

ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

Religious Education  
Program Handbook

2026-2027



STAFF

Cynthia Johnson, Director of Religious Education  
[cjohnson@standrewrcc.org](mailto:cjohnson@standrewrcc.org)

Aileen Orth, Program Assistant for Religious  
Education  
[aorth@standrewrcc.org](mailto:aorth@standrewrcc.org)

Antonio Pineda, Program Assistant for Religious  
Education  
[apineda@standrewrcc.org](mailto:apineda@standrewrcc.org)

## **CALENDAR FOR THE CLASS YEAR**

After registering online, parents will receive a confirmation of their payment. In a separate e-mail, they will also receive a personalized welcome letter, Handbook, and Calendar.

## **CLASS DAYS AND TIMES**

All classes will be held on the **1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays** of every month **in Saint Andrew School**.

- **Grades K—8** begin on **September 20, 2026** and meet from **10:15 am—11:45 am**.
- **Confirmation Year 1** students begin **Nov. 1, 2026** and meet from **3 pm—5 pm**.

## **REGISTRATION FEE**

The costs of the Religious Education Program are based on the current cost of books, shipping and other materials that students will consume during the school year. Our registration fee will remain the same this year as the prices of materials and shipping have stabilized to a degree. Please know that this is a **one-time charge** and no other fees will be requested after registration.

## **STUDENT DROP OFF AND PICK UP**

All students should be dropped off at the St Andrew School Cafeteria, where their catechists (teachers) will meet them, under signs indicating the grades they teach.

All students must be signed out at the end of each class. Catechists will bring them to the Cafeteria and wait until each child is signed out by a parent or another adult who has been approved by a parent.

## **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

The Diocese of Venice requires parents or guardians to **submit the following three forms for each student every year:**

- Medical Authorization for a minor
- Authorization to release a minor to a third party (someone other than a parent/guardian)
- Authorization for use of student images in photos or other media, such as the parish bulletin.

These can be completed during the online registration process, or at the office upon request. *Since this is a diocesan requirement pertaining to student health and safe-ty, students will not be allowed to attend if we do not have these forms on file.*

In addition to the above forms required for every student, please note:

- ◆ **If a child is preparing for First Holy Communion, we must have a copy of their Baptism Certificate.**
- ◆ **If a child is preparing for Confirmation, we must have a copy of their Baptism Certificate and proof of their First Holy Communion which includes the date and name of the church.**

## **MASS ATTENDANCE**

Attendance at Sunday Mass is key to keeping the Third Commandment, “remember to keep holy the Sabbath.” As Catholics we fulfill this obligation by attending Mass on Saturday evenings or on Sundays . Students in the Religious Education program are expected to attend Mass weekly. Staff and Catechists do also as part of modeling a Catholic way of life for the students entrusted to our care.

While we should attend Mass out of our love for and gratitude to God, it is important to remember that as mere creatures we owe it to God for everything he has created for us and given to us. Refusing to attend Mass is a serious sin which prevents us from receiving Holy Communion until we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE**

There are 16 religious education classes during the school year. **We ask that students limit absences to a maximum of 4 during the year.** Four absences means that approximately 25% of all classes have been missed, which is especially difficult during a sacramental preparation year. If a student, for whatever reason, needs to miss more than 4 classes, please notify the religious education office so that homework may be assigned. That way the student will not fall behind in the class content and the reception of sacraments may be able to proceed on schedule.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is impossible to schedule all religious education classes on dates that will never coincide with the **Lee County School District's breaks, which are:**

Christmas Break: 12/21/26 - 1/5/27  
Spring Break: 3/22/27 - 3/29/27

*Please keep these dates in mind when planning attendance at religious education classes and **the required Confirmation Retreat on MARCH 13, 2027.***

### **ATTENDANCE IN NON-SACRAMENT YEARS**

Just a reminder that there is much religious education to be had before and after sacramental preparation years. Formation in the Catholic Faith begins in the family, well before a child is old enough to participate in formal religious education. This happens when parents, the first and best catechists of their children, give authentic Christ-like example in

their words and deeds. This includes helping their children learn basic Catholic practices and prayers (see Page 8 and regularly bringing them to Mass.

