

St. Stanislaus Parish
Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)
Parent & Participant Handbook

215-855-9893

Parish website – www.ststanislaus.com

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” (St. John Paul II)

MISSION STATEMENT

The St. Stanislaus Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) is a teaching ministry that witnesses to the children of our Parish who attend area public and non-Catholic private schools what it means to be a Catholic Christian in the 21st Century.

Religious Education is not a product to be consumed; it is a process in which to become involved. Religious education cannot be provided for families; *it can only be created with them.* The most effective religious education occurs within the family setting and our Parish Religious Education Program is here to support parents and guardians in their role as their children's primary religious educators.

We believe that the family is the visible model of the Church and through its everyday events children learn the meaning of belonging, forgiving, and serving. The love within the family forms the basis for the child's understanding of who God is as Father, Son, and Spirit. It is the responsibility of the Parish community to build on that understanding so that all members of a family may mature in a faith that is not only celebrated in the local Church but extends beyond to an understanding of the Universal Church and their place in it.

It is our hope and prayer that together as parents, catechists, and assistants, we will continue to awaken and nourish the gift of faith that each child was given at his/her Baptism.

PARENTS and PREP TOGETHER

Teachers in our PREP Program are called CATECHISTS. A Catechist is “one who echoes the Word of God.” All of our Catechists and Classroom Assistants are volunteers who share their time and talents for the benefit of our Parish children. Please support them in this work with your prayers and cooperation.

Our Catechists supplement, in a more formal way, the faith education that occurs informally in your home. Parents of children in our religious education program are encouraged to be supportive of our Catechists' efforts and our Program in the following ways:



Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, and receive the Sacraments.

- Read the Bible as a family.
- Teach your child to pray in his/her own words as well as to learn the traditional prayers of our faith.
- Show interest in what your child is doing in PREP class each week. Check his/her PREP folder for communication from the Catechist or Program Coordinator after each class.
- Help your child to be conscientious about completing assignments that may be sent home to extend the teaching from class where further clarification may be needed.

- Join your child by participating in service projects or workshops that may be offered in his/her class.

The example you set is invaluable to our efforts in the classroom.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

"Catechesis describes the essential ministry of the (Catholic) Church through which the teachings of Christ have been passed on to believers throughout the ages...Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes the teaching of Christian doctrine" of the Roman Catholic Church. (National Directory for Catechesis, no.1, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) Keeping in mind that all the baptized have a right to catechesis, every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness (General Directory for Catechesis, no. 189). Catechetical and sacramental programs are inclusive of parishioners with disabilities and may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities.

Our Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) provides classes for children of all abilities. Children with developmental, intellectual, sensory, physical or behavioral disabilities are welcome and encouraged to attend our PREP classes.

Each student who enters our program is required to be registered by his/her parent or legal guardian. A copy of our **new family** PREP registration form may be downloaded from our Parish web site: www.ststanislaus.com. Go to the "Religious Education" tab. Please carefully complete the Medical/Learning Data section of the registration form so that we may work together to provide the best possible experience for your child in our PREP program. All information will be kept confidential and, with your permission, will be provided to the Catechists on a "need to know" basis.

A **Baptismal Certificate** is required for children who have been baptized at other parishes. In addition, if a child has received other sacraments at another parish, we will also need a copy of those certificates, too. (e.g., First Communion)

Families of children who have not received the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church or whose children have never been baptized should contact the Program Coordinator to discuss an appropriate formation plan to welcome your child into the Catholic Church.

Re-registration for returning families usually takes place in April during regularly scheduled session times or via an online survey form.

St. Stanislaus PREP offers classes in person weekly on Wednesday evenings and bi-weekly on Sunday mornings, with a home component added for the Sunday session. Due to the current environment as it relates to COVID-19, we will also be offering a Virtual PREP option for the 2020-2021 PREP year. The Virtual PREP option schedule will mirror our Sunday PREP session calendar. Virtual lessons will be held twice a month. Home-Based PREP is also an option. See page 12 for additional details regarding the Home-Based PREP option.

FINANCIAL POLICY

Tuition is set each spring by the Parish financial committee for the upcoming session year.

Full payment of tuition is expected at the time of registration. Arrangements may be made for alternate payment plans by contacting the Program Coordinator.

No student will be denied acceptance into the program because of his/her family's inability to pay. A confidential inquiry may be made to the Pastor or the Program Coordinator.

