

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 2017-18

In order for our Program to run smoothly and ensure 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 for 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.

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 that time, 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 written note of permission is required from the parent, for anyone picking up his or her child who is not the parent. 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 a parent.
4. If you are carpooling, please include a note at the beginning of the year for each of your children's Catechists, stating who is able to pick up your child from session for the year. Please include their full name and please sign and date this release form. You will need to fill out this form every program year.
5. Parking is at the Main Church parking lot only. It is illegal to park on the street in front of the Chapel, on McMahan Pl., 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 to enter this lot.
7. At dismissal time, the doors will be opened 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 2nd & 8th 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 a mandatory Sacramental parent meeting at the beginning of the Program 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. These Catechesis events are intended to strengthen your family's understanding of the faith and/or a particular aspect of the faith.

Tardiness and Early Dismissal Policy

To help prevent disruptions to the classes already in progress, please make every effort to arrive on time and have consideration to our volunteers and their lessons. It is extremely disruptive when students arrive late to class. Should a child repeatedly be tardy, the Director will call the parents to address the issue and see if there is possibly another session that might accommodate the family's schedule better.

Unless there is an absolute emergency, early pick-ups are not permitted. Please plan accordingly and note that sports, dance, recital practice is not considered an emergency for early pick up. Should your child not be unable to attend their full session, we ask that you please just keep them home that day and make up the work they missed.

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.

Our dress code requires that all bellies, backs, and shoulders be covered. All legs need to be covered by clothes that are no shorter than the length of the fingertips when hands are at their sides. This includes, no short skirts, no shorts, along with no spaghetti strap, low cut tops, etc.

Clothing may not have 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 before the first day of class if your child has any special needs or medical conditions, so we can make any special accommodations needed for your child.

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-Pens) and there is a form that you will need to fill out for your child.

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 do 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 out of the Program.

1. Three excused absences are permitted during the Program calendar year (For ex. sickness, death in the family, doctor's appt., etc.).
2. If your child will be absent, please email FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org to inform the Director that your child will not be in class and include the reason for our records. Your child will be required to make up all missed work from class and the work will be reviewed by the Catechist upon their return.
3. Excessive absences (4 or more) may result in a child having to repeat the year or attend a summer make up program so they can be promoted to the next grade level. The Director will determine the child's readiness upon assessment.
4. If a child is enrolled in a Sacramental year (2nd or 8th), it is crucial that your child attend classes regularly. Excessive absences and/or tardiness in a Sacramental year may result in your child being delayed in making their Sacrament until the following year. The Director will determine the readiness of the child.

Class Participation and Preparedness

Participation is key for your child to get the most out of our program, so please send your child to the program prepared for each week's class. They should arrive to class each week with their workbook, a pencil/pen, and any other supplies requested by their catechist, along with all completed assignments.

Homework Policy

Homework is a useful tool to help children review, use, and retain information learned in the classroom. As our faith is an integral part of our lives, 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, pray with your children, and help them as they learn about their faith and grow in their relationship with God.

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.

Our basic expectation 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 with their textbook, pencil or pen, etc. (6-8th includes a Bible each week).
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 at home or in class, as well as prepare for any quizzes or class assessments.
6. Turn off all cell phones or any electronic devices while in the program. (Please see cell phone policy)
7. Respect the property of the Program both inside and out 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 other in their class:

1. Upon a student's disruptive behavior in class, the student will be sent to the office. The disruptive behavior will be discussed for correction 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 and the form will be filed.
2. Should the disruptive behavior continue and the student is sent back to the office, the disciplinary form will be filled out and the parents will be contacted to meet with the Director to discuss the behavior and they will be asked to sign the form 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 set up at that time 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.

Cell phones and Electronic Device Policy

Cell phones or electric devices are not to be used in class at any time for any reason. A cell phone may be on the child for emergency uses, but 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 Program Administrator 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 Program Administrator 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. 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. The Chapel bathroom is also available to you prior to your entering the building.

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 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.

Flocknotes

By registering into our Program, you are automatically added to our Faith Formation Flocknote, as well as our St. John's Parish Flocknote messaging system. You will get periodic notices about Mass schedules, bulletin notices, special events, etc. through Flocknote. Please note that this is not an email system. If you have a question regarding something sent through a Flocknote, please email FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org to get a response. Otherwise your message will go unanswered and the Director may not see your message.

Emergency Closure Policy

For weather related closing, we follow the Mahopac School District. If Mahopac closes, then all St. John's programs for the day are cancelled. If Mahopac cancels after school activities, then we will cancel our activities and sessions as well. However, if Mahopac has a morning delay, then our Program will remain in session. We follow Mahopac School District for weather related closings only.

In case of an emergency closing, we will use either our Flocknote notifications or our email system. Please check your email 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
845-628-2006 ext. 113
845-628-6464 (during sessions)

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. Mrs. DiBiase's messages from her extension 113 are retrieved and answered only two times per week. The fastest way to reach Mrs. DiBiase is through email.

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

We look forward to a faith-filled year in our Program. Please watch your emails throughout the year for updates on church happenings, special events, and invitations to participate as a family at St. John's.

May God bless us all 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