

“Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for the lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold”.

Mark 4:3-8

In grateful appreciation to all our volunteers and staff who give so generously to the Religious Education Program.

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Introduction

The beginning of Pope John XXIII's Second Vatican Council heralded a new era in the spirit of Catholicism. Religious Education in St. Augustine's is no exception in its attempts to make religion a part of our lives in this fast changing world.

The purpose of Religious Education is to "promote an understanding of and love for the teachings and person of Jesus Christ."

In the document "To Teach as Jesus Did" it stated that Religious Education programs must "Strive to teach doctrine fully, foster community, and prepare their students for Christian Service".

In 2000 the New England Bishops wrote about the formation of children as Disciples of Christ.

Working closely with our clergy and countless volunteers, the religious education staff has developed a comprehensive program at St. Augustine. The purpose of this handbook is to inform you of the program at each level.

Further details are always available from the Religious Education Office.

Tel.-978-475-0050 E-mail: reinfo@staugustineparish.org

Web Page www.staugustineparish.org (click on Religious Education)

We acknowledge that catechesis is an educational ministry, and is undertaken largely through our ministers and volunteer teachers. The whole parish is charged with supervising this ministry. Parents are the first catechists and through them the faith is passed on. Parishioners who are called to be catechists support and extend the parents' role.

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Curriculum Guidelines

We strive to ensure that our program is a complete and doctrinally sound catechesis for children. The texts used are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and take note of the national documents regarding religious education, "To Teach as Jesus Did", "Sharing the Light of Faith" and the National Catholic Directory.

- We follow the **Call to Faith** program for Grades 1 - 3. A variety of catechetical approaches are used in its teaching and within each lesson a proven three step process is used: **Invite, Explore, and Celebrate**. Family Connections are made throughout the program and each chapter contains a family Faith page which we would encourage you to read and act upon.
- The **Blest are We** program is in place for Grades 4 – 6 which recognizes the invaluable formation in faith that comes from a home where the Catholic faith is valued and practiced. Each young person is seen as part of a larger community where faith is nurtured through experiences the child has from the time of infancy. An important part of the faith life is the catechetical program. Here the young person learns about the Catholic faith in its belief, worship, morality and prayer.
- The **Call to Faith** series has now been extended into Grades 7 & 8 and has been especially designed with the young adolescent in mind. This program promotes dynamic, age appropriate faith learning and life application for adolescents and presents the content of the Catholic faith by drawing on **Doctrine, Scripture, People of Faith and Catholics Today**, the very sources of catholic wisdom.

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Grade 1 *Call to Faith*

In the first grade the children will learn what it means to be one of God's children. They will learn that God is a loving God who teaches us to love. They will study his creation, the Trinity, the importance of church and the sacraments. ***The children will become familiar with several prayers, for which we expect their parents, as their foremost catechists, to play a leading role.***

Grade 2 *First Reconciliation/First Eucharist Catechesis*

The Eucharist is the center of this year. The children are called into a sacramental relationship with Jesus and the Catholic community. The text explores the nature of celebration, the saving actions of Jesus, and the moral choices involved in being a good follower of Jesus. The theme of belonging leads the children in beginning the sacramental preparation for Reconciliation and First Eucharist. ***Parent meetings for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist are mandatory. The dates for these meetings are detailed in the calendar***

Grade 3 *Call to Faith*

This year the children are urged to follow Jesus' command, loving God and others, and spreading the Good News everywhere. They will know God better by studying the Church – being Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and having a mission in the world..

Grade 4 *Blest are we*

In the fourth grade the focus is two-fold – the **Trinity** and the **Ten Commandments**. With the trinity the children learn that

God the Father, out of love, brings all creation into being and gives his law to the Chosen People in the form of the Ten Commandments; Jesus, the Son of God, through his life, death, and Resurrection, shows us what it means to live in according to God's law and gives us a share in his divine life forever; while the Holy Spirit strengthens us to become active witnesses to our faith.. The Ten Commandments, supplemented with the Beatitudes, provide us with the framework upon which to build our lives.

Grade 5 *Blest are we*

Fifth graders focus upon the seven sacraments – Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders – sacred signs given to us by Jesus so that we might share in God's life.