ATTENDANCE/CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Faith formation received in the program is ongoing in that each session builds on the previous session; therefore, *it is imperative for the children to complete the lessons at home when a session is missed.* The syllabus for each class may be accessed on the parish website. If you move to another parish and enroll your child in their religious education program, we will be asked to verify your child's satisfactory participation in our PREP Program.

If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, please contact us to report the absence at (215) 855-9893 or email ststansprep@yahoo.com. Please be sure to include your child's name and grade level when leaving a message.

- **If there is any question as to whether your child is feeling “well”, please keep him/her home. *The lessons may be completed at home.***
 - Parents are asked to monitor their child/children for COVID-19 symptoms, which include:
fever • chills • cough • shortness of breath • loss of taste or smell • body aches • severe tiredness • nausea • vomiting • diarrhea • sore throat • runny nose
- **COVID-19 related absences**
 - If a student or volunteer is exposed to COVID-19, he/she may return to PREP 14 days after the exposure if no symptoms were present during the 14 days. If other members of the same household become infected, the quarantine will start over on the day of each new infection.
 - Individuals who have had a past infection or have positive antibodies are not exempt and should also quarantine if exposed to COVID-19.
 - Exposure is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or more, direct physical contact, or caring for a sick person diagnosed with COVID-19. This is usually exposure to a household contact. If it is unclear whether the exposure is significant, the parent/guardian or volunteer should contact their primary care provider for guidance.
 - A testing-based determination to return to PREP may be considered depending on community testing practices and availability and CDC guidelines.
 - If a student or volunteer is diagnosed with COVID-19, he/she may return to PREP after 24 hours with no fever (without fever reducing medicine) and symptoms have improved, and if it is at least 10 days after the symptoms began, or if there is no fever for 24 hours (without fever reducing medicine), respiratory symptoms have improved, and they received two negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart.
 - The PREP Program Coordinator, in conjunction with the Mater Dei school nurse, will be responsible for tracking and documenting the status of any potential cases.
 - The PREP Program Coordinator will communicate to parents/guardians promptly if any positive case occurs in the PREP or Mater Dei school community. This will be in the form of a formal letter, sent via email and/or traditional mail. The identity of the individual will be kept confidential.
 - The need for a full or partial school building closure will be determined by the PA Department of Health if a case of COVID-19 occurs. Closure will be 2-5 days. All areas where the individual was present will be cleaned and sanitized.
- Extended absences due to other illness require a doctor's note upon return to class. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's Catechist in an effort to keep their child's formation up-to-date when possible.

GENERAL SAFETY PRACTICES DURING PREP SESSIONS (Wednesday and Sunday)

- Prior to coming to PREP, all students are asked to wash their hands and use the bathroom at home. Bathroom usage during PREP will be permitted on an as needed basis. Since we are only here for a limited amount of time and we want to minimize movement for everyone's safety, the students will not have a scheduled bathroom break.
- Students will be required to wear a mask at all times when they are in the school building until further notice.
- **We will be taking the temperature of every student and volunteer when they arrive at PREP until further notice. They will also receive a squirt of hand sanitizer after their temperature has been checked.**
- Each student will be assigned a seat in the classroom for the duration of the year. Per the CDC guidelines, the desks have been arranged to be 6 feet apart, or as close thereto, in each classroom.
- Each student will receive his/her own Hefty Jumbo Storage bag to safely keep all necessary class supplies. The Hefty bags and all regular classroom supplies will be provided by PREP. The bags will remain in the school. We will keep them in classroom storage bins in the PREP office in between the PREP sessions. The supply bags will follow the students throughout their time in our PREP program. Replacement of worn out supplies will be provided as needed.
- Mater Dei will be cleaning the desk surfaces and all other high touch surfaces in the classrooms and hallways at the end of each school day prior to our arrival.
- A representative from PREP will be responsible to clean the desk surfaces and other high touch surfaces at the end of each PREP session.
- Food is not permitted to be eaten in the classrooms. All drinking fountains in the school have been closed at this time. If it is an extra warm day and your child needs to have water available during that session, they may bring a water bottle with them.

The **WEDNESDAY PREP** session is scheduled to be held weekly, in person, in the classrooms. *This is subject to change based upon the status of the COVID-19 virus spread/containment in Montgomery County and/or per orders by the Governor of Pennsylvania.*

- The syllabus for each class may be accessed on the parish website to assist parents in discussing the lessons with their children and to work with them from home in the case of an absence or mandated transition to home-based learning. The parish website also includes a link to the Sadlier website for parents to get an overview of the topics that are covered each week as well as to access online activities that may be done at home to reinforce the lessons.
- Through the end of 2020, the textbooks for our **WEDNESDAY** students will remain in the school so as to limit materials going back and forth between families' homes and the school. The necessary information will be provided electronically to families whose children were absent so that they may complete the lesson from home. [We will reevaluate this practice prior to January 2021 and update it as necessary based upon conditions at that time.]

