



St. Damian Religious Education

Family Handbook 2026-27

Dear Religious Education Family,

Welcome and thank you for choosing St. Damian Religious Education Program for your child(ren). Our parish supports parents as the primary educators of their children. We are committed to assisting them in the Religious Education of their children. Our primary goal is to teach each child to know, love and serve God through Jesus Christ.

Sunday Mass is the central practice of our Catholic faith. Religious Education is not a replacement for Sunday Mass. The example of faith by parents, along with Sunday Mass and Religious Education create a strong family faith that helps children grow close to Jesus.

We encourage all parents to attend Sunday Mass with their children. The nursery is open for 9:30 am Sunday Mass all year, so families can help their older children during Mass. Our Little Lambs program for 4 and 5 year-olds meets during 9:30 am Mass two to three Sundays a month September until May. Registration forms are located in the Narthex. Catechists meet the children in the Narthex and walk them into Church after the procession to receive a blessing from the priest. Then, they go to a classroom to read a children's scripture reading and work on an activity. Parents collect their children from the inner door by the school after Mass.

Each year brings new growth and improvements to our program, allowing us to create a more spirited formation program. This year, Deacon Jim Katula will be serving all the Religious Ed students. This will allow the children in all grades to receive more focused instruction on the Church and the Sacraments. We are committed to helping each child grow in his/her Catholic faith.

The Religious Education for Children section located on our website: stdamianchurch.org contains all the information about our 2026-2027 Religious Education program. The website will be updated as more events or enhancements are made throughout the year.

We will provide monthly newsletters as to what is new, coming up or happening with our program. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact our RE office at 708-687-7778 or email re@stdamianchurch.org. Please be aware that our office hours vary throughout the year.

Our program relies on our families to come together and assist with the formation of our faith. Please consider being a part of our program that will benefit all.

We look forward to an exciting, faith-filled journey this year.

God Bless,

St. Damian Religious Education Team

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Religious Education Office

Mary Melody

Religious Education Coordinator

5250 W. 155th Street, Oak Forest, IL

708-687-7778

re@stdamianchurch.org

General Office Hours: Mondays 2 pm to 8:30 pm, Tuesdays-Thursdays 9 am to 3 pm

Religious Education Hours

RE sessions meet Mondays 6:30 pm to 8 pm for all grades beginning September 14th through May 3rd. Classes meet about 3 times per month.

OCIC sessions meet Sundays 8:30 am to 9:20 am followed by 9:30 am Mass with family.

Pastoral Center

708-687-1370

Pastoral Staff

Rev. Robert Stuglik, Pastor

Deacon Bill Stearns

Deacon Tom Ruzevich

Deacon Richard Korepanow

Deacon Jim Katula

Mass Schedule

Saturday Vigil Mass: 5 pm

Sunday Masses: 7:30 am, 9:30 am, 11:30 am

Daily Mass: 9 am Monday through Saturday

Reconciliation

Saturdays 3:30 pm

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Religious Education is a journey that begins with Baptism nurturing and preparing our young people in prayer and worship, scripture study, building community and service. Each child comes to know and love Jesus, and respond to God's message at home and in religious education sessions.

This process requires learning the beliefs of the Catholic Church through prayer, scripture and tradition to create a solid faith foundation. Integrating faith traditions and life experiences to develop and strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ helps form meaningful Christian lives. Active participation in the sacraments, rooted in the celebration of the Eucharist, weaves our knowledge and beliefs into beautiful expressions of faith through each individual's personal relationship with Jesus.

Religious Education is a team effort between the parents/guardians and St. Damian Parish to work together to help our children grow in knowledge, faith and service to our Lord Jesus Christ. This commitment requires consistent faith practice at home, participation at RE and Sunday Mass, and supporting the parish by sharing your time, talent and treasure.

Religious Education is formation, introducing children to Jesus and the Church He established, and preparing them for two of the Sacraments of Initiation—Eucharist and Confirmation. RE expands on the faith parents pledged at Baptism, which begins our faith life by fostering participation in the community of faith and at Sunday Mass.

