

**SAINT MATTHEW
CATHOLIC CHURCH
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**



**PARENT AND STUDENT
HANDBOOK
2011-2012**

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Dear Parents and Students,

September 2011

I am truly grateful to God for giving me a seventh year here with you. I am also thankful for your prayers and support of the Religious Education Program; it has been a pleasure serving you. I look forward to working very closely with all of our families as we grow in the love of Jesus Christ.

We have an exciting year ahead of us as we continue our *“Back to the Basics—Heart of Catechesis”* curriculum. Our year will focus on the very heart of our teaching, Jesus Christ. Our journey through Sacred Scripture will take us through the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters to the early Church from the Ascension to Revelation. With you, the parents, who have the primary duty and responsibility of educating your children, we will strive towards the goal of the children knowing and remembering the very basic Truths of our Catholic Faith. Together we will increase our knowledge, love, and service to God and our parish family.

This handbook is designed to provide a clear explanation of the curriculum, philosophy, and expectations of the St. Matthew’s Religious Education Program. Your parent folder also contains a calendar for the academic year and curriculum information.

Please join us for Adoration and the Rosary led by the children 15 minutes prior to class followed by Benediction for the first 10 minutes of class. After Benediction, the students will report to their classrooms with the catechist. You are welcome to stay in the church and pray (please include a prayer for the RE Program).

If you need to contact me for any reason, please feel free to do so at 540-582-5575. Again, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to you. It is my pleasure to work with you in this new academic year.

Peace of Jesus Christ,

Joanne L. Warren
Director, Religious Education

SAINT MATTHEW RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Religious Education Program at St. Matthew Catholic Church is to look upon each child as created in the image and likeness of God and as a reflection of His goodness. Being a living witness to the Gospel will be central to the development of each student. Therefore, at Saint Matthew's, understanding Jesus and His message is essential to knowing Him, loving Him, and serving Him always. The core elements listed below form the foundation and strength of St. Matthew's Religious Education Program.

- † **The dignity of the individual, as a unique child of God, is nurtured and developed.**
- † **Parents are recognized and expected to be the primary educators of their children.**
- † **The doctrine of the Catholic Faith is presented in its *fullness* and entirety as both knowledge to be *learned* and a life to be *lived*.**
- † **We will strive to instill in our children the Gospel values which teach moral life as expressed in the Ten Commandments.**
- † **Life in the Sacraments is central in developing the Catholic Faith.**
- † **The *Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* and the *Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist* is the center of our Faith.**
- † **Weekly attendance at Mass and monthly reception of the Sacrament of Penance are essential.**
- † **We will teach reverence of The Word of God and encourage our children to read the Bible on their own.**
- † **We will stress the importance of prayer as a source for growth in the spiritual life through Adoration, Benediction, Holy Hours, the Rosary, and Mass.**
- † **We recognize Our Blessed Mother's example as the first disciple of Jesus is our model.**
- † **We will encourage reading and studying of the lives of the saints as an example for us.**

III. Parents' Rights & Responsibilities

Parents are the primary religious educators of their children. The home is the domestic Church and the place where a child first experiences the Catholic Faith. You teach primarily by the example you set. It is extremely crucial for children to experience the love of God in their homes. The Religious Education Office intends to work in partnership with parents in order to assist them in living their vocations as educators of their children. This program should merely complement, **not replace**, the catechesis children receive in the home.

The Religious Education Program assists parents in their God-given role as educators of the Faith by:

- † Providing the truth of the Roman Catholic Faith as handed down by Jesus Christ through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church, and the Church Fathers.
- † Providing weekly religious education classes for children in a classroom setting.
- † Providing weekly homework and definitions that students and parents should work on together.

All Christian education finds its source within the sacramental life of the Church. Therefore, parents should assist their children by:

- † Recognizing that it is of **utmost importance** that children are given the opportunity for weekly Sunday attendance at Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and frequent participation in the Sacrament of Confession.
- † Understanding that Knowledge of the Catholic Faith that is not upheld by the practice of the sacramental life is empty knowledge.
- † Ensuring that your child participates in Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- † Make every effort to have your child attend class regularly and arrive at Adoration and Benediction on time. Your child should not miss this wonderful opportunity to grow closer to Jesus.

IV. Students' Responsibilities

Students are expected to be punctual and prepared for class. *Each week, students should bring their Bibles, writing utensils, and completed homework assignments.* Students should conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to a classroom environment.

Student Decorum

- ✝ All students are expected to be reverent during our period of Adoration.
- ✝ No Student is to ever be alone.
- ✝ All students must have a parent or guardian escort them to the church and pick up at the classrooms.
- ✝ Gum is not permitted in the building. No food or drink should be brought to class.
- ✝ Items that could in anyway cause injury to a student or others (including dangerous toys) are not permitted in the building.
- ✝ Every student has the right and privilege to learn in a classroom where students are well behaved. Similarly, every catechist and assistant has the right to teach in such an environment. Students will exhibit proper behavior and respect authority in the classroom and on the premises.