The **SUNDAY PREP** session is a blend of "in class" and "at home" catechesis. *This is subject to change based upon the status of the COVID-19 virus spread/containment in Montgomery County and/or per orders by the Governor of Pennsylvania.*

- The syllabus and all lesson plans for the "at home" catechesis portion of the Program may be accessed on the parish website. All necessary worksheets for the full PREP year will be put into each child's folder at the start of the PREP year so that parents will have all of the necessary paperwork available to complete the lessons at home if your child is absent or if we need to transition to a full home-based catechesis program.

- When a child misses an “in class” session, the parent is responsible for covering the missed chapter at home, along with the following week’s “at home” lesson, before the child returns to the classroom.

Since material is presented in developmental sequence, children may not arbitrarily skip grade levels. If a child who is baptized enters the program with little, if any, formal religious education, or returns to the program after skipping several grade levels, he/she may not be placed in the same grade that they are in at school. These special circumstances will require a family meeting with the Program Coordinator to determine the best placement for the child.

STUDENT RELEASE and WAIVER OF LIABILITY

Parents acknowledge that attendance at PREP may present certain risks of injury or illness, including from COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. Parents/Guardians enrolling their child or children for in class attendance acknowledge such risks and voluntarily assume responsibility for these risks and accept that St. Stanislaus Parish, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Archbishop of Philadelphia have no obligation to provide insurance or other financial assistance for the costs of treating an injury or illness that results from attendance in the St. Stanislaus PREP program, except if the injury or illness is caused by gross negligence or intentional misconduct of any of these parties.

In the event of a medical emergency during a class session, parents/guardians consent for their child to receive necessary medical treatment until the emergency contact(s) on file with the PREP office can be notified. The cost of such treatment is the responsibility of the parent/guardian, except if gross negligence or intentional misconduct is proven to be the cause of the injury or illness.

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Students should be dropped off in the back parking lot of Mater Dei Catholic School and enter through the designated doors. Please use caution when driving through the parking lot to ensure the safety of all students and parents who are walking to/from their cars and the building. A drop off car lane is provided at the back of the school on Wednesday evenings with a safe walking zone. You are encouraged to use the drop off car lane when bringing your child/children to class.

****Parents will not be permitted to enter the building during the arrival time until further notice. If you need to make a payment, please put it in an envelope that is marked “PREP Office” and ask your child to hand it in when they enter the building at the temperature check station. Please also include your child’s name on the envelope. A receipt will be sent home with your child for all cash payments.**

Arrival:

Each student is expected to arrive in his/her classroom 5 minutes before the start of the PREP session so that sessions may begin promptly at the designated start times. (*The session start times are 6:45p.m. on Wednesdays and 10:15a.m. on Sundays.*)

- The doors will open at 6:20pm on Wednesday and 9:55am on Sunday to allow time for a staggered arrival to properly distance the children during the arrival temperature checks.
 - On Wednesdays, 2 temperature checks stations will be available inside the double glass doors in the back of the school and 1 will be at the entrance in the front of the school near the PREP office.
 - The door near the PREP office is to be used only by volunteers and their children.
- On Sundays, 2 temperature check stations will be available at the glass double doors in the back of the school.

- The school will be locked during the session times. Students arriving more than five minutes late will be required to sign in on arrival and the arrival time will be noted. Chronic lateness may require a conference with a parent as it is disruptive to the class.
- The parent group for the Sunday session will meet in the Chapel at the Parish Center during the 2020-2021 PREP year.

Dismissal:

WEDNESDAY & SUNDAY PREP Sessions:

A parent or guardian is required to pick up his/her child/children in the gymnasium of Mater Dei Catholic school at the end of each PREP session.

- We are planning a staggered dismissal for the 2020-2021 PREP year to minimize the number of students and parents in the gym at one time.
 - Students will be divided into three dismissal groups on Wednesday and two dismissal groups on Sunday, with the youngest children being part of the first dismissal group on both days.
 - Once each group of children is in the gym, parents will receive a text via the REMIND app to tell them it is their turn to come into the school to pick up their child/children. **Please do not come into the gym until you receive the text for your group.**
 - Dismissal times will be at approximately 7:55pm, 8:00pm and 8:05pm on Wednesday nights and 11:30am and 11:35am on Sunday mornings.
- **If your child needs to be excused prior to the end of a particular PREP session, (e.g. doctor appointment) please send in a written note to be given to the child's teacher. Your child will meet you at the center double doors at the requested time.**

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the responsibility of both parents to provide the PREP office with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. If either the Custodial Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both parents to immediately provide that document to the PREP office.

