

# **St. John the Evangelist Religious Education Parent/Student Handbook**

## **St. John the Evangelist Religious Education Program**

St. John's is dedicated to helping our students grow in faith in a loving, safe environment that spreads the true message of our Catholic faith; so that our students may come to recognize the love of Christ and to help them participate more fully in the life of the Catholic Church.

### **Program Policies for 2021-2022**

In order for our Program to ensure all safety measures while your children are in our care, we ask that you please read our Parent/Student Handbook in its entirety. Included you will find guidelines for safety, student behavior while attending our program, as well as guidelines for our policy on absences and tardiness of our students. Please read over the policies for our Program, which follows the guidelines of the Archdiocese. You will be asked to sign on your registration form that you have read and agree to follow these policies throughout the program year, with understanding that policies may be revised throughout the year as needed. You will be informed of any revisions should they become necessary.

### **Safety Policy**

These rules are set in place to ensure the safety of our students attending our Program and we follow the guidelines set by the Archdiocese. Your cooperation is crucial to your child's safety.

1. Any safety protocols and guidelines regarding drop off policies will be updated once we receive notification from the Archdiocese. We will update our handbook to include these procedures required prior to the start of our Program.
2. Our Faith Formation building will be locked after the start of sessions and will remain locked until dismissal.
3. Anyone arriving after the doors are locked will be required to enter through the front of the building where a staff member or volunteer will sign you in.
4. A signed and dated Pick-up Release form is required by the parent or legal guardian, stating which adult other than the parent has permission to pick up their child. The Archdiocese requires this person to be an adult, **18 years or older** (even if siblings). Without written permission, we are unable to release your child to anyone other than the parent. **A new Pick-up Release form is required to be filled out every year.**
5. The Faith Formation lower parking lot will be reserved for all Catechists and volunteers of the Program. No one is permitted to park in this area at any time during sessions.
6. Dismissal policies will be updated once we receive all protocol and guidelines from the Archdiocese.

### **Mass Participation**

**It is expected that all children registered in our Religious Education Program attend Mass each weekend and Holy Days of Obligation.** Attending Mass is an integral part of your child understanding and growing in their faith. Parents are the first example of the faith, and we are here to assist your child in learning the teachings of the Catholic Church. We hope to assist you throughout the year in providing your children with the best faith foundation for their future.

## **Weekend Mass Schedule**

### **Main Church**

Saturday 4:00pm and 5:30pm  
Sunday 7:30am, 9:00am, 11:30am, and 5:30pm

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation Schedule**

Main Church: Saturdays 3:15-4:00pm and 5:00-5:30pm  
After weekday Masses, Monday – Friday following the 12:00pm Mass

### **Sacramental Program for 2<sup>nd</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade students & families**

As all our families are expected to attend Mass regularly, our Sacramental year students will be expected to attend Mass weekly and will have a special record for their Mass attendance throughout their Sacramental preparation year.

By enrolling your child into our Sacramental Program, you are agreeing to bring your children to Mass every weekend, including Holy Days of Obligation as well throughout the year. You are also agreeing to use our method of recording Mass attendance weekly, which will be explained to you and your child at our first Sacramental parent meeting.

There will be mandatory Sacramental parent meetings during this special preparation year. Here you will learn all the details about your child's requirements for the reception of their Sacrament, as well as hearing about the Family Catechesis events that each family will be required to attend with their child. These Catechesis events are intended to strengthen your family's understanding of the faith and/or a particular aspect of our Catholic faith.

There will be Sacramental fees for both Confirmation and Communion that will be due in November of 2021, along with a Sacramental registration form you will fill out for your child.

A Sacramental calendar will be emailed to each family and will contain important calendar dates for requirements throughout the year (ex. Sacrament dates, practice dates, Family Catechesis dates, etc.). Please mark your calendars of all these important dates to serve as your reminder.

### **Tardiness and Early Pick up Policy**

To prevent unnecessary disruptions to our classes, please bring your child to their scheduled session on time. Should a student arrive tardy more than once (2 or more times), the Director will contact the parent to address any issues and a switch in session placement may be suggested to accommodate the family's schedule.