Dress Code

- Articles of clothing which depict drugs, alcohol, profanity, weapons, and sexual innuendo are forbidden. Hats, for gentlemen, must be removed upon entering the building.
- Tight-fitting clothing, halter tops, tank tops, midriff shirts, spaghetti straps, or clothing that may be considered immodest dress should not to be worn.

V. Curriculum

The objective of our Back to the Basics Curriculum is to engage the children in a program of catechetical formation which:

- Provides a firm intellectual foundation and an opportunity for understanding and remembering the basic teachings of our Catholic Faith.
- Familiarizes the students with the Bible; its structure and meaning and how to read, ponder, and pray with Sacred Scripture.
- Firmly and clearly forms in the minds and hearts of those involved a deep sense of the loving covenantal relationship with God established by Jesus Christ in and through His Church and Sacraments.

This year we will focus on the Early Church as we explore Sacred Scripture from the Ascension to Revelation. It is vital that we follow through on reviewing and incorporating the Central Mysteries of our Faith, the Creed, and the Sacraments learned last year into the lessons this year.

All classes and grades will follow the same syllabus and cover the same topics each week. Classroom time will be devoted primarily to lecture, discussion, and activities to help the students understand the topic for that week.

VI. General Information

Class Arrival and Departure

Parents are asked to escort their children into the church and not drop them off at the curb. All Students **MUST** have a parent or guardian come to the classroom to pick up students at the end of class time. Siblings younger than high school age are not permitted to pick up students. **No student should ever be alone in the parking lot.**

Class times

Grades K-1 Tuesday 5:00-6:15 p.m.

Grades 2-6 Tuesday 5:00-6:15 p.m. or Wednesday 6:00-7:15 p.m.

Grades 7-8 Tuesday 7:00-8:15 p.m. or Wednesday 6:00-7:15 p.m.

Grades 9-12 Tuesday 7:00-8:15 p.m.

Rosary, Adoration and Benediction

Fifteen minutes prior to the beginning of class the Rosary will be prayed. While this is not part of class, students are encouraged to come as this presents a wonderful opportunity for them to learn the Rosary.

ALL STUDENTS will take part in Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction for the first 10 minutes of their class. Students will be escorted into the church by their parents. Each class will have assigned seating and students will sit with their class. Parents may sit behind the last row of students. Students who arrive late will remain in the vestibule of the church with the Director of Religious Education and will join their class as students leave from the church.

After Benediction, the students will report to their classrooms with the catechist. Students will be dismissed from the classrooms at the end of class.

Class Time	Rosary	Adoration/Benediction	Class Ends
Tuesday 5:00	4:45	5:00-5:10	6:15
Tuesday 7:00	6:45	7:00-7:10	8:15
Wednesday 6:00	5:45	6:00-6:10	7:15

Class Cancellations

Please note that Religious Education Classes follow the Spotsylvania County School closings for inclement weather.

Spotsylvania County Schools Closed
Due to inclement weather

Religious Education Classes
Cancelled

Spotsylvania County Schools Early
Dismissal due to inclement weather

Religious Education Classes
Cancelled

Spotsylvania County Schools Indoor
Activities cancelled due to inclement
weather

Religious Education Classes
Cancelled

Spotsylvania County Schools Closed
Due to school holiday

Religious Education Classes
are usually held (consult calendar)

Cancellations can be found on the Spotsylvania Count School website at www.spotsylvania.k12.va.us. When in doubt, contact the Religious Education Office (540-582-5575 or www.stmatthewspotsylvania.org). Notifications of class cancellations will always be posted on the telephone recording.

Absences

Faithful attendance at class is vital for a well-grounded understanding of the information provided. Absenteeism also harms the individual student and the morale of the class as a whole. Parents of students in the program in the past have set a fine example for their children by making class a priority. Please call the Religious Education Office if your child(ren) will miss a class. It is important that you contact us prior to the start of class as we will be calling parents of all those not in attendance.

Please keep your sick child home. They should be fever and symptom free for 24 hours prior to attending Religious Education. To promote a well environment, we will not have an award based on perfect attendance.

STUDENTS WHO MISS FIVE OR MORE OF THE SCHEDULED CLASSES, MAY BE REQUIRED TO RETAKE THE COURSE WORK FOR THAT YEAR IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR'S PROGRAM. THIS POLICY INCLUDES SACRAMENTAL STUDENTS.

Tardiness

Tardiness can be a serious disruption to the class and is harmful to the individual student as well. There is limited time allotted each week for classes, so please help us to help you by getting your child(ren) to class ON TIME each week. If a student arrives after opening prayers have begun, please have them remain in the vestibule with the Director of Religious Education or Assistant. If you arrive late and the classes are still in the church, please bring your child to the church. Never leave your child alone in the classroom.