Our Program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, if requested, our Program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other Program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Program Coordinator with an official and most recent copy of the court order.

If a court prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Program Coordinator with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

CONDUCT

The Parish Religious Education Program offered by St. Stanislaus Parish is designed to **assist** parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Program (In person and Virtual) has **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or

psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form. These categories do not cover every possible situation.

Conduct by children or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the PREP program is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic, by a child against any member of the PREP or Mater Dei Catholic School community, the child, if suspended but not dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance before returning to the Program.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

In the event a participant engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, and has failed to respond to a Catechist's attempts to stop or correct the behavior, the following actions *may be taken at the discretion of the Pastor or Program Coordinator:*

- **First Incident:** The Catechist will bring the situation to the attention of the Program Coordinator. Possible corrective actions will be discussed, including a meeting of the student with the Program Coordinator.
- **Second Incident:** The student will be removed from the session and the parent or guardian will be notified by phone by the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will schedule a conference with the parents/guardians and student to discuss the matter.
- **Third Incident:** The student will be removed from the session and be suspended from the program for a period of one session. The parents/guardians will be immediately notified by the Program Coordinator and will be required to pick up their child. Prior to returning to the program, the Program Coordinator will schedule a conference with the parents, student and Catechist to further discuss the matter. Future incidences of the same nature could result in dismissal from the in class Program, with possible consideration for the Home School Program.

However, St. Stanislaus Parish reserves the right to supersede the forgoing courses of action depending on the particular circumstances of a given situation.

CELL PHONES & OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

While we realize that cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communication open between parents and children, it is the policy of this Program that such devices should not be brought to catechetical sessions. If it is necessary for a student to bring a cell phone to the Program, the student must keep the device turned off during the session and it must be kept in a backpack, purse or pocket.

- If the student is found to be using a cell phone during class, the Catechist has the right to keep the phone at his/her desk until the end of the session. All other electronic devices (e.g., ipods, ipads, etc.) must be left at home. The St. Stanislaus Parish PREP Program is not responsible for any of the devices that are brought into the building.
- Students are not permitted to take photographs or videos of themselves or others in the school building.

CONTRABAND

BRINGING CONTRABAND TO PROGRAM SESSIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL BE CONFISCATED AND RETURNED TO PARENTS ONLY! Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities will be notified.

- Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to weapons, drugs, alcohol and tobacco products.
- It is unlawful for minors to be in possession of these items. Participants found to be in possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the Program.

SEARCH & SEIZURE

It is the policy of St. Stanislaus's PREP Program to respect the privacy of its participants. However, in the event that a student is suspected of having weapons or drugs in his/her possession or is believed to be a threat to himself/herself or others, the Program Coordinator will be notified immediately. The Program Coordinator will conduct a search with an adult staff member as a witness. Refusal on the part of the student to cooperate will result in the parents/guardians being contacted and asked to assist with the search. Parental refusal to cooperate may result in the student's immediate dismissal from the Program.

PROTECTION OF YOUTH

Safe Environment - All priests and deacons, as well as Parish staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children must obtain the necessary clearances from the State of Pennsylvania and FBI fingerprints, if applicable, and attend Safe Environment training seminars provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. This training provides a greater understanding to the adults in our Church on how they can be protectors of children and models of appropriate behavior and relationships. It teaches them to be advocates for those who are most vulnerable. More information on the requirements for volunteers may be found at:

<http://childyouthprotection.org/index.php/staff-volunteers/information-for-volunteers>.

In its effort to support parents in their responsibility to educate their children concerning personal safety, the Archdiocese provides grade appropriate personal safety lesson plans ("KidTalk") to all Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education. St. Stanislaus's Parish PREP program will incorporate these lessons into the curriculum each year. Parents can check the general PREP calendar to see when these personal safety lessons will be taught to their child/children. Copies of these lesson plans are available in the PREP office or on the Archdiocesan website for parents to review in advance.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

When we have inclement weather that is deemed unsafe for traveling, we will use the following procedures for the cancellation of PREP classes.

