

ASCENSION CATHOLIC CHURCH

Religious Education Program

Student Handbook 2015 – 2016



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We Serve the Community



WELCOME to the Religious Education Program (RE program) of Ascension Catholic Church. The purpose of the RE program is to share the word of God with children, youths, young adults, and adults in the Catholic faith by creating an atmosphere where the voice of the Lord can be heard, experienced and felt. In the short time we have with young students each week we cannot give them all that they need to be fully educated in the Catholic faith and to grow in their friendship with Jesus.

Parents are the first and foremost teachers of their children and have the primary responsibility for the faith education of their children. Parents teach informally but powerfully by example and instruction. They communicate values and attitudes by showing love for Christ and His church. Parents are encouraged to discuss class topics and inspire students to learn about their Catholic faith

Learning about the Catholic faith is a lifelong journey and for young children/youth it requires a commitment to attending religious education programs. Children/youth may not have total understanding and may not receive the true beauty of receiving sacraments if attending sessions simply to get a sacrament. RE sessions begin at Kindergarten and continue through 12th grade.

CALENDAR

Schedule

Wednesdays

Kindergarten through 6th grade

4:30-5:30pm -First bell rings at 4:25pm, start bell rings at 4:30pm, RE sessions begin in the RE building. It is suggested that parents drop off students in the classroom, however students may be dropped off with Safety personnel, no earlier than 4:15pm. Students may not enter the RE building before the 1st bell rings. **Parent must pick up students from their classrooms.**

Kindergarten through 7th grade-Sacramental Prep Adult and Children

6:30-7:30pm -First bell rings at 6:25pm, start bell rings at 6:30pm, RE sessions begin in the RE building or the Parish Hall. It is suggested that parents drop off students in the classroom, however students may be dropped off with Safety personnel, no earlier than 6:15pm. Students may not enter the RE/Parish hall building before the 1st bell rings. **Parent must pick up students from their classrooms.**

Sundays

8th grade, 1st and 2nd year Confirmation 11th and 12th grades

5:00pm-7:30pm

5:00pm-6:00pm- Mass or Adoration in the Church. Students should arrive before Mass/Adoration begins. Students preparing for Confirmation (1st and 2nd year) Must attend Mass every Saturday or Sunday

6:00pm-6:25pm Snack/Fellowship in the Parish Hall

6:30pm-7:30pm RE session or Youth Activity

Calendar

Wednesdays

First day of classes is September 16, 2015 and will meet in the Church

Last Day of classes will be April 27, 2016.

Classes will meet **every Wednesday** with the exception of the following dates:

November 25, 2015	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 23, 2015	Christmas Holiday
December 30, 2015	Christmas Holiday
January 6, 2016	New Year's Holiday
February 10, 2016	Ash Wednesday
March 16, 2016	Spring Break
March 23, 2016	Holy Week

Sundays

First day of classes is September 20, 2015 begins with Youth Family Mass in the Church

Last Day of classes will be May 17, 2016.

Classes will meet **every Sunday** with the exception of the following dates:

October 4, 2015	Festival Weekend
November 15, 2015	Spirit Fest
November 29, 2015	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 27, 2015	Youth Family Mass -No RE session
January 29, 2016	DCYC in Waco -no Mass, no Class
March 13, 2016	Spring Break
March 27, 2016	Easter Sunday

Policies and Procedures

ATTENDANCE Regular attendance at class is essential for any measure of success in a Religious Education Program. Weekly attendance enables children to grow in the knowledge of their Faith, to develop a sense of belonging to the parish community and through regular prayer to build a relationship with God. Since class time is only 1 hour each week, we ask that students not be absent or dismissed unless there is an extreme emergency. Parents should call the office or send an email to the DRE if an absence is required. Students preparing for **First Communion or Confirmation** are expected to have no more than 3 absences each year.

