

FAMILY HANDBOOK

The Religious Education Program at Holy Trinity Church has as its goal the formation of a Catholic Christian who :

is committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ
is a person of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit's presence to guide, inspire and empower
is faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church in his / her own life
is able to articulate and express the teachings of the Catholic Church
desires to foster peace and justice in the world

Rev. John Pringle, Pastor

Mrs. Debbie Phibbs, PCL

OPERATING INFORMATION

RE OFFICE HOURS:

| | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| Monday | 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM |
| Tuesday | 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM |
| Wednesday | 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM |
| Saturday | 8:45 AM– 10:00 AM |

RE Phone (908) 725-6339

EMERGENCY Phone (908) 526-2394 (Rectory)

PERSONEL:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Pastor | Rev. John Pringle |
| P.C.L. | Mrs. Debbie Phibbs |
| RE Secretary | Mrs. Mary Ann Forfa |
| Rectory Secretary | Mrs. Lucille Frevert |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Weekly Parish bulletin
Parent notices and letters sent home with children
Parent meetings
Mailings

INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSING

RE CLOSINGS WILL BE POSTED ON www.nj1015.com

Closing information will be put on answering machines, 526-2394 and 725-6339.

RECORDS

PERMANENT RECORD CARDS are kept on file in the RE Office. They contain a child's RE and sacramental history. This information is used when a child transfers to another RE program.

STUDENT REGISTRATION cards are kept on file in the RE Office. They contain the following information

- Parent telephone numbers
- Emergency telephone numbers
- Names of persons who cannot pick up a child from RE class
- Confidential information indicating a child's learning or physical challenges, allergies and self-medication needs.

VISITORS

No one is permitted to "visit" during religious education class time or during sacramental ceremony rehearsals without prior arrangement with the P.C.L.

Catechists who wish to have a guest speaker or other person "visit" their classroom must consult first with the P.C.L.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the following RE year's classes begins in February. Registration must be done in person at the RE Office. Appropriate registration fees, sacramental certificates, and **FAMILY HANDBOOK AGREEMENT** if necessary are due immediately after registration. Class days are assigned on a first-come, first served basis. Class size is limited and if you do not get the day of your choice, your child's name will have to be put on a waiting list.

The Registration fee is \$70.00 per child in grades 1 through 7. There will be no charge for the fourth or more children. An additional sacramental fee of \$25.00 will be charged to second grade registrations. Eighth grade students pay a sacramental fee of \$75.00 which includes the cost of the Confirmation robe.

March 2 to May 1, a late registration fee of \$70.00 will be charged for all currently enrolled children in the program. **May 2 to first week of class in September, a late registration fee of \$140.00** will be incurred for all currently registered parishioners.

Registration closes on Labor Day except for new parishioners who have recently moved into the parish during the summer. Registration closes for everyone at the end of the first week of RE. Families moving into the parish after the first week of RE are welcome to register any time during the RE year if their child has been attending classes in another program. The PCL has discretion to make the decision for enrollment in any unusual case.

Only children of registered Holy Trinity parishioners can enter the RE program. **Parish boundaries are strictly observed.**

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Our Religious Education classes are intended to offer a systemic instruction in the faith and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church to students being raised as active members of this faith community. All students participating in our program must participate at Mass on all Sundays, unless a serious reason excuses them. As a Catholic community, we teach that Mass attendance is an important responsibility, and that habitually missing Mass is a serious sin.

ATTENDANCE

CLASS AND MASS ATTENDANCE GO HAND IN HAND IN HOLY TRINITY'S RELIGIOUS FORMATION. In other words, faithful Mass attendance is an extension of the catechetical process. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The Church is most clearly itself in the Eucharist, as it gathers a people to listen to the Word of God and to share the one bread and the one cup until Jesus, our Lord, comes again.

MASS ATTENDANCE POLICIES

1. Parents of children in our RE program are expected to understand that this teaching of the Catholic Church, stated above, makes them responsible for taking their children to Mass on a regular weekly basis. Regular weekly Mass attendance is essential to a student's growth in faith.
2. ***Sports or extra curricular activities are not acceptable excuses for missing Mass.***
3. Mass attendance will be taken by the catechist each week at the start of class.
4. **Parents of children who miss Mass more than three times will be called to a meeting to discuss the absences with the Pastor and PCL.** If parents do not attend the meeting, their child will not be promoted to the next grade and / or a sacrament will be delayed.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICIES

1. **No more than three absences a year should occur for class attendance. Students who miss class more than three times will have to repeat the grade. Sacramental reception will be delayed.**
2. ***Sports or other extra curricular activities are not acceptable excuses for absence from class.***
3. Exceptions to the absence limit, based on illness or adverse family circumstances, will be made by the Pastor and PCL after consultation with the parents.
4. Class attendance will be taken by the catechist each week at the start of class.
5. Students are expected to make up any work missed when absent. Catechists will provide make up work to students and / or parents.
6. A written excuse of absence must be presented by the student upon returning to class. A telephone call is not a substitute for a written excuse.
7. Students will not be allowed to switch class days permanently or temporarily once RE has begun.