WEDNESDAY PREP Session:

If North Penn School District or Mater Dei Catholic School cancels classes or their evening activities due to the weather, we will also cancel class. The cancellation will be posted on the Parish website and a text will be sent using the REMIND app. An email will also be sent to all families who have provided an email address to us. We will also leave a recorded message on the PREP voicemail (215-855-9893) (*if possible based upon power conditions*).

If there is an emergency closing outside of the winter season, (and North Penn's classes and activities are NOT cancelled), a text will be sent on the REMIND app to alert families of the closure and an email will also be sent to the families with the necessary information. We will make every attempt to notify you as soon as such closing is decided.

SUNDAY PREP Session:

The Program Coordinator will send an email and a text message via the REMIND app to all families by 8:00 a.m. if the weather conditions or other emergency require us to cancel class. A recorded message will also be left on the PREP voicemail and the closing will be posted on the Parish website.

CURRICULUM

St. Stanislaus's Parish Religious Education Program follows the Scope & Sequence guidelines for religious education that are published by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. All teaching materials are selected from the list of textbooks that have been approved by the United States Bishops.

HOMEWORK: Catechists will assign homework at their discretion to extend the lesson to help the students grasp the materials covered in class. Catechists have been asked to keep homework to an absolute minimum, if at all, during the 2020-2021 PREP year. *For the Sunday PREP Session and the Virtual PREP program, the work assigned for the "off weeks" is not deemed to be Homework, but is the "home school lesson", in lieu of a full in class session, and should take 60 to 75 minutes to complete for each student.*

ASSESSMENTS: Mid-Year and Year-End Assessments, as provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, will be made available online for students in Levels 1 through 6. Sufficient notice will be sent home by the Catechist to allow ample time for the student to prepare for the Assessments. A passing grade is required. If a student does not receive a passing grade, he/she will be asked to retake all or part of the Assessment. The Assessment grades will be noted on the Progress Reports. The Catechists may also give chapter or unit tests at their discretion to help them assess the students' knowledge of the faith which will assist them in their lesson planning as well as to assign grades for each student regarding "Knowledge of the Faith" on the Progress Reports.

PROGRESS REPORTS: A Progress Report, prepared by the Catechists and reviewed by the Program Coordinator for children in Level 1 through Level 7, will be distributed three times a year for the Wednesday PREP Session and twice a year for the Sunday PREP Session. Parents are asked to sign and return the Progress Reports for all but the final marking period.

COMMUNICATION

Parents are provided with a yearly calendar at the beginning of the program year. *The calendars are subject to change during the course of the year.* Parents will be notified of any changes as soon as they are known and updated calendars will be distributed via email. The calendars are also posted on the Parish website.

The majority of communication will be done via email. If you do not have an email address, we will provide you with a hard copy of all email correspondence.

The Program Coordinator may be contacted as follows: (215) 855-9893; ststanslr@comcast.net. Direct communication with your child's Catechist is also an important component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's Catechist to discuss any concerns or share any information that will enhance the learning experience for their child.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

Preparation for the reception of a sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A participant's desire to receive the sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Proper attendance and behavior, (including during PREP, in Mass, and at meetings), are expected. Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) in the parish in which their family is registered. Exceptions may be made with special permission from the Pastor.

Parents are expected to follow St. Stanislaus's Parish policy with regard to the sacramental preparation and celebration with their children.

- Registration in the parish is required.
- Since sacramental catechesis requires more than classroom participation, it is important that families participate at Sunday Mass.

RECONCILIATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST

A minimum of two years of preparation in a formal religious education program are required for the reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. Guidelines put forth by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia concerning baptized children receiving sacraments for the first time specifies that the Sacrament of Reconciliation be received prior to First Eucharist. At St. Stanislaus Parish the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist are scheduled to occur in the second grade, but may occur at any age beyond second grade.

The expectations for **children** preparing for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist are that the child:

- Be baptized
- Be participating **weekly** at Mass
- Have completed at least two consecutive years of formal religious instruction (including the preparation year in second grade)
- Have a satisfactory class attendance record (includes lessons completed at home)
- Have an age appropriate appreciation and understanding of the sacraments they are to receive

The expectations for **parents or guardians** who choose to have their children celebrate these sacraments are:

- Be registered in the parish
- Participate **weekly** at Mass
- Support the teachings of the Church

- Be involved in the child's preparation through attendance at meetings and other activities that surround the preparation for these sacraments
- Actively supervise the child's preparation through homework assignments, retreat day, and practicing for reception of the sacrament

CONFIRMATION

At St. Stanislaus Parish, candidates will generally be confirmed in the spring of 7th grade. Preparation begins at the end of 6th grade.