REGISTRATION/FEES- Students must be registered each year prior to attending sessions. Fees for registration are:

Early registration Must be enrolled before September 7, 2015

Registered parishioners who have been registered over 6 months \$20.00 per student for non sacramental preparation session. \$35.00 for Sacramental preparation sessions.

Newly Registered Parishioners registered less than 6 months- \$30.00 for non sacramental sessions and \$45.00 for Sacramental preparation sessions.

Late registration starting September 8, 2015

Registered parishioners who have been registered over 6 months \$30.00 per student for non sacramental preparation session. \$45.00 for Sacramental preparation sessions.

Newly Registered Parishioners registered less than 6 months- \$40.00 for non sacramental sessions and \$55.00 for Sacramental preparation sessions.

There is no charge for Confirmed 11th and 12th graders

When parents register their children in the RE program, they agree to abide by all program policies, procedures rules and guidelines

****No child will be denied a religious education; speak to the DRE if payment arrangements or financial assistance is needed.**

CHANGE OF ADDRESS Please notify the Religious Education office of any changes of address, phone number(s) or email address. It is important to keep the Religious Education database current in case of any emergency and to better serve you.



ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL Wednesday- First bell rings at 5 minutes prior to class start time, second bell at class start time. and sessions begin promptly. It is suggested that parents drop off students in the classroom, however students may be dropped off with Safety personnel, no earlier than 4:15pm for the 1st session and no earlier than 6:15pm for the 2nd session. Students may not enter the RE building before the 1st bell rings. **Parent must pick up students from their classrooms when the final bell rings.**


All doors will be locked once classes have started. The doors will be monitored for the duration of class, please be sure that children are on time for class. Please ring the doorbell for entry.

STUDENT SAFETY AND HEALTH After arriving on church grounds, students are **not** permitted to leave the premises except with their parent or guardian. Please drive slowly and carefully while RE classes are in session. Parents need to ensure students understand and follow these guidelines.

*Special Needs-*Parents should notify the DRE in writing regarding medical conditions, allergies or special needs of their child or any legal restrictions for child pick up that are in effect.

Ethnics and Integrity in Ministry for Children/Youth Parishes in the Diocese of Austin are **required** to use *Called to Protect for Children/Youth* **annually** to help educate our K-6th grade students and 9th graders about abuse prevention and personal safety. The programs are developmentally appropriate and sequential for each age group. Please see attachment 1 in the back of this handbook for information from the Austin Diocese concerning these programs.

YOUTH MINISTRY-  Students in 8th through 12th grade participate in the  youth ministry program. The program provides resources and faith experiences that help lead teens closer to Christ, through a vibrant and interactive program lead by and empowered by the youth to serve the church, our community and each other. Participants take part in praise and worship, service projects, retreats and exciting activities throughout the year.

 youth met on Sunday evening beginning with the 5 pm Youth Family Mass. Contact Priscilla Ruiz at 512-733-4651 or e-mail at p_ruiz@ascen.org for more information

BAD WEATHER If BISD schools dismiss early or close on a Wednesday due to inclement weather or other reasons, RE classes on Wednesday will also be cancelled. **Text/Email Notifications for Parents-** Text Messages and/or email will be sent to parents regarding meetings/emergencies and class cancellations please provide your cell number and service provider or email to receive notifications. Students will not be penalized for absences due to hazardous weather conditions.

STUDENT PHOTOS Classroom teachers/Youth Minister or DRE may take pictures of students from time to time to be used in a classroom, RE projects or bulletin announcement. If you do not want your child's picture taken, posted or used in a Religious education display in the Religious Education Building or parish hall or Church bulletin, please email the DRE at desquivel@ascen.org.



CLASSROOM RULES

The rules adopted for use in our classrooms are based on Gospel teachings and aim to provide a positive learning atmosphere. Parents need to ensure students understand and follow these rules. Please let your children know all Teachers and Aides serving in the RE ministry program are volunteers who graciously and lovingly give of their time each week to be here to teach and share their faith with your children. They **MUST** be treated with respect and appreciation.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT Our religious education staff consists of volunteers of dedicated men, women and youth who have chosen to give their time and talent to help in the faith education of your children. **Please cooperate and participate** in this important process. **All teachers and helpers require respectful, considerate behavior**

CLASSROOM RULES

Arrive to class on time

Everyone is to be treated with courtesy and respect. This includes students, catechists, parents, parish staff and parish volunteers.