A student who becomes ill during class should be brought to the RE Office. Parents or Emergency Contacts will be called. In case of emergency, catechists are instructed to call 911 on their cell phones. The PCL and parents must be informed immediately.

HOME STUDY

Children learn to be Catholics in relationship with other faithful Catholics in both the Church and the family. Our RE program provides a Catholic community where the tenets and practices of our Church are learned and appreciated while providing an enriching, ongoing faith experience for the entire family. Therefore, a parent will not be allowed to tutor his / her child at home. Any exception to this policy because of illness or physical disability will be decided by the Pastor and the PCL.

SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS

Parents are asked to volunteer to be substitute catechists, especially in the class where their own child is placed. Catechists are responsible for getting their own substitutes with back up support from the RE Office. Catechists may not cancel a class without permission from the RE Office.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

1. Students should arrive in their classrooms **ON TIME** or a **FEW MINUTES** before the scheduled time. **STUDENTS ARRIVING BEFORE THE CATECHIST MUST STAY IN THE CLASSROOM WITH THEIR PARENT UNTIL THE CATECHIST ARRIVES.**
2. Tardiness will be marked on the catechist's roster.
3. A student is considered **LATE** if he / she arrives after the catechist has begun prayers.
4. Students in grades 1 and 2, are to be accompanied by their parents to and from their car to the building which houses their classroom.
5. Students are to be made aware by their parents of who cannot pick them up from class. Students cannot go home with anyone who has been designated as such by their parents on their registration form.
6. Parents must park behind the barrier when dropping off and picking up students.
7. *Parents are not allowed to pick up students from their child's classroom before dismissal time without written permission from the RE Office. Parents must come to the RE Office to get a permission slip which can then be given to their child's catechist.*
8. Parents are responsible for picking up their child **ON TIME**. Catechists and RE staff members cannot transport any child home if parents or designated car pool drivers fail to pick up their child after RE class. After a reasonable wait, in the RE Office, police must be notified. The child will be brought to the police station by a patrolman to await parental pick up.
9. Walkers: Students who live in the vicinity of Holy Trinity Church can walk to and from RE classes. A note granting this permission must be signed by parents and turned into the RE Office. **This note should not be given to the catechist.**

Classes are in session at the following times:

| | | |
|-----------|------------------|-----------------|
| Monday | 4:30 to 5:30 PM | Grades 1 thru 8 |
| Tuesday | 4:30 to 5:30 PM | Grades 1 thru 8 |
| Wednesday | 4:30 to 5:30 PM | Grades 1 thru 8 |
| Saturday | 9:00 to 10:00 AM | Grades 1 thru 8 |

BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to behave in a manner appropriate for their age. Appropriate behavior will be discussed and articulated at the start of RE classes.

1. Students are not allowed to eat or chew gum in class.
2. Students are not allowed to wear baseball caps in class or at Mass.
3. Respect and calm should pervade during prayer time. Students entering class during prayer time should remain at the classroom door until prayers are finished.
4. Respect for catechists and fellow students must prevail in every classroom.
5. **Calling out** answers or information is unacceptable. Hand raising is the appropriate practice.
6. Catechists or the PCL will inform parents if disruptive or disrespectful behavior persists.
7. Students may be sent to the Religious Education Office for disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Parents will be contacted.
8. If, after consultation with parents, disruptive behavior continues, a student can be dismissed from the program for the remainder of the RE year. Re-admission into the program will be decided by the Pastor and the PCL. He / she, therefore, will have to repeat that year.
9. **No activated cell phones allowed in class and during activities.**
10. HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING Policy Statement:
Holy Trinity Religious Education program prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying. A safe and civil environment in class is necessary for pupils to learn and achieve high standards. Definition: "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any gesture, written, verbal or physical act that takes place on Church property or at any Church-sponsored function.

A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of harming a pupil or damaging the pupil's property, or placing a pupil in reasonable fear of harm to his / her person or damage to his / her property; or has the effect of insulting or demeaning any pupil or group of pupils in such a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with the orderly operation of the Religious Education Program.

Acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying may also be a pupil exercising power and control over another pupil, in either isolated incidents (e.g., intimidation, harassment) or patterns of harassing or intimidating behavior (e.g., bullying).