Grade 6 *Blest are we*

This year the students follow an overview of the Old Testament, beginning with Abraham and Sarah (our ancestors in faith) and continuing on through the events of the Exodus, the arrival in the Promised Land, the era of the kings of Israel, and the prophets and the Exile, culminating in the New Testament preaching of John the Baptist and the birth and early life of Jesus

Grade 7 *Call to Faith – Kingdom of God*

The seventh grade will learn that the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of peace, justice, and love. Being followers of Christ requires us to share the good news with others and to work towards ending everything that denies the dignity of the human person.

Grade 8 *Call to Faith – The Church*

This year we focus on the Church, and how every one of us is called to be a disciple of Jesus and join in the tradition of the Church. Evangelization, using personal gifts, salvation, the role of the clergy and being part of the parish community are all discussed. .

Policies and Guidelines

The following statements of policy and guidelines should be respected by all those enrolled in the program.

Student Performance

- Any student who does not attend Religious Education in any given year may be asked to make up work in order to maintain continuity in their religious education.
- We expect our students to try their best in class but should any student receive a significant number of unsatisfactory comments from their teacher their parents will be contacted by a member of the religious education team to discuss what factors might be contributing to the poor performance.

Student Behavior

- **RESPECT** is the keyword for our children's behavior. We ask them to **respect themselves, respect each other, respect their teacher** and to **respect their classroom and teaching materials.**

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(Should a child's behavior become of concern, the teacher will contact the parents to discuss the situation in order to resolve the problem together. However, if this does not result in an improvement in the situation further action will be taken. This will mean a conference with the Pastor or the Religious Education Director and in the most extreme cases consideration will be given to supervised home teaching or expulsion from the program.)

- Any student involved in a **violent incident** will be suspended immediately from class. A meeting with the Pastor, the Religious Education Director and the families of those involved will be held. Students may return to the classroom when they satisfy the Pastor and the Religious Education Director they are able to manage their aggression and there will be no repeat of any violent behavior. Any further violent incident will result in the students terminating themselves from the program. There will be an opportunity to reapply the following year provided their grade work has been completed at home and a change in behavior can be demonstrated.

Cancellations

- In the event of Religious Education classes being cancelled as a result of snow the students will be notified by broadcast on TV Channel 7. Cancellation details will be posted on the Parish website and a recorded message will be available on the Religious Education phone line – 978 475 0050. **If time permits the students will also be contacted by phone by their teacher.**

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Parental Guidelines

- Please have your child arrive and leave class **promptly**.
- If your child is to be absent for any reason please call the Grade Coordinator in advance or the Religious Education absence line.
- **Regular attendance** is a requirement of the program but there will always be occasions when it is impossible for your child to come to class. At these times we would expect you to go through the missed lesson at home and to make up any homework as necessary.
(If your child misses two consecutive classes without explanation their coordinator will contact you to discuss the situation. Should your child's attendance record continue to be poor the Religious Education office will seek a family conference.)
- All the children in the program should **behave themselves appropriately**. Please take time to discuss with them how they should conduct themselves in class by respecting their fellow students and teacher.
- Please **read all written notices taken home by your child**, they **always** contain important information.
- Please inform us if your child has any disability (learning, emotional or physical). Confidentiality will be honored.
- A syllabus for the year is distributed at the first class. The calendar for the year will be posted on the webpage.

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Please try to keep this paper in a safe place, should you lose it please request an additional copy from your child's teacher or go the Religious Education web page and download a copy **On occasions we have to make changes to the calendar, sometimes at very short notice, but we will always keep you informed when these changes occur.**

- **Homework** is required in some of the grades. This helps the children to understand that learning about their faith does take place outside the classroom. The activities required of the students should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.
- **Church Services** take place throughout the year across all grades and we would like families to attend these whenever possible. These events will be printed in the bulletin and reminder notices and invitations are also sent home.
- **Family Meetings** are held across the grades on a variety of subjects. Notification of these events is always given in advance and we would like our families to attend these meetings
- **Safety** of our children is paramount and so we ask that all parents of children follow our pick up and drop rules. **Cars must be parked in the proper manner and all parking restrictions observed.**
Children will not be allowed to walk home without the written consent of their parents