Students will come to class prepared to learn and willing to participate in class activities.

Students will not be allowed to interfere with the learning and participation of other students.

Students will not bully or intimidate other students, either through their words or actions.

Students will respect the classroom, materials and belongings of others.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE A 4-step process will be used if a student is disruptive or in need of correction. Any step in the following process may be by-passed, depending on the severity of inappropriate behavior. It is important that disruptive behavior be addressed promptly, to minimize distraction in the classroom and aid students in the learning process.

- **Step One: Intervention** – Any teacher or staff member may intervene any time a student is behaving in a way that is in need of attention or correction. All adults associated with RE are expected to intervene to stop inappropriate behavior in a respectful manner, while demonstrating the love of Christ for each individual.
- **Step Two: DRE Involvement** – If Step One is not effective in correcting inappropriate behavior, a student may be removed from the classroom or other learning or worship environment and escorted to the DRE's office. The DRE will assist teachers and students by visiting with the student in an attempt to determine why the disruptions are continuing and seek ways, in collaboration with the student, to resolve any problems that may exist.
- **Step Three: Parental Involvement** – If Step Two is not effective in correcting inappropriate behavior, the DRE may contact the student's parents or guardian. Several options exist at this level:
 - One-on-one discussion with either or both parents regarding the student's behavior, conducted in person with the DRE.
 - Either or both parents may be asked to attend class with the student, on the belief that the religious education of children is a cooperative effort between the parish and parents.
- **Step Four: Meeting with the Pastor/Deacon** – If behavior problems continue after reasonable attempts at communication among student, teacher, DRE and parents, the Pastor/Deacon may be contacted and asked for a determination on whether the student will be allowed to continue in the RE program.

FIRST COMMUNION/FIRST RECONCILIATION

– Important Information for Parents

First Communion is considered one of the holiest and most important occasions in a Roman Catholic person's life. It is the first time that a person receives the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, which is the eating of consecrated bread and drinking of consecrated wine. As Catholics we truly believe these to be the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Most Catholic children receive their First Communion when they're 7 or 8 years old, as this is considered the age children are able to reason and understand.

For anyone to receive communion, that person must be considered to be without mortal sin and in a state of grace. Traditionally, young Catholic children will make their first confession, also called the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) prior to receiving their First Communion. At confession, the child will tell his or her sins and misdeeds to a priest, the priest will then assign a penance. The penance usually is several prayers to be recited immediately after leaving the confessional. The Priest will then grant Absolution. Confession is a sacrament and should be practiced as often as possible.

Students may receive the Sacrament of Eucharist in the 2nd grade if they were enrolled and actively attending religious education classes in the 1st grade. All students are required to attend 2 years of preparation in order to receive their First Holy Communion. The teachers and staff ask for parents' support in preparing students to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation (Confession) and Eucharist (Communion). Parents should help children learn and recite their prayers daily. Students should be able to recite the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and the Act of Contrition.

1. Students and their families are expected to attend Mass every weekend as part of living their faith as this is the central part of our Catholic Faith. Students will be assigned their own envelopes with should be brought with them to each weekend Mass. Donations placed in the envelopes should be given from the child. Money donations are not required, students may describe a gift or talent they have provided that week. All fees collected from the children's collection goes to support the religious education program.
2. Parents need to provide the student's official **Baptismal Certificate** if he/she was not baptized at Ascension. **The certificate is due by December 30, 2015.** You may bring it by the Religious Education Office during business hours to be copied. Please begin to locate/request the baptismal certificate NOW, as it may take some time to receive the certificate. **Your child cannot receive their first communion without a baptismal certificate.**
3. **There will be one mandatory parent meeting.** The meeting will be held on Thursday, February 25, 2016 **6:30pm in the Parish Hall. Parents are required to attend the meeting** to receive important information, instructions and to prepare your child for the sacraments.
4. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) will be celebrated in on Saturday, March 12, 2016 at 10:00am. in the Church.
5. First Holy Communion will be celebrate on Saturday, May 14, 2016 at 10:00am. Students must arrive no later than 9:30am in the Parish Hall.
6. Children do not need a sponsor for the Sacrament of Eucharist (First Communion).