Religious Education is practice as we are all called to be followers of Jesus. Through our RE lessons, children learn to be disciples in age-appropriate ways. These lessons are furthered when children apply them to everyday life and identify ways to live like Jesus by sharing their talents (ex.: drawing a bulletin cover), their time (ex.: volunteering in the Church nursery) and their treasure (ex.: contributing to our annual coat drive). Actively living their Catholic faith makes children proud to be Catholic.

Religious Education is a journey that is most successful when we provide continuous opportunities to practice the Catholic faith through religious instruction, family prayer life and parish community involvement. This schedule enables children to become the best version of themselves as active followers of Jesus. Consistent RE attendance reinforces lessons learned in previous classes, building knowledge and keeping Jesus close as they grow. A close relationship with Jesus helps children make good choices, adapt to challenging situations and respond to difficult issues with compassion.

REGISTRATION

Registration includes completing and signing registration forms and updating necessary contact and emergency information. New families need to submit a copy of each child's baptismal certificate. Tuition is due at the time of registration. If payment is an issue, please contact the RE office to arrange payments.

Registration forms are available on stdamianchurch.org under the Religious Education for Children section. Paper copies were sent home with each family on May 4th. Additional printed forms are available in the Church Narthex.

Registrations are to be submitted by July 31, 2026. There will be a \$25 Late Fee for registrations received after July 31, 2026.

The final day to submit registrations, all required paperwork, copies of certificates, and full fee payment for the 2026-27 year is August 28, 2026.

Sessions begin Monday, September 14, 2026. Doors open at 6:30 pm. Classes begin at 6:45 pm. Children are dismissed at 8 pm.

Please read the registration packet for important dates, fee schedules and policies. All children are automatically placed in their appropriate level, which normally corresponds to their grade level in school, but not in all cases. If there are any questions, please call the RE Office at 708-687-7778. Students transferring from another parish should provide transcripts.

Students will be placed in classrooms as they are registered. Classroom assignments will be emailed to families the week of August 31st. Please contact the RE office if you have any questions.

RE SESSIONS

RE sessions meet Monday evenings 6:45 pm – 8 pm from September 14, 2026 through May 3, 2027. A full calendar is posted on stdamianchurch.org.

Classes are held in St. Damian School. Catechists will meet the children outside in warm weather:

- First through 3rd grades line up at Door A—the main school door.
- Fourth through 6th grades line up at Door B at the west end of the school building next to the Church, and
- Seventh and 8th grades will enter through Door C at the east end of the school building next to Grimmel Center (gym).

When the weather turns cold and we lose daylight, children will line up with their catechists and classes inside the school.

Please be sure children have had a meal, bring their classroom materials, and have used the restroom before coming to sessions.

If you are in a carpool or want to authorize another adult to pick up your child(ren,) please be sure to complete the Authorization for pick-up form in the registration packet.

2026-2027 Dropoff and Pickup Guidelines

1. Drop off begins at 6:30 pm for our program. **Classes will begin promptly at 6:45 pm**
This gives the children time to get settled so that classes are not interrupted after 6:45 pm.
2. Drop off areas will be clearly marked. First through 3rd grades will line up at Door A—the main school door. Fourth through 6th grades line up at Door B at the west end of the school building next to the Church. Seventh and 8th grades will enter through Door C at the east end of the school building next to Grimmel Center (gym).
3. Parents, please park your car, and walk your child to the assigned door to meet his/her catechist.
4. As the weather turns colder and we lose daylight, parents can leave their children at the doors and the children will line up with their catechist and class inside the doors.
5. Pickup will follow the same pattern. Please park and meet your child at their assigned door at 8 pm.
6. Entrance areas will be coned off for the safety of all our families.