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Sacraments

The seven sacraments are treated in detail throughout the program and preparation for them will be outlined briefly below:

Reconciliation and Eucharist

The preparation for these sacraments will involve some direct participation of the parents so that they may support their children as they attend regular religious education classes. **We ask that all parents of children preparing to receive a sacrament help them to fulfill their weekly obligation to attend Mass.**

Reconciliation

The children are prepared for the reception of this sacrament in the second grade. **Reconciliation will take place over 2 sessions in the church during** the month of January. The students in other grades are also offered the sacrament of penance during services throughout the year.

Eucharist

First Communion preparation is the main emphasis of the second grade. The culmination of the year is the celebration of 6 Communion Masses in the Church in early May.

Late sacramental preparation

We offer a sacramental preparation program for those children who have completed the second grade but have not received the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. The program runs in parallel to the regular religious education program.

Home Schooling

The following are guidelines for those parents, who for whatever reason, have chosen to instruct their children at home.

- Permission to teach at home may only be given by the Pastor or the Religious Education Director
- Parents and Students in Grades 7 & 8 will meet with the Religious Education Director throughout the year to monitor progress and to maintain an open dialogue between the parish and home taught students and their families.
- Failure to comply with these guidelines will effect promotion to the next grade

Special Needs

We make every effort to include children with special needs in our program. This requires a discussion with the family to understand how we can work together to ensure their child is given access to learn about their faith in a manner consistent with their abilities.

Catechist Recruitment

With nearly 1100 students in our program we are in need of many catechists to work with our children. In the past we have relied heavily on parents to perform this task but more recently fewer have been coming forward. We have been blessed with an increased response from the young people of the parish who are playing many different roles in catechizing their younger fellow parishioners.

We welcome anyone who would like to participate in whatever way they feel most comfortable, This could mean teaching, helping out in the classroom, patrolling the corridors, preparing material for class or a dozen other tasks vital to the smooth running of the program.

All catechists work under the supervision of a Grade Coordinator. Basic training is available to everyone in the program. We have in place **Teacher Guidelines** and a **Volunteers Code of Conduct** to make explicit the values we expect from our volunteers and to enhance uniformity in teaching standards across the program.

All volunteers must undergo **CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information)** scrutiny before they are allowed to work with our students.

Additional training, “**Protecting God’s Children**”, is also mandatory to safeguard the well-being of all the children who participate in the Religious Education Program.

For our program to continue to grow and flourish we need an influx of enthusiastic and committed individuals willing to pass on their knowledge and love of their faith to the children of this parish. We ask you to consider offering your time to this most worthwhile of services. However if you are unable to help directly, you can support us through your encouragement and prayers.

Personal Safety Curriculum

Safety programs are in place throughout all the grades. **Talking about Touching**, Grades 1- 3, teaches children basic skills to help keep them safe from dangerous or abusive situations.

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Keeping Children Safe, Grades 4 – 8, will review safety rules, with an emphasis on the ability to judge risks, and discussions of power and when it is appropriate for others to have power over them and when it is not, peer pressure, babysitting and appropriate touch and internet and online safety.

A **parent meeting** will be held to discuss the programs in detail and materials will be available to view. All children are encouraged to participate in the program but if parents wish to withdraw their child they are free to do so. A written notice of withdrawal must be completed and submitted to the Archdiocese.

Chastity Curriculum

A new chastity program “**See I make all things new**” is to be introduced for Middle School students. Targeted specifically for 7th graders the curriculum reinforces and encourages parents as primary educators and so there is a parent component offered.

The “**Parent Information Night**” will precede all implementations. This will not only inform parents of the content, but will also offer them tools to help them in their roles as parents.

Conclusion

The intent of this booklet has been to give a brief overview of what direction religious education is taking at St. Augustine’s. We welcome discussion at any time over any issue related to religious education. Please do not hesitate to speak to any of our teachers, Coordinators or Religious Education Director.

***Faith is first experienced within the family. The parish community nurtures and supports this faith formation
Thank you for your continued support.***

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