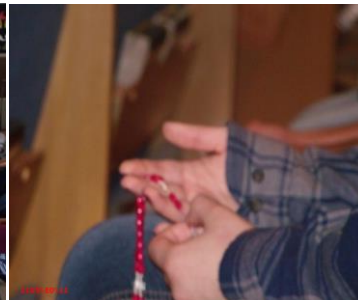


CONFIRMATION – Important Information for Parents

Through the Confirmation sacrament the candidate receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit that was given to us at Baptism. This is the same Spirit that filled the Apostles with the zeal and courage needed by all who are to public witnesses to Christ. Confirmation celebrates God's presence in our lives as the Holy Spirit continues to guide, strengthen and empower us to live and witness the Good News of Jesus Christ. Christians on the day of their Confirmation become public witnesses to Christ and his saving works. Confirmation is a sign of God's love and presence in our lives. It gives us sanctifying grace—the free gift of God's love. Confirmation establishes the beginning of a life of full participation and responsibility in the Church.

1. The Diocese of Austin requires a minimum of two years of formal religious education in a parish program before a candidate may be presented for the Sacrament of Confirmation.
2. Candidates and their families are expected to attend Mass every weekend as part of living their faith. Students will receive donation envelopes which should be placed in the donation basket each week, which will also represent their weekly Mass attendance. If they do not attend Mass here at Ascension, students will need to provide a bulletin from the church where they attended Mass.
3. Three excused absences will be allowed; missed classroom assignments must be completed. Parents must call the DRE when the student will not be attending weekly RE session.
4. Parents need to provide the student's official **Baptismal Certificate** if he/she was not baptized at Ascension. **The certificate is due by December 30, 2015.** You may bring it by the Religious Education Office during business hours to be copied. Please begin to locate/request the baptismal certificate NOW, as it may take some time to receive the certificate. **Your child cannot receive their Confirmation without a baptismal certificate.**
5. **Confirmation Parent Meeting-** For 2nd year Confirmation there is a mandatory Parent meeting on **Sunday, April 3, 2016 after the 5:00pm Youth Family Mass in the Church.**
6. All second year Confirmation students MUST attend the confirmation retreat. The Confirmation retreat date is Saturday, April 9, 2016, registration is at 8:30am.- 7:30pm.
7. **REHEARSAL** Candidates and sponsors (or their proxies) must attend the Confirmation rehearsal. The rehearsal date will be on will Thursday, May 19, 2016 at 6:30pm.
8. **CONFIRMATION MASS-** The confirmation Mass will be on **Sunday, May 22, 2016 at 3:00pm.** All students and sponsors must meet in the parish hall no later than 2:30pm. There will be a reception after the Mass in the Parish hall.

CONFIRMATION IS NOT A CATHOLIC GRADUATION. IT IS A PART OF OUR FAITH JOURNEY AND A NEW BEGINNING IN OUR CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP. Students should continue their religious education by attending RE classes in 11th and 12th grades.



CURRICULUM

Each student will be given a textbook which will be kept in the classroom during the year and sent home on the last day of class. Below is a brief explanation of what each grade level covers.

Kindergarten: God Loves Us

The textbook *God Loves Us* teaches children that God loves them and that they are to love God and each other. This book presents simple faith concepts, including silence, reverence for the Bible, being sorry, celebration, and God as creator. Children are introduced to five prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Grace before Meals, and Prayer to the Guardian Angel.