Students who continuously attend religious education classes from grades K—8 receive a well-rounded education in the Catholic faith which begins with Creation and guides them through the Old and New Testaments to the present day. Our “Word of Life” program helps them to answer the question Jesus asked of his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” Their answer will change and grow each year and will help them become the Catholic disciples we are all called to be.

### **PARTICIPATION & SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Religious Education classes involve much more than preparation for the sacraments. Therefore, classes are offered for all students from Grades K—12.

In accordance with the mandates of the Diocese of Venice, *a minimum of two years of participation in Religious Education is required before a student can receive either First Holy Communion or Confirmation.* We accept children from grades 1—12 into First Communion preparation, but preparation for Confirmation cannot begin until a student is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade or above

Student retreats are required before receiving First Communion and Confirmation, as are parent meetings. These dates are given on the Religious Education calendar that was e-mailed to you.

### **HOMEWORK**

There will be 30 minutes of homework assigned each class. Catechists will give assignments that help students to understand and practice the topics being studied. We encourage all families to assist students in completing their homework, and also to learn the basic Catholic prayers found on Page 8 of this Handbook.

*Students in Year 2 of preparation for First Holy Communion must be able to read or recite the Act of Contrition, the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be before they receive First Reconciliation (Confession).*

### **STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

The Religious Education program views the catechesis of a student as a partnership between the parents and the program. Parents and students are expected to comply with the rules and policies described in this handbook, and to accept and support the authority of Religious Education staff and volunteers, whether it be during class or on social media or other public forums.

Just as a parent can withdraw a child from Religious Education, the program reserves the right to administratively withdraw a student if it determines at its discretion that the parent or student partnership with the Religious Education program is irretrievably broken. Examples may include, but are not limited to: the persistent use of abusive or vulgar language, verbal or physical threats to others, acts of vandalism and/or destruction of school property or persistent disregard for other rules in this Handbook.

### **CLASSROOM ATTIRE**

Out of respect for themselves and for one another, we request that students do not wear any clothing that is too revealing, such as very short shorts or skirts, bare midriff tops, pajamas, swimwear, or T-shirts with suggestive or vulgar pictures, graphics, or sayings.

### **USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Cell phones, ear buds or any electronic devices should not be in use during class. If use persists after 2 requests to stop using the device, the device will be placed on the catechist's desk for the remainder of the class and returned at the end of class.

### **SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING**

Catechists, catechist assistants, hall monitors and other Religious Education staff have been fingerprinted and vetted according to Diocese of Venice standards. All have taken Safe Environment Training to ensure that children in our care are in the safest possible environment.

In addition, all Religious Education students receive Safe Environment Training each year. This program assures that students feel safe while on campus, and that they know what to do if they do not. For more information please call the office at 239-574-2411.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STAFF**

Religious Education at St. Andrew is staffed almost entirely by volunteers. If you would like to offer your talents and time by participating in our mission, please contact the Religious Education Office. Training will be provided.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Religious Education Office at 239-574-2411:

In English – Cindy	En Español or English
En Español- Antonio	- Aileen

### **A FINAL WORD**

*If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, we have nothing to preach. But if He did, having purchased our salvation at such a great price, how can we stop from speaking of it?*

May God bless you and your family,

*Your Religious Education Staff*

## **Fundamental Catholic Prayers**

*All students are required to learn the following prayers by heart. The easiest and best way to do so is by praying them regularly, especially at home, so please practice!*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### **The Hail Mary**

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, JESUS.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

### **The Glory Be**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.

### **The Act of Contrition (Modern)**

O my God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong, and failing to do good, I have sinned against You whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with Your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His Name, my God, have mercy.