Classroom Discipline

Every student has the right and privilege to learn in a classroom where students are well behaved. Similarly, every catechist and assistant has the right to teach in such an environment. Students will exhibit proper behavior and respect authority in the classroom and on the premises. In the event that a student finds it difficult to exhibit proper behavior, the teacher will call upon the Religious Education Director in order to integrate the child back into the classroom. If this is unsuccessful, the Religious Education Director will enlist the support of the parents to rectify the situation. If this process fails, a parent MUST accompany the student to class and sit with him/her until the student demonstrates that he/she is able to behave in a manner suitable for classroom instruction. If this attempt is not successful, parents may be required to home school for the remainder of the year.

Learning Disabilities/Health Related Problems

If your child has a learning disability or health related problem that would necessitate special consideration while attending religious education classes, please notify the Religious Education Office in writing or by entering the information on the registration form. All information will remain confidential but may be passed on to the catechist or assistant to assist them in teaching your child.

Textbooks

We will use Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Students in grades K-1 will use the *The Illustrated Acts of the Apostles*. Students in grades 2-4 will use the *Bible for Young Catholics*. Students in grades 5-12 will use the *New American Bible*. They should take care of this book as they will use it in years to come. Have your child write their name in their Bible as replacement Bibles will be very costly.

Testing

Two Quizzes and a Final exam are given to students in grades 2-8. The quizzes will be True/False, multiple choice, and matching. The Final exam will be cumulative with a fill in the blank format.

The test will cover:

50% of class topic material

25% definitions

25% Mysteries of the Faith and Scripture passages

70% is a passing grade. Special accommodations will be extended to those who need extra help (i.e. Test read, extra time). Students may take the test multiple times or have remedial help to obtain a passing grade.

Awards

Awards are given to students at the end of the year assembly for those students who have faithful attendance, test grades, and knowledge of definitions and prayers. Faithful attendance is awarded to those students who are absent no more than three times during the religious education school year.

Formation in Christian Chastity

This year we will continue the Diocesan program called ***Formation in Christian Chastity*** for Grades 1-8. This program recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children and even though they are entrusted to Religious Education Programs, you retain the primary duty to form and inform your children in the teachings of our Catholic Faith. This program is intended to **assist** parents in the formation of their children in the Virtue of Chastity.

Parents with students in grades 1-4 will be given a lesson plan for your use. When, how and if you teach the lesson is entirely up to you. Students in grades 5-8 will have a home lesson as well as a lesson that will be taught during their regular religious education class. Each parent will receive the home lesson plan as well as the class lesson plan. All classes will be taught as presented in the lesson plan but no homework will be assigned. The two lessons will be combined into one and taught by the Director of Religious Education on the date indicated below. **Should you wish to opt out of the program, simply sign the Formation in Christian Chastity Opt Out Form at the end of this handbook and keep your child home for that particular class.** They will not be penalized for their absence.

Fifth Grade:	October 11 or 12, 2011
Sixth Grade:	October 11 or 12, 2011
Seventh Grade:	October 25 or 26, 2011
Eighth Grade:	October 25 or 26, 2011

Home School Students

All children who participate in a home school religion curriculum are expected to register with the Religious Education Program. All students will be expected to complete the grade level tests throughout the year. These tests will be mailed to you. Any student in a sacramental year (2nd and 8th grade) is expected to participate in all sacramental related meetings and events.

Safety Monitors

For the safety of our students, we will have three adult volunteers this year to monitor our parking lot and Parish Office. **Please remember their goal is to keep your children safe and we ask that you cooperate with their requests.** They will be responsible for ensuring our children's safety from the moment they are left in the church until they are picked up at the classroom.

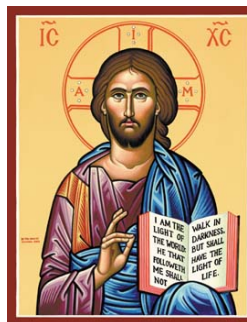
The safety monitors will be positioned in the parking lot and hallways of the building. They will enforce the following rules:

No child should ever be alone in the parking lot. This includes children of catechists. Do not send your child out to the car for a forgotten item.

No child should ever be alone in the hallway. Should a child need to use the restroom, the aide should escort the child to the classroom door and ask for assistance from the safety monitor. The safety monitor will walk the child to the restroom door and then escort the child back to the classroom.

The monitors will also ensure that children are brought into the church and not dropped at the curb. Upon class dismissal, no child will be released to the parking lot without a parent or guardian. Siblings younger than 9th grade are not to be considered guardians.

Entrance and exit from the building will be via the front door only unless an emergency situation requires exit by the nearest door (fire).



ST. MATTHEW RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
2011-2012
FORMATION IN CHRISTIAN CHASTITY OPT OUT FORM

FAMILY NAME: _____

Phone Number: _____

My completion and signature of this form indicates that I wish to opt my child(ren) out of the Formation in Christian Chastity Program taught to grade levels 5-8.

Child's Information:

Child's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Child's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Child's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Child's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Parent's Signature

Date

Please return to the Office of Religious Education