Catechists will report acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying to the PCL who will meet together with the Pastor, catechist, parent and pupil.

If acts are repeated, the pupil will be dismissed from RE class permanently.

CHILD ABUSE

N.J. Law requires any person who has **reasonable cause** to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse to report the abuse immediately to the Division of Youth & Family Services by telephone or otherwise (N.J.S.A. 9:6-8,13). The telephone number can be obtained from the RE Office.

Accordingly, any diocesan employee (including a Catechist volunteer) who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse **must** make **immediate** report to D.Y.F.S. The law imposes this obligation on every person and it **cannot** be delegated to any other person. **FAILURE** to report suspected child abuse or neglect is punishable as a disorderly persons offense. Under the law, anyone who makes a report shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability and cannot be subject to adverse action by the employer for making the report (N.J.S.A. 9:6-8,13).

DRUG POSSESSION

1. In all cases, any controlled dangerous substance (drugs) that is found on parish grounds or in a student's possession **MUST** be turned over to the police. The student will be detained until police are notified. Parents will be immediately notified. Pastor and PCL will be immediately notified. The student will receive in-school suspension for the first offense. Dismissal from the Program will follow second offense.
2. If there is reason to believe that a student intended to distribute the drugs to others, then the student **MUST** be turned over to the police. The Pastor and PCL will be notified. Parents will be notified. The student will be dismissed from the Program.

WEAPONS POSSESSION

STUDENTS WHO ARE FOUND GUILTY OF POSSESSING A WEAPON IN THE BUILDINGS USED FOR RE CLASSES OR, ON CHURCH GROUNDS, WILL BE PERMANENTLY EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL. IN ADDITION, CRIMINAL CHARGES WILL BE FILED WITH THE BRIDGEWATER POLICE DEPARTMENT.

A **weapon** is defined as any instrument of offense or defense which is capable of inflicting injury or death to someone.

Examples of items which would be considered weapons include, but are not limited to, the following:

Guns*: (loaded or unloaded) revolvers, BB guns, pellet guns, stun guns, air guns, dart guns, shotguns rifles.

* Also defined as any device or instrument in the nature of a weapon from which may be fired or ejected any solid projectile

ball, slug, pellet, missile or bullet, or any gas, vapor or other noxious thing, by means of a cartridge or shell or by the action of an explosive or the light of flammable or explosive substances. This includes mace, pepper spray or like substance.

Knives: pocket knives, hunting knives, switch blades, gravity knives, daggers, stilettos, dirks

Other: pipes, tire irons, billies, blackjacks, brass knuckles, sandclubs, slingshots, leather bands studded with metal, laser beam pointers, other flame producing devices or any article of clothing or jewelry that could likely cause injury, such as chains, belts, bracelets, rings, chokers with or without spikes or studs and wallet chains of any length.

PARENT NOTICES AND LETTERS

RE information is published in the weekend **PARISH BULLETIN**, and in notices and letters sent home to parents via their children in RE classes. Parents should carefully read the notices and letters sent home to them. Students should also be instructed by parents to be diligent in giving them to their parents.

TEXTBOOKS

1. Textbooks are reused every year. Students should treat textbooks with care.
2. The charge for lost or abused textbooks will be based on the market value.
3. Textbooks should be taken home only if required for an assignment. Otherwise, textbooks will remain in the classroom.
4. Students are expected to bring the textbook back to class if taken home for an assignment.
5. Folders with curriculum guides, study sheets, reference materials, etc., are provided every grade 2, 6, 7 and 8th grade student.

TEXTBOOKS USED AT HOLY TRINITY

WE BELIEVE Grades 1 thru 6 Sadlier, Publisher

FAITH AND WITNESS series Grades 7 & 8 Sadlier, Publisher

FAMILY LIFE Grades 5 thru 8 Benziger, Publisher

NEW AMERICAN BIBLE Catholic Book Publishing Co., Publisher

PFLAUM GOSPEL WEEKLIES

PRAYERS

Some class time will be spent in praying (at least at the beginning and at the end of each class) and class time will be taken to explain the nature of prayer and the necessity of praying individually and together. Memorized prayers (Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Doxology) are especially important in grades 1 through 8. Parents are urged to pray with their children at home. Grace before and after meals and bedtime prayers are encouraged.

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

1. Holy Trinity parish cooperates with the mandate from Metuchen Diocese that Family Life education be part of our religious education curriculum.
2. Four class sessions in January are reserved exclusively for Family Life education in grades 5 through 8.

HOMEWORK

Homework can be assigned to supplement or reinforce classwork.