**With the exception of a family emergency, early pick-up is not permitted.** Due to expected updated protocols and guidelines, early pick-ups will be highly discouraged throughout the year. Please schedule all doctor, sports and recreational activities, etc. outside the time of your child's scheduled Religious Education classes. This example of the importance in regular class attendance is a great example you will set for your children as to the importance of faith in your family.

Should there be repeated early pick-ups, the Director will contact the parent and a switch in the schedule may be suggested to accommodate the family's schedule.

### **Dress Code**

Children are expected to wear modest clothing, which reflects the dignity of our Religious Education Program, as well as the reflection of who we are and what we believe here at St. John's. All children are expected to be appropriately dressed while attending our Program.

Modest dress would include no short skirts, short shorts (during the warmer months, Bermuda length would be acceptable), tank tops, spaghetti straps, low cut tops, short dresses, tight clothing, etc. Clothing may not contain any messages, which are negative, offensive, disrespectful, or having anything deemed as degrading or demeaning of the human person in any way.

Discretion will be left up to the Director as to what is acceptable. Any child who is not in compliance with the dress code or dressed inappropriately will be sent to the office and the parent will be called to either bring alternative clothes or to pick up their child from the program.

### **Special Needs/Medical Conditions**

Please inform the Director at registration if your child has any special needs or medical conditions, so that we can make any special accommodations needed for your child. This information should be included on your child's Emergency Form.

Medication of any kind is not permitted on a student. If special emergency medication is necessary for your child, please speak to the Director about the Archdiocese's policy regarding any emergency medicine (Ex. Epi-Pens) and there is a form that you will need to fill out for your child.

For children who have special education needs, a copy of your child's IEP is requested to help us serve your child in the best way possible.

### **Food Policy - Allergies**

St. John's Religious Education program is a "Food Free" building during sessions. No food is permitted into the building. Please have your child eat & drink any snacks prior to coming into the building. Any food brought into the building will need to be discarded upon entry.

### **Absentee Policy**

Regular attendance is expected throughout the Program calendar year. We understand that children get sick or an emergency may occur. However, please make every effort to bring your child to class on time each week for the continuity of the Program and for your child to get the most of out of the Program.

1. Two absences are permitted during the Program calendar year for sickness or special circumstances. Make up of all missed work is required by the following class session. Please keep track of your child's absences throughout the year and plan accordingly.
2. If your child is going to be absent, please email the Director at: [FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org](mailto:FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org). to let her know your child will be absent and the reason for their absence for our records.
3. If more than 2 absences occur, you will be contacted by the Director who will assess whether your child will need to do a make up program before they can be promoted to the next grade level will contact you. If a summer make up is required, then a fee will be added at that time. The Director will determine the child's readiness upon assessment to be promoted to the next grade level.
4. If a child is enrolled in a Sacramental year (2<sup>nd</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>), it is crucial that your children attend class regularly. Excessive absences and/or tardiness may result in your child being delayed in making their Sacrament until the following year.

### **Class Participation and Preparedness**

Full participation is key for your child to receive the most benefits of our program. Your child is expected to come fully prepared for class. This would include bringing their workbook, Bible in the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade level, pencil/pen, and any other supplies requested by the Catechist at the start of the year.

Your child should complete all assignments and homework given by their teacher and hand it in by their next class session.

**If your child loses their book during the year, the replacement book fee is \$30.**

### **Home Assignment Policy**

During the weeks where your children are not in session, they will be given a Home Assignment that is to be completed by their next class session. These Home Assignments are a required part of their full participation in our program.

If Home Assignments are missed, the Director will contact the parents to make sure that all work is completed.

### **Snow Day/Cancellation policy**

If our Program is closed for weather related emergencies or other emergency cancellation, your children is then required to complete that day's chapter assignment at home. If the assignment is not completed by the next class session, an absence will be recorded for that day verses an excused snow day.

### **Behavior/Discipline**

For the best learning environment for all of our students and Catechists, it is expected that the students attending our Program show respect to their Catechist, our staff, their fellow classmates, and to the Program's property. Our goal is to provide a loving, safe environment for all our students to learn about our Catholic faith.