2026-27 ST. DAMIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TUITION AND FEES

Tuition, Book, and Supply Fees

One child: \$275
Two children \$390
Three or more children: \$490
Bible fee for grades 5 and 6: \$40
Lost Bible or Textbook: \$40

Sacramental Fees

Level 2 (First Reconciliation/First Eucharist)

\$50 additional per student: *A sacramental retreat, professional photograph and additional materials for this Sacrament.*

Level 8 (Confirmation)

\$75 additional per student: *A sacramental retreat, gown, professional photograph and additional materials.*

Additional Instruction: OCIC – Order of Christian Initiation for Children in grades 4-7 who have not yet received their First Reconciliation and First Communion. This class meets Sunday mornings twice a month with family Mass attendance from October through Easter. Children receive their First Communion at the Easter Vigil. \$250 per child. RCIC and RE are attended concurrently.

TUITION

Online registration forms can be found at stdamianchurch.org under Religious Education for Children.

Online payments may be made via the Donate link on the website or <https://giving.parishsoft.com>, choose Rel. Ed Tuition & Fees = 26-27 as the recipient of your donation. If you choose electronic payment, please attach a printed receipt to your registration paperwork or email a picture to re@stdamianchurch.org.

Students will be assigned to a classroom or assigned their book/classroom materials when registration is completed, and all fees are paid in full. New students must provide birth and baptismal certificates, as well as transcripts of previous religious education completed for all grade levels except those entering 1st grade.

SPECIAL SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS

Celebrating the Sacraments is a special part of our RE journey when children truly come to know the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith. Sacramental meetings provide parents/guardians with focused information and resources to help with their child(ren)'s faith development. These meetings provide opportunities to build community with other families in the sacramental preparation process

Archdiocesan policy states that sacramental catechesis is a 2-year process. For example, children are expected to attend 1st and 2nd grade classes to experience First Reconciliation and First Eucharist in Grade 2. The 2-year Confirmation program is based upon all faith that has been presented in grades 1 through 6.

RECONCILIATION AND EUCHARIST

Religious Education children will make their First Reconciliation and receive First Communion in 2nd grade if they have been enrolled in a religious education program during first grade.

Children entering the St. Damian's RE program in 2nd grade with no previous RE experience must complete extra prep work at home (during the first few months of RE) to provide a foundation to understand the lessons for First Reconciliation and First Communion. This is to ensure that they are properly prepared for the sacraments they are receiving.

All children receiving religious instruction in the Archdiocese of Chicago are required to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before First Communion. The 2nd grade curriculum provides general faith instruction for 2 months before focusing on sacramental preparation for Reconciliation. The curriculum then builds on God's forgiveness during the beginning of Lent before segueing to the Eucharist. Children will use a First Communion Packet during April to focus on preparing for their First Holy Communion.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation preparation begins in 7th grade as part of a two-year preparation process required by the Archdiocese of Chicago and designed to weave prayer and spirituality with Catholic tradition and Catholic social teaching while applying faith to daily life.

Candidates must have completed all yearly catechetical sessions prior to entering this 2-year process. If a student has not attended consecutive years (3 through 6), the student must attend a makeup class in addition to their regular RE session. All catchup work must be completed before a child is allowed to receive their Sacrament. There is an additional cost for makeup materials.

COMMUNICATION BY EMAIL

Email is our primary method of communication with RE families. Our email messaging list is created from the phone numbers and email addresses you supply at registration. If your contact information changes, please advise the RE office so you will continue to receive important notices and updates.

ATTENDANCE

Children should attend RE sessions regularly to create a solid faith foundation and development of their Catholic identity. As we only have 28 sessions per year, the Archdiocese advises that **a maximum of 3 absences per year are allowed.** Tardiness and early releases are strongly discouraged, because they are disruptive to both children and catechists.

ABSENCE: If your child will be absent due to illness or an emergency, please notify the RE office at 708-687-7778 or re@stdamianchurch.org.

TARDINESS: Children arriving late must enter via the main school door (others doors are locked) and report to the RE office before going to their classroom.

