



St. John Chrysostom Parish
Fr. Edward Hallinan, *Pastor*

PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM (PREP) PARENT HANDBOOK

Patty Briganti, Coordinator of Religious Education (*CRE*)

Religious Education Office
(Located in the SJC Parish House)

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Welcome, Parents!

I am happy that your child or children have been registered in the PREP Program. Although you are the first, primary, and most important teachers of the faith, Fr. Ed Hallinan, our parish's devoted catechists, and I are committed to assisting you as you teach your children about our Catholic faith and to help them grow in understanding and appreciation for the Mass. As partners in your child's religious education, our hope is that in addition to regular attendance at PREP, you will observe and support the teachings and traditions of our faith through prayer, attendance at weekly Mass and Holy Days, and reception of the sacraments. Attending Mass each week with your child inspires lifelong devotion to God and the Catholic faith.

We invite you to carefully review this PREP Parent Handbook, written for the parents/guardians and of students enrolled in public or private, non-Catholic education systems. It is intended to assist your understanding of the policies and procedures for our parish program. The policies and procedures contained in the handbook are in accordance with the religious education program guidelines provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The Parent Handbook is subject to change. You will receive notice of any changes to the Parent Handbook, as well as other information pertaining to our Religious Education via email messages and our parish website.

We look forward to getting to know you and your children. We look forward to sharing our journey in faith with you.

May God bless you and your family,

Patty Briganti

Patty Briganti
Coordinator of Religious Education

MISSION STATEMENT

The Religious Education program of St. John Chrysostom Parish is devoted to the teachings of God's Word and is committed to assisting our youth to living lives as life-long practicing members of the Catholic Church. Our program endeavors to help our children recognize the importance of developing a close and meaningful relationship with Jesus through prayer, the sacraments, and service to others.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: Partners in Faith

Canon Law, the law of the Church, states that *"parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation"* (Can. 774 §2). This is underscored via the General Directory for Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis. St. John Chrysostom's Office of Religious Education recognizes and supports parents in their role as the primary and most important educators of the faith.

The word *catechist* comes from a Greek word meaning *"to echo."* Catechists echo the Word of God to our parish children. The catechists generously volunteer their time to share our Catholic faith, values, and traditions with our youngest generation of Christians. They are positive role models who help children grow in faith and spirituality. It is through their words and actions that the message of Christ continues to spread throughout the world.

Our pastor, Fr. Edward Hallinan, and the PREP catechists willingly and enthusiastically partner with parents, as the first catechists/teachers of the faith, to accomplish common goals that include advancing the knowledge and love of our Catholic faith, forming life-long believers, and developing a habit of service to others.

St. John's also understands that some families have special circumstances that affect their child's religious education and sacramental preparation. We invite you to make an appointment to discuss how we can meet your child's needs.

ENROLLMENT IN THE PREP PROGRAM

It is essential that each participant remain enrolled in the program from year to year beginning in first grade. 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.

A student who voluntarily leaves the program for two or more consecutive years will be placed into a grade level below their current school grade level. The grade level will be determined on a case-by-case basis. This could delay the student's reception of the sacraments at the usually scheduled time. Excessive absences jeopardize the reception of sacraments

In accordance with Archdiocesan guidelines, students preparing to receive sacraments must have completed 2 consecutive years of study prior to receiving the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion .

LEARNING AND HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION

The PREP registration form requests important information regarding medical conditions, allergies, medications, and disabilities and/or learning support such as an IEP or a 504 Plan. This information is shared with the catechist only and remains confidential. It is very important to disclose this information, so that we can best support the learning and medical needs of your child. Parents are asked to inform the Coordinator of Religious Education if a new condition becomes known or a condition previously noted no longer applies.

MASS ATTENDANCE

Parents are reminded that attendance in PREP class is not intended as a substitute for the weekly obligation to attend Mass. Attendance at Mass on Saturday night or Sunday morning, as well as Holy Days of Obligation is expected, in addition to attendance in PREP class.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

First Reconciliation (First Penance) and **First Communion**: Students receive instruction for the reception of these two sacraments in grade 2. First Reconciliation is celebrated in January and First Communion in early May.

Confirmation is usually celebrated in the spring, but varies according to the presiding bishop's schedule. St. John's will celebrate Confirmation in the child's 7th grade year.

A separate sacramental fee of approximately \$50 applies for the students preparing to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion (\$50 total). A sacramental fee of approximately \$50 applies for the students receiving the sacrament of Confirmation. The fee covers the cost of the sacramental teaching materials, retreats, sacrament certificates, sacrament presentations, and more.