1. Homework assignments should be directly related to classwork and reasonable in length.
2. Homework is **not** used to punish students.
3. Assignments can be varied and can include long-term projects (i.e. in grades 6, 7 and 8).
4. Students are held accountable for completion of their assignments and homework is to be included in the total assessment of the student made on Progress Reports.
5. It is expected that homework assignments be completed **on time**. Failure to complete homework assignments will be indicated on report cards. Catechists are also expected to call parents and inform them that homework assignments are not being completed.
6. Failure to complete homework projects on time in sacramental classes will result in a delay in the reception of the Sacrament.

TESTS

Grade level tests are given in grades 6, 7 and 8. Students in those grades are given review material at the start of RE classes in September.

1. Parents may receive copies of this review material.
2. Students are expected to pass these tests in grades 6, 7 and 8 with a grade of 70%.
3. Students who fail a test will take the test over until he / she passes.
4. Students with learning disabilities will be allowed to take the test orally. Parents should notify the catechist or the PCL of any disability.

5. Catechists may give their own tests during the course of the year. Students are expected to pass these tests.

CONFESSION

Every class from grade 3 thru 8 is scheduled for Confession at least once a year. Schedules are available to catechists in October. It is expected that catechists thoroughly review the Examination of Conscience and Confession Procedure the week before their class goes to Confession. Copies of this material will be put in the catechist's box in the RE Office.

PROGRESS REPORTS (Report Cards)

Progress Reports are issued to students twice a year, in February and at the end of the RE year. Catechists will be honest and fair in reporting a student's progress. Request for a parent-catechist conference should be made on the Progress Report if the student is doing poorly academically or behaviorally.

MISSIONS

The **HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION** is the mission association which is supported by the children of our parish RE program. Individual folders are distributed throughout the year to collect the money. Parents should do their part to encourage their children to be generous to those less fortunate than themselves.

PARENT MEETINGS

Parents are encouraged to attend all parents' meetings throughout the year. In this way, they can keep in touch with what is expected of their children as well as with the latest developments in the Program. At these meetings, they can also have the opportunity to express their opinions if there are problems brought forth for discussion.

SACRAMENTAL PARENTS' MEETINGS are mandatory. Parents are allowed to miss these meetings for serious reasons only. A make-up meeting with the PCL will then be necessary.

FIRE DRILLS

Students will participate in Fire Drills twice a year, in the Fall and in the Winter. Fire Drill dates and instructions will be given to Catechists one week before the drill.

LOCK DOWN DRILLS

Lock down drills (crisis management) will be held periodically throughout the school year. These drills are conducted to train students and staff on what to do in the event a life-threatening situation which has occurred inside or outside the RE buildings that requires us to lock students in their rooms to keep them safe. At the conclusion of a lock

down, students will evacuate the building with hands clasped behind their heads, indicating to police that they are safe and no threat.

In the event of a real emergency and the RE buildings need to be evacuated, students would be transported to the Bradley Gardens Firehouse, Old York Road, Bridgewater, where parents will be able to find and meet their children.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST EUCHARIST

Preparation for the Sacrament of Penance and Eucharist entails **two** full years of classroom instructions. Catechists follow curriculum guides issued by the Religious Education Office. Students are expected to attend Mass and class on a regular basis in preparation for these sacraments. (See Attendance policies on P4 and P5.)

First Penance and First Eucharist preparation materials and schedules are distributed to parents and students throughout Grades 1 and 2. Grade 2 parents are expected to attend a Sacramental meeting in November.

CONFIRMATION

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation entails **three** full years of classroom instructions. Catechists follow curriculum guides issued by the Religious Education Office. Students are expected to attend Mass and class on a regular basis in preparation for Confirmation. (See Attendance policies on P4 and P5.)

Confirmation preparation curriculum guides and schedules are distributed to parents and students throughout these three years.

A test is given in grades 6, 7 and 8. Sixth, seventh and eighth grade students do written Confirmation projects. Review sheets for tests and directions for projects are contained in student folders issued in September.

Completion of 15 hours of service is expected in each grade.

Eighth grade students attend mandatory Confirmation retreat in the parish.

PARENT PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM

Parents are needed for the Religious Education Program to function in a parish. Parents serve as catechists and substitutes as well as perform the myriad duties of making phone calls, serving at Sacramental receptions, donating refreshments, doing clerical chores, etc.

WITHOUT YOU THERE IS NO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM!

THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO

FAMILY HANDBOOK AGREEMENT

I have thoroughly read the Holy Trinity **FAMILY HANDBOOK.**
I understand my responsibilities as a Catholic parent as presented
in the HANDBOOK.

Parent's Name

Date

**TO BE HANDED IN BY EACH PARENT AFTER HAVING
READ THE HANDBOOK**

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