

On Monday afternoon, it will be necessary for parents/guardians to come into the school gym to pick up their child(ren) after class,

as it will be dark by 5:30. This is a matter of safety for your child. Students will NOT be dismissed into the school parking lot at dismissal. It is necessary that you park in the **CHURCH LOT** and walk over to the school to pick-up of your child(ren). Enter the school building ONLY through the Religious Education door #2 from the school parking lot. For safety reasons, no other doors are to be opened

On Monday evenings, the 6th, 7th and 8th grades meet in the church upon arrival. At dismissal, all walkers who have turned in notarized walking permission slips will be dismissed from the gym. All students whose parents come into the building for pick-up will be dismissed from the school gym as well.

On Thursday evenings, grades 1 to 5, will meet in the church and be dismissed from the school gym. It will be necessary for the parents to come into the school to pick their child(ren) up from all evening classes. No students will be dismissed into the school parking lot for the evening classes. It is necessary that you park in the **CHURCH LOT** and walk over to the school to pick-up of your child(ren).

If your child needs to leave class early, you must send a note to the teacher and sign the child out in the Religious Education Office. They will be dismissed from the Office **ONLY**. We **DO NOT** encourage your child to walk home from Religious Education classes on **Monday evening**, but if **you** choose to have them do so as the parent/guardian, you **MUST** fill out a walking permission form from the Diocese of Metuchen. This form **MUST** be signed by you and notarized. This form can be picked up in the Religious Education Office. Without this completed form, your child will not be permitted to walk home or to leave the building without an adult.

17. HOMEWORK

Please check your child's Religious Education folder as well as the Christ In Us Portal **weekly** for assignments and important messages. In order to encourage a home/school relationship, the Religious Education teachers are required to give a **homework assignment every week**. Please be sure to ask your child each week what was learned and what the homework assignment is for the week. Have your child bring their **Religious Education folder, books and a pen and/or pencil to class every week**. Grades 6, 7 and 8 must also bring a Catholic Bible, which can be purchased in the Religious Education Office, if necessary.

18. TESTING

At the end of the religious education year, a final exam will be administered to all students covering the material learned during the course of the year. Students are expected to achieve a passing grade in order to proceed to the next grade level.

19. VISITATION

All visitors who want to visit the classrooms for any reason, must first stop at the Religious Education Office to sign in. **NO ONE** will be permitted to go to a classroom without first reporting to the office. **ALL** visitors will be escorted to and from the classrooms for the safety of ALL the children in the building.

20. CHILD ABUSE POLICY

If a catechist/director suspects a child has been abused, NJ State Statues require that the Division of Youth & Family Services be notified immediately.

21. SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Drugs of any type (alcohol, illegal substances, prescription medications, etc.) will NOT be allowed on the school or church premises. If a student is found to be in possession of any of these items, the student(s) will be detained until the police and parents/guardians are notified. Drug possession by a minor will always be considered a police matter.

The Parish Catechetical Leader/Catechist/Assistants will NOT send a student home with a parent/guardian/driver who is visibly impaired. The Parish Catechetical Leader reserves the right to contact the emergency number on file.

22. NECESSARY HELP

We absolutely need assistance for all our programs. With the number of students enrolled in the Religious Education program, we need your help. In cooperation with the Office of Child and Youth Protection of the Diocese of Metuchen, all catechists/assistants, volunteers and employees of the St. James School of Religion Program must have a background check and be fingerprinted through the agency designated by the Diocese. All catechists/assistants, volunteers and employees of the St. James School of Religion must also attend a Protecting God's Children Workshop as well as additional workshops provided throughout the year as determined by the School of Religion and Diocesan guidelines. Fingerprints are required to be re-certified EVERY 3 years as per Diocesan guidelines.

23. REGISTRATION, FEES AND REFUNDS

Registration for First Graders takes place annually at the end of April. A copy of the Baptismal certificate (even if your child was baptized here at St. James) is required as well as the required paperwork and tuition fees. Re-registration forms for all other grade levels are sent in the mail in the Spring. If this paperwork is not sent to the Religious Education Office by the deadline in May, a **\$25.00 LATE FEE** will be required. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS to the late fee. The tuition fee, (our policy is sent to you every year with your re-registration forms), is to be paid upon registration unless a monthly billing plan has been arranged.

There is a fee for the sacramental years - \$35.00 for 2nd grade, \$35.00 for 7th grade and \$50.00 for 8th grade. (The fee includes the Confirmation gown, retreat fees, sacramental paperwork and programs, etc.)

If there is a legitimate financial difficulty, parents/guardians are asked to make an appointment with the Parish Catechetical Leader and/or Pastor.

REFUNDS will not be issued once classes begin as materials will have already been purchased for the academic year.

24. TRANSFER STUDENTS

Students transferring from a religious education program into the religious education program offered by St. James must bring a letter from the former parish stating the years attended and grade level completed as well as the most recent Progress Report for each child enrolling in the St. James School of Religion.

If you find it necessary to leave our program for any reason, you must notify our office immediately. We will forward the appropriate transfer paperwork directly to the new religious education program you will be attending, and adjust our records accordingly.

25. RECORDS

Please make sure that all information on the registration form is accurate. If there are any changes throughout the school year, please notify our office of these changes, so that we can keep our permanent record cards up to date and send any correspondence correctly. The permanent record cards keep track of the students' Religious Education and Sacramental records.