Sacramental years also entail parent meetings. One parent per student is expected to attend the parent meetings relating to the sacrament. However, both parents are welcome and encouraged to attend. Students preparing to receive instructions are required to attend the sacrament retreat.

Students with excessive absences, lateness, or those who cause disciplinary concerns may be required to delay the reception of the sacraments for the following year or later.

Archdiocesan policy requires that sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist be received in the parish at which the family is registered, unless permission is granted by Fr. Hallinan, in addition to the pastor of the parish at which permission is sought.

PREP PROGRAM SCHEDULING OPTIONS

There are currently two options for your child's religious instruction at St. John Chrysostom Parish (SJC):

A. Traditional PREP (Sundays during school year)

St. John's also understands that some families have special circumstances that affect their child's religious education and sacramental preparation. An Adaptive PREP option may be offered for children and youth of all ages with autism and other special needs.

We invite you to contact the Coordinator of Religious Education to discuss how we can meet your child's needs.

B. Summer PREP Intensive

This program is an intensive program, and attendance is mandatory for all days with no absences for completion. *Enrollment is limited.* For non-sacramental years, the PREP Summer Session satisfies the entire year of religious instruction, without the need for the student to return to the Sunday morning classes.

However, for the sacramental grades of 2 and 7, Summer PREP students will be required to attend additional sacramental preparation during the school year in order to receive their sacraments. The Summer Session schedule may vary from year to year, according to the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District's yearly calendar.

REGISTRATION

- All families registered in St. John Chrysostom Parish are eligible to register their children in the PREP Program.
- Registration in the parish must precede registration in the PREP Program.
- Newly registered families in the parish are accepted at any time. The late fee is waived for newly registered families.

All Information announcing the timing and other information regarding the registration process for both Traditional PREP and PREP Summer Session is emailed to the families with students currently registered in PREP, as well as published on the parish website and parish bulletin.

New student registration: Parents of new PREP students (of all grade levels) are required to submit a copy of each child's Baptismal certificate, if baptized in a parish other than St. John Chrysostom Parish.

It is important that all parents notify the Office of Religious Education of any **changes in home address, student health information, learning issues, emergency contacts, email addresses, etc.,** so we may update our records.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

During the course of the academic year, the number of instructional hours is extremely limited. Please make your children's religious education a priority, arranging other activities at times other than during the PREP Program.

- Attendance at all scheduled PREP sessions is expected.
- Parents are asked not to compromise this time by allowing absences other than those due to illness.

- *Students are permitted 3 absences per academic year, as per the Archdiocesan guidelines.*
- Parents are asked to make every effort to have their children arrive on time and to refrain from requesting an early dismissal.

If your child will be absent from class, please contact the Coordinator of Religious Education at pbriganti@sjcparish.org or 610-874-3418 (Extension 105). Be certain to note your child's name, grade level, and catechist's name. Please note that a staff member is not available in the office to take your calls prior to and during class time. Therefore, notification via email is best on days when PREP is in session. If you know well in advance of the anticipated absence, please contact the Religious Education office as soon as possible. This allows us to notify your child's catechist in advance.

As noted above, students are permitted 3 absences per academic year. The Coordinator of Religious Education will initiate a conversation with the parents of students who have accumulated 2 absences. A student with more than 3 absences may be required to repeat the grade level the following year. This determination will be made on a case-by-case basis. If extenuating circumstances affect a child's ability to attend PREP class, the parents should make this known to the Coordinator of Religious Education as soon as possible. A sport is typically not considered an extenuating circumstance.

Every absence requires the missed lesson to be completed, as well as the completion of assigned homework, if applicable. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure the completion of the missed work and homework assignment. The student will receive the missed work and home assignment upon his or her return to class following an absence. Students are expected to submit the completed work prior to their next scheduled class.

Please note: According to the Archdiocesan policy, excessive absences may result in the inability to advance to the next grade level and delay the reception of one or more sacraments.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Arrival: Students will assemble with their classmates at assigned locations in the gym prior to the start of PREP. Students are always expected to remain with their classmates until instructed to move to their classrooms with their catechists. Students are NOT permitted to run around the gym, toss balls, etc. either before or after class.

Dismissal of students in grades 1-3: These students and their older siblings, and friends riding home with these students assemble into 2 lines in the gym, near the stage. The students are asked

to talk quietly and remain in line. The parent or adult are asked to park their cars in the parking lot and enter the gym via the side door closest to the playground area. Upon entering the gym, the parent/adult must sign out each child on the clipboard provided by one of the catechists. The child/children may then join the parent or adult and walk toward the back of the gym and exit via the side door.