EARLY DISMISSAL: Any children who must leave class early for whatever reason—a parent must contact the RE office beforehand. Children must be picked up by an adult at the RE office.

Be advised that participation in sports is not an acceptable excuse for RE non-attendance, late arrival or early dismissal. Advise coaches of your commitment to your child's faith formation and advise them of the date/times sessions are held. Only one child in 10,000 will play a sport at the college level. We want all of them to practice their Catholic Faith daily, building strong, personal relationships with Jesus so that they go to Heaven—the ultimate win.

Refer to the RE calendar for scheduled sessions and special events for parents. To gain full benefit of the program, the following policy is mandatory.

- Attendance and participation in RE sessions is expected unless the child is ill or there is a family emergency.
- Parental attendance at Parent Sacrament Meetings is required for any child who is participating in a sacramental preparation program.
- Children are expected to be enrolled in a Religious Education program from 1st through 8th grade. Consistent religious education helps build strong character by knowing, loving and serving God. Active participation in their Catholic Faith through Sunday Mass and RE attendance strengthens their virtues to be the best they can be now and as they grow into high school and beyond.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

If inclement weather or any other major problem should force us to cancel RE classes, you will be informed through an email announcement.

RESPONSIBILITIES

To provide a safe and effective learning environment, it is essential to inform the RE office if your child(ren) have any behavioral or learning issues, and a list of all current medications and possible side effects. Additional responsibilities include:

- Bringing required materials to each session, including textbooks, Bibles, notebooks, etc.
- Being respectful and courteous to all catechists, aides, parish ministers and other volunteers involved with the RE program.
- Respecting each other, and responding in a kind and compassionate manner to any child they encounter in the RE program.
- Respecting the property of St. Damian School and Church, as well as the property of any child or adult involved with RE or School.
- Refraining from chewing gum, and wearing hats or cleats inside the Church or School.

EXPECTATIONS

It is the responsibility of the parent(s) of the child(ren) who attend Saint Damian Religious Education Program to help their child(ren) succeed. You can do this in a variety of ways:

- Respect the authority of the Catechist and Religious Education staff.
- Respect your classmates. Treat others as you would want to be treated.
- Attend Mass with your child(ren) every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation.
- Bring your child prepared to all RE sessions.
- Check their folders, practice prayers together and review their homework.
- Support the Parish financially.
- Volunteer! Contribute! Our program is always in need of your support.
- Show Christian behavior at all times.

DRESS CODE

Dress and grooming influence the attitude and behavior of the children. We expect the children to dress in a fashion that reflects good taste. We need cooperation from the parents to accomplish this goal. Please note the following guidelines:

- Clothing must be modest and free from holes, and objectionable sayings or logos,
- No sleepwear, such as pajama pants or slippers,
- No exposed undergarments,
- Dresses, skirts, and shorts must be mid-thigh length or longer,
- No beachwear, and
- No hats and hoods.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Tablets, computers, phones, etc. are not to be brought to class. Cell phones are to be powered off and put away during sessions. Texting, videoing, taking pictures and internet use are not allowed in the classroom. If a child does not abide by these rules, the catechist will confiscate an electronic device and return it to a parent at pickup. St. Damian RE takes no responsibility for items lost or damaged on Parish property.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Please do not bring special personal items or toys to RE unless it is for a class project. Many items, especially toys, tend to create distractions and issues in the classroom.

LOST ITEMS

We will make every effort to find lost clothing and other items. If your child leaves something behind, please call or email the RE office with a description. You will be notified if the item is recovered, so you can either pick it up or we will give it to your child the following Monday.

PHOTOS or VIDEOS

During our year there may be class pictures or videos that will be taken of your child. We are proud of our RE students and like to share photos in the Parish bulletin. Please sign the authorization form in the Registration packet.

VOLUNTEERS

The RE ministry is supported mainly by volunteers. Help is needed and is always appreciated! Please consider volunteering! Contact the RE Office, 708-687-7778, so that we may advise on how to complete the Virtus requirements of the Archdiocese before volunteering with children.