Grade 1: God Is Good

The textbook *God Is Good* presents God, Jesus, and the Church in their goodness. The lessons lay the foundation for spiritual growth by enhancing children's knowledge of the Faith. This level teaches concepts such as love, salvation, and the Trinity. Children practice basic prayers, including the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Prayer to the Guardian Angel.

Grade 2: God Cares For Us

The textbook *God Cares for Us* prepares children for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist and emphasizes the structure and meaning of the Mass. Children learn to respond to God's call to give themselves in love to God and to others. This level introduces them to the Church, to Mary, and to Morning and Evening Prayers, Act of Contrition and meal prayers.

Grade 3: We Believe

The textbook *We Believe* presents primary truths that Catholics believe and express in the Apostles' Creed. Children are called to the faith community and learn how Jesus is present to us in the Mass. This level introduces Bible stories and the concepts of vocation, healing and response to God. Prayers include Morning and Evening Prayers; Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love; Apostles' Creed; Rosary; Act of Contrition and Hail, Holy Queen.

Grade 4: God Guides Us

The textbook *God Guides Us* presents the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes as guides for living. Children learn that, as followers of Jesus, we must know these teachings and live them. Lessons focus on kinds of prayer, the Bible, reconciliation, and the communion of saints. Prayers include Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love; Prayer to the Holy Spirit; and Stations of the Cross.

Grade 5: We Worship

The textbook *We Worship* teaches celebration and worship in the Eucharistic Liturgy. Eucharist is presented as a gift from God through which we share divine life. Lessons introduce liturgical prayer and guide children to respond to God's presence through prayer and loving service to others. The text also focuses on the sacramental system and the paschal mystery. Prayers include Peace Prayer, Vocation Prayer, prayers of the Mass and Psalms.

Grade 6: God Calls Us A People

The textbook *God Calls Us a People* is devoted to studying God's saving love as revealed in Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament. This study of salvation history helps students gain a deeper appreciation of Jesus Christ. Lessons explore the psalms, the concept of "sacred" roots of the sacraments and symbols. New prayers include the psalms, the Angelus and Memorare.

Grade 7: Jesus The Way, The Truth, And The Life

The textbook *Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life* focuses on the New Testament. Jesus' teachings, the paschal mystery and the sacraments are the core of this year's program. Students will see Christ as our way to the Father and grow in understanding and love of Jesus. This level also discusses respect for justice. Teachings include spiritual Works of Mercy, Corporal Works of Mercy, Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Students are asked to learn to recite the Nicene Creed.

Grade 8: The Church Then And Now

The textbook *The Church Then and Now* helps students grow in awareness of the mystery of the Church and its mission. Students learn to value their union with Christ in the Church. Lessons focus on the Liturgy of the Hours, centering prayer, the acts of the apostles, respect for life and the Holy Spirit. Teachings include Holy Days of Obligation and Precepts of the Church.

Grade 9, Confirmation Year 1: Grade 10: Confirmation Year 2: Chosen: Your Journey Toward

Confirmation. A twenty-four lesson program that prepares your student both intellectually and spiritually to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and to become lifelong disciples of Christ. Chosen seeks to win over the hearts of teens at a critical time in their lives and keeps them firmly planted within the faith community of the Church. Chosen features effective and engaging material conveyed through videos, student workbooks and classroom experience.

Grades 11 & 12: Peer Ministry- As Confirmed Young adults these students will seek to put their faith in action by mentoring, sponsoring community events and hosting and serving at Youth Mass. They will continue their religious education through videos series such as *Altaration: The Mystery of the Mass revealed, Chosen, Our Catholic Faith*, as well as group discussions and retreats.

**Parents and Legal Guardians:
Enrollment of your child in the Religious Education Program
at Ascension Catholic Church
indicates that you and your child
agree to abide by the policies, procedures, rules and other
guidelines contained in this Handbook.**