Expectations for each child who attends our program:

1. Respect the Catechist and other students in their classroom.
2. Arrive on time weekly and come prepared to class.
3. Listen to the lesson from their Catechist without interruption.
4. Raise one's hand when wanting to speak or answer a question.
5. Complete any assignment given, as well as prepare for any quizzes or class assessments.
6. Turn off all cell phones or any electronic devices upon entering our program. (See cell phone policy)
7. Follow all safety protocols that are set at the start of the Program year.
8. Respect the property of the Program both inside and outside of the building.

To help ensure the overall loving and safe environment of the program, we will enforce the following behavior policy for any student who is unable to behave and/or is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in their classroom:

1. Upon a student's disruptive behavior in class, the student will be sent to the office. The disruptive behavior will be addressed and corrected. A disciplinary form will be filled out and signed by both the student and Director of the program. The child will be sent back to class, make an apology to the teacher, and the discipline form will be filed.
2. Should the disruptive behavior happen a second time and the student is sent back to the office, the disciplinary form will be filled out again and the parents will be contacted to meet with the Director to discuss the behavior. The parents will be asked to sign the form this time as well.
3. Upon the third disruptive behavior, the Director will contact the parents to pick up their child and a

follow up consultation meeting will be scheduled at a future date to discuss the best option going forward for all involved.

If a child physically harms or endangers any person in our program, they will be asked to leave the program immediately.

### **Cell phones and Electronic Device Policy**

Cell phones or electric devices are not permitted to be on in class at any time for any reason. A cell phone may be on the child for emergency purposes, and the cell phone or any electrical device must be turned off (muted) during the entire class time. If a cell phone or electronic device is seen being used, it will be given to the Director for the parent to retrieve at the end of session in the Main Office.

No child or parent is permitted to record, take photographs, video, etc. of any child, classmate, Catechist, staff, or any person while in our Program. If a child is caught doing so, they will be immediately removed from the classroom and the parent will come to pick up their child. Disciplinary actions will be taken and determined by the Director at that time.

### **Bathroom Policy**

In following our Safe Environment directive, the bathroom policy states that no adults are permitted to use the children's bathroom during sessions at any time. Should you need to use the bathroom while in the Faith Formation building, please see one of the staff members and you will be directed to our family bathroom.

### **Email Communication and Family Information**

Email is our main source of communication with our families. It is necessary for our families to check their emails regularly to see if there are any cancellations or important messages sent from about the Program.

Please note:

1. If your email, home address, cell, or any other important family information changes, please contact the Faith Formation office immediately to update our records.
2. Please add the Faith Formation email to your contacts (both in your email and smart phones). This should help with spam issues.

### **Emergency Closure Policy**

**For weather related closing**, we follow the Mahopac School District. If Mahopac closes for bad weather, then St. John's program will be cancelled. If Mahopac cancels after school activities due to weather, then we will cancel our activities and sessions as well.

However, if Mahopac has a delay, we will remain in session. Please note we follow Mahopac School District for weather related closings only. For example, if Mahopac schools close because of a power outage, but we have power, then we will still hold session.

In case of an emergency closing, we will use WHUD to notify our families. Please sign up for St. John Religious Education text alerts through WHUD by going to the website: <http://www.whud.com/storm-center/>. Be sure to choose St. John's Religious Ed Classes in Mahopac, as there are other St. John's parishes that use this system and you want to be sure to receive our alerts.

Please remember to check your phones before heading out to session in case of an emergency closure.

### **Faith Formation Contact Information**

Lori DiBiase  
Director/Coordinator of Religious Education  
[FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org](mailto:FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org)  
845-628-6464 (during sessions)

For emergencies if you should need to reach a Faith Formation staff member during your child's session time, please call our Program office at 845-628-6464. For non-emergency communication or questions, please email the Director for assistance.

We are here to assist your family with any needs you may have throughout the year. Feel free to contact our office at any time should you have a concern or need, so we can see how we may be able to assist you and your family.

We look forward to a faith-filled year with your children and family. May God bless each of our families, our Catechists, and staff throughout the year, as we all work together to bring your children closer to God as they learn about our Catholic faith.

In Christ,

Lori DiBiase  
Director/ Coordinator of Religious Education