It is the expectation that a **Confirmation Candidate** will:

- Be Baptized
- Participate **weekly** at Sunday Mass
- Have a satisfactory class attendance record (includes lessons completed at home)
- Complete the Confirmation formation program, as provided in the "Red Folder" at the meeting in the second half of 6th grade

It is expected that the **parents or guardians** of the Confirmation Candidate will:

- Be registered with the parish
- Participate **weekly** at Sunday Mass
- Support the teachings of the Catholic Church
- Be involved in the preparation of their child for the sacrament by attending scheduled meetings, encouraging their child to come to class prepared, fostering a sense of the importance of this sacrament in their home during this preparation period, and guiding the candidate in the selection of a saint's name and a sponsor.

The Confirmation **Sponsor** is to help the candidate throughout his/her life to fulfill the baptismal promises. **Sponsors** at Confirmation represent the believing Christian Community. The Code of Canon Law states they must lead, "a life in harmony with faith and the role to be undertaken, and will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with Baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it." They are to support the confirmed person in their daily witness to Christ. The selection of a Sponsor for the Sacrament of Confirmation should be done with careful thought and consideration. The Church's law for this Sacrament requires that a sponsor be:

- A Baptized Catholic
- A Confirmed Catholic
- A Practicing Catholic
- Age 16 or older (This person needs to be sufficiently mature for the responsibility being assumed. An older brother or sister may be a sponsor, provided he/she is mature in his/her personal spiritual development.)
- Married in the Catholic Church, if married

A father or mother of the child to be confirmed **cannot** be his/her sponsor.

A "practicing" Catholic means they are registered as a member of a parish and attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and receive the Sacraments on a regular basis. The priest of the parish where the sponsor is registered is bound in conscience and in Canon Law to refuse to give a sponsor certificate to anyone lacking these requirements. Please consider the above requirements before asking someone to serve in this capacity. If any clarification is needed, please speak to the Pastor. Please do not put the priest in an awkward position by choosing an individual who does not meet these requirements.

Sponsor certificates are required of all sponsors.

SPECIAL SACRAMENT SITUATIONS

Students in third grade and above who are baptized in the Catholic Church, but who have not yet received the Sacraments of Reconciliation and/or First Eucharist, may enter a special

Sacrament preparation program. This program emphasizes family involvement. It helps parents or guardians prepare their child for these sacraments. Please contact the Program Coordinator for more details.

Students age 7 and older who have been baptized in another Christian faith are welcome to participate in our PREP program so as to prepare to come into Full Communion with the Catholic Church. **Students age 7 and older** who have never been baptized in any Christian faith are welcome to prepare for reception into the Catholic Church. Please contact the Program Coordinator to discuss and develop a sacrament preparation plan if either of these scenarios represent your personal situation.

HOME-BASED CATECHESIS

The U.S. Bishop's *National Directory for Catechesis* (the "NDC") states:

"As the primary educators of their children, parents have the right and the duty to choose the kind of educational environment that they determine best suits their children's educational needs."

It is also important to keep in mind that as "Church", we are a community of believers and ongoing involvement in parish life is an important element in faith formation and practice. Home schooled children are encouraged and welcomed to participate in group programs within PREP and the parish so that they are not isolated from the community. Again, the Bishops note:

"All parents have an obligation to involve their children in the life and mission of the church. Since their children are being initiated into the life of the Church, which is fundamentally realized in the local parish, parents who provide catechesis for their children in their homes should participate fully in the life of the local parish. They should celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in the local parish, involve themselves in its charitable works, and attend appropriate training and formation sessions the parish or diocese provides."

That being said, we **strongly** encourage that the children participate in PREP rather than be home schooled in the years when they are to receive a sacrament (typically 2nd grade and 7th grade). First Communion is a communal sacrament in which we are all sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ. Confirmation prepares the students for full membership in the Church, which involves participation in the parish community. Exceptions will be made during the 2020-2021 PREP year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NDC also states, *"If Catholic parents choose to provide catechesis for the children in their home, that catechesis must be both complete and authentic...home-based catechesis of children is a cooperative effort between the children, their parents, parish leadership, and the diocesan bishop. Parents who choose to be...their catechists must adhere to all guidelines for catechists as outlined by the diocesan bishop."*

Families interested in home-based catechesis should contact the Program Coordinator for additional information. All materials will be provided.

FINAL NOTE

The Program Coordinator reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.