Dismissal of students in grades 4-7: These students exit the gym via the main doors and await the arrival of their parent or adult under their catechist's supervision. Students are not permitted to run around while waiting or to run into the parking lot to meet their parent or adult.

LATENESS AND EARLY DISMISSAL

Student lateness and early dismissal are disruptive to the learning process for both the students and his or her classmates. Students should make every effort to arrive on time. Repeated lateness and requests for early dismissal may result in a meeting with the student's parents.

Requests for early dismissal should be an exception. Early dismissal for sports related activities is highly discouraged. Requests for early dismissal must be in writing to the CRE before the start of class. The CRE will inform the student's catechist of the early dismissal. **Parents must enter the building and sign out the child before the student is permitted to leave the classroom. Students will NOT be permitted to leave the building to meet a parent outside.**

Procedure for early dismissal of students: Please enter the Mother of Providence Regional Catholic school building via the main entrance, located on the opposite end of the building from the gym. (Follow the sidewalk from the school's mailbox.) Ring the bell. Personnel from the PREP Program or a volunteer will let you into the building. Sign out your child/children on the clipboard and state the reason for the early dismissal. Your child is not permitted to leave his or her classroom until signed out.

If someone other than a parent is picking up a child early or at regular dismissal, the RE Office must be notified via email in advance.

NON-CUSTODIAL ORDER/CUSTODY AGREEMENT

It is the biological parents' responsibility to provide the Office of Religious Education with the latest Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. These documents are requested at the time of registration. If either the Custodial Order or Custody Agreement changes, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide that document to the Office of Religious Education.

Our parish adheres to the Buckley Amendment regarding the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order requiring otherwise, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program-related information. If a court order exists which specifies that information is not to be given to the non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Director of Religious Education with an official and latest court order.

If a court order prohibits the release of a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Director of Religious Education with the official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Good behavior is expected of each student attending the PREP Program. Disruptions due to behavior are unfair to the volunteer catechists and the students. Students are expected to respect the school and parish property as well as the property of other students.

Inappropriate or obscene language, fighting, bullying, disrespect, destruction of property, consistent disruptive behavior, or failure to cooperate with the catechist and/or administrators of the program are cause for a student to be immediately removed from the classroom. A meeting of the parents and Director of Religious Education must occur before the child may return to class. Depending on the infraction, immediate expulsion from the program could occur. It will be determined on a case-by-case basis if the student will be readmitted to the program if expelled. The student may be required to repeat the grade level upon return to the program.

CELL PHONE AND ELECTRONICS POLICY

Student cell phones are to be turned off upon entering the building and collected by the catechist who will place the cell phones into a bin or basket. The cell phones will be returned to each student at the end of each session. Likewise, each student is required to submit any other electronic devices or games to the catechist. The devices will remain with the catechist until the session has ended. St. John Chrysostom is not responsible for any lost or damaged cell phones or electronic devices. Parents are asked to advise their children of this policy.

USE OF THE RESTROOMS

In the case of true need, students are expected to ask the catechist for permission to leave the classroom to use the restrooms. If permission is granted, the student is expected to return to class within a reasonable amount of time.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

If students are given home assignments/assessments, the assignments are expected to be completed, unless otherwise directed by the catechist. Assignments/Assessments are intended to reinforce the lesson taught or prepare for a future lesson. Some of the assignments might require your assistance. Parents are expected to ensure that their child is completing the assignments.

As noted under the heading, “Attendance Policy,” each absence requires the student to complete the missed lesson as well as assigned homework. The student is expected to submit the make-up assignment and homework to the catechist within two weeks of the absence so that the catechist can give credit for its completion. It is the parent’s responsibility to ensure the completion of the missed work and homework assignment.

Consistent, incomplete homework assignments may interfere with the student’s advancement to the next grade level.

In addition to the weekly lesson, students are expected to learn and memorize the prayers of our Catholic faith. Parents are asked to assist their child with the memorization of the prayers.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

In the event of inclement weather or another reason requiring the unexpected cancellation of classes, parents will receive an email notification. The closing will also be posted on the parish website.

COMMUNICATION

A PREP calendar is provided to all families registered in the program. For the parents’ convenience, the calendar is also posted on the parish website along with other PREP Program information. Regular communication via Parent Updates is provided to the parents by email. Because the calendar is subject to change, parents are encouraged to regularly check the calendar posted on the parish website, posted under the PREP tab.

Parents are welcome to contact the Director of Religious Education with questions or concerns.