26. PROGRESS REPORTS

The students receive progress reports twice per year, in January and May. Please be sure to review your child's progress report and return the signed envelope to the next class. If there are any areas of concerns noted on the report, please address these concerns with your child. Unsatisfactory in any area on the final report card may require a meeting with the PCL and/or a grade level final test. Please contact our office with any questions or concerns that you might have regarding your child's religious education.

27. FOOD ALLERGIES

Food allergies are a growing health concern for children across the county. Even a miniscule amount of the allergic food is sufficient to cause a life-threatening reaction and inadvertent contact (via the nose, eyes, mouth) can be sufficient to put a child in danger. It is the goal of the Religious Education Program at St. James to provide an allergen free environment for children with food allergies, so

that they may enjoy a safe and respectful place to grow in their faith.

Recognizing that strict avoidance of the allergen is the only way to prevent a potentially life-threatening reaction, we ask your cooperation with the following policy: **NO FOOD AND/OR DRINK OF ANY KIND WILL BE PERMITTED DURING PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS AS MANDATED BY THE DIOCESE OF METUCHEN.**

Parents/guardians of highly allergic children **MUST** make known the special needs of the child to the Parish Catechetical Leader so that all precautions will be taken. If your child carries an epinephrine pen, it is necessary that you bring it to the attention of the Parish Catechetical Leader and let him/her know whether your child is able to self-medicate and can inject himself/herself if necessary. A consent form for your child to self-inject on the premises and/or our staff/volunteers to inject your child, if necessary, **MUST BE FILLED OUT BY YOU AND SIGNED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN AND THE PRESCRIBING DOCTOR AND RETURNED TO THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE TO BE KEPT ON FILE. THE FORM WILL EXPIRE AFTER ONE (1) YEAR.**

28. MEDICATIONS/EPI-PENS

If your child(ren) requires medication, or carries an Epi-Pen, has life-threatening allergies, a severe illness or medical condition, it is YOUR responsibility as the parent/guardian to inform the St. James School of Religion of the allergy/illness. If your child(ren) needs to take medication during religious education hours, please inform the office as a "Self-Administration of Medication Permission and Release form" will need to be filled out by you and your physician to properly accommodate your child(ren). If your child carries an Epi-Pen, it is YOUR responsibility as the parent/guardian to inform the St. James School of Religion. If your child carries an Epi-Pen, the office needs to know if your child is trained and equipped to self-medicate. If so, the St. James School of Religion must have a signed "Self-Administration of Medication Permission and Release" form on file allowing your child to self-medicate with the Epi-Pen while on the school premises. This form must be signed by the parent/guardian and your physician. If your child(ren) cannot properly utilize his/her Epi-Pen, it is YOUR responsibility as the parent/guardian to alert the St. James School of Religion. You and your physician will need to complete the "Release from Physician and Parent for Staff to Administer Medication to a Child" and the "Waiver of Liability and Agreement to Hold Harmless" forms so that the staff and/or

catechist can administer the medication to your child in the event of an emergency situation.

29. ILLNESS OR INJURY

If a child becomes ill or injured during religious education, the parent/guardian will be notified. The child will be released **ONLY** from the Religious Education Office.

30. SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

We look forward to a productive year as we bring God's word to you and your family. You can be assured of our continuing concern and pledge our service to you and to all our students who come to us eager to learn and live out the catholic faith each day to the best of our abilities. In return, we urge you to become involved in the programs offered at St. James. Remember, you are important to your child's spiritual education.

31. VIRTUAL PLATFORM GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS, CATECHISTS AND PARENTS ARE ATTACHED TO THIS BOOKLET. Please take the time to read the guidelines as we must request strict compliance for the safety of all involved. These guidelines are a separate "clickable" page on our website as well. By signing the attached agreement signature consent form, parents/guardians agree to all policies and guidelines (virtual or in-person classes) set forth in this Policy Handbook and attached Virtual Platform Guidelines should virtual learning become necessary.

32. PANDEMIC LEARNING

In the event of a pandemic and State shut down or shelter in place, religious education will continue remotely. Classes will be held via Zoom (see 31 above) and messaging will be via the Sadlier Christ in Us Digital.

As the school year progresses, I hope to meet with all our parents/guardians to discuss your child's religious education. We have slated several meetings for this purpose. Please mark them on your calendar and prepare to make time for your child's most important education, their spiritual growth in faith.

Congratulations! You have selected a Roman Catholic Religious Education Program for your child. This program teaches the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, and utilizes Diocesan programs to train catechists. Please sign the agreement attached to the front of this handbook and return it to your child's teacher on the first day of class. The signed agreement page will be kept on file in the parish religious education office. As stated in the handbook, **if the School of Religion Office does not receive the signed agreement page of this handbook and your child(ren) continue to attend religious education classes, the School of Religion will accept your child's enrollment in classes as your formal agreement and acceptance of all policies and procedures as set forth in the handbook.**

Together in Christ,
Mrs. Dorothy Zmigrodski
Parish Catechetical Leader

Father Thomas Naduviledathu
Pastor

We will continue to utilize the **CHRIST IN US PORTAL** to stay connected with our students' families. Information will be sent home at the beginning of the school year with instructions on how to register. Please sign up with your log on immediately so you will be able to receive important communication, information, etc. from the Religious Education office, in the event of a school closing, emergency, meetings, assignment reminders, etc. **PLEASE MAKE SURE TO CHECK THE CHRIST IN US PORTAL WEEKLY.** A welcome e-mail will be generated the first time your child is registered. Each year your username and password for the portal will remain the same. This will be our **ONLY** form of communication with the families this year. If you do not register, you will not receive notices from the Religious Education Office. If you have any questions or difficulties, please feel free to contact the office for assistance.