

# **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 2018-19**

In order for our Program to run smoothly and ensure safety measures while your children are in our care, we ask that you 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 for our students. Please read over the policies for our Program, which follows the guidelines of the Archdiocese. You will be asked to sign your child's registration form that you have read and agree to follow these policies throughout the program year.

### **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. All children in our program (grades 1-8) are to be escorted by their parents to their classrooms, and parents remain with their child until the Catechist arrives.
2. The Faith Formation building will be locked 5 minutes after the start of sessions and will remain locked until 10 minutes before dismissal. If you arrive after the doors are locked, you will need to go around to the front of the building and ring the bell and a staff member or hallway monitor will let you in.
3. A signed and dated note of permission is required from the parent or legal guardian stating which adult besides the parent has permission to pick up their child. This person needs to be an adult, **18 years or older** (including siblings). Without written permission, we are unable to release your child to anyone other than the parent.
4. If you are carpooling, a note needs to be given to your child's Catechist at the beginning of the year, stating who is permitted to pick up your child from session for the year. Please include their full name on our release form. You will need to fill out a new form each program year.
5. Parking is permitted in the **Main Church parking lot only**. It is illegal to park on the street in front of the Chapel, on McMahan Place, or in front of the Convent. The only place to park is in the Main Church parking lot. Please use the lit walkways to gain access to the Program's lot.
6. The Faith Formation parking lot will be closed during sessions and the lower lot is available only for volunteers who assist in the Program. All volunteers have placards on their cars and are the only cars permitted to park there throughout the year.
7. At dismissal time, the doors will open 10 minutes before the end of sessions, and all parents will gather in the Gym until the bell rings. At that time, please pick up your child from their classroom and remain with them in the hallway until you exit the building.

### **Mass Participation**

**It is expected that all children in our Religious Education Program attend Mass each weekend and on Holy Days of Obligation.** This 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, 5:30pm, 7:00pm Spanish Mass (OLQA)  
Sunday 7:30am, 8:45am, 10:45am, 12:30pm, and 5:30pm

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation Schedule**

Main Church: Saturdays 3:15-4:00pm, 5:00-5:30pm  
OLQA: Monday – Friday after 12:00pm Mass, Saturday after 9:00am Mass  
Spanish 6:00-6:45pm

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

Sacramental year students will be given special Mass attendance cards to be used throughout the year. By enrolling your student into our Sacramental Program, you are agreeing to bring your children to Mass every weekend, as well as Holy Days of Obligation throughout the year. You are also agreeing to use our method of recording Mass attendance weekly.

There will be mandatory Sacramental parent meetings during the year. Here you will learn all the details of your child's requirements to make 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 the faith.

There are Sacramental fees for both Confirmation and Communion that will be due in January of the year your child makes their Sacrament. Details will be given at the parent meetings.

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

To help prevent disruptions to the classes already in progress, please make every effort to arrive on time. Should a child repeatedly be tardy (3 or more times), the Director will address the issue and a switch in session may be suggested to accommodate the family's schedule.

**With the exception of an emergency, early pick-ups are not permitted.** Please plan your schedules accordingly and we ask that you do not schedule non-emergency doctor appointments, sports practice, or any extracurricular activities during your child's session time. The Director will address repeated early pick-ups and a switch in sessions 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, shorts, along with no spaghetti strap, low cut tops, etc. Clothing may not contain any messages or sayings that are negative, offensive, or disrespectful, nor have 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 is 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 on emergency medicine (Ex. Epi-

## **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 entering 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 emergencies 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 out of the Program.

- Three absences are permitted during the Program calendar year. Please keep track of your child's absences throughout the year and plan accordingly.
- If your child is going to be absent, please email [FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org](mailto:FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org) and inform the Director and include the reason for your child's absence for our records. Your child is required to make up all missed class work and it is to be completed by the next session.
- If 4 or more absences occur, your child may be required to attend a summer make up program to be able to be promoted to the next grade level. There will be summer program fee, which will be determined by the number of absences. The Director will determine promotion to the next grade.
- If a child is enrolled in a Sacramental year (2<sup>nd</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>), it is crucial that the child attends class regularly and does not have excessive absences. Excessive absences and/or tardiness in a Sacramental year may result in your child being delayed in making their Sacrament until the following year. A summer make up is not permitted during a sacramental year.

## **Class Participation and Preparedness**

Participation is key for your child to get the most out of our program. Your child is expected to come fully prepared to class. This would include bringing their workbook, Bible for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade, a pencil/pen, and any other supplies requested by their catechist at the start of the year.

Should your child lose their book during the year, there is a book replacement fee of \$30.

## **Homework Policy**

Homework is a useful tool to help children review, use, and retain information learned in the classroom. Our faith is an integral part of our lives, so it is important that the lessons taught are reinforced at home. Since parents are the primary teachers and role models for their children, we encourage you to talk to your children about what they learned, assist them with their lessons, pray with your children, and help them as they learn about their faith and grow in their relationship with God. If homework is assigned, it is expected that it be completed by the next session day.

## **Homeschool or Reschedule Day Policy**

Should a particular day incur more than 2 snow days, a homeschool day may be necessary. Should a homeschool day be needed, we will email out the assignment to be completed on the next day the children return to session. Should we have more than 4 snow days and the schools have give back days, we may add a session day in the year if necessary. You will receive an email should this be the case.

## **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 the Catechist without disruption.
4. Raise one's hand when wishing 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. 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 and 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 (not muted) during class time. If a cell phone or electronic device is seen being used, it will be given to the Director and the parent can retrieve it at the end of session in the 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. Discipline actions will be made and determined by the Director at that time.

### **Session Switch Policy**

We will not permit any session switches after the second half of the Program year. After the Christmas break, we will not honor any switch requests unless deemed absolutely necessary by the Director.

### **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 we will direct you 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. 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 closings only, we will follow the Mahopac School District. If Mahopac closes for bad weather, then St. John's programs are cancelled. If Mahopac cancels their afterschool 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 have a power outage, but we have power, we will still be in session.

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

Please remember to check your email and cell 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)

845-628-2006 ext. 113 Parish House

Should you need to reach a Faith Formation staff member during your child's session time, please call our Program office at 845-628-6464. However, the fastest way to reach Mrs. DiBiase is through email.

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 can assist 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