

St. Michael the Archangel Parish

Religious Education (RE) 2025-2026

Dear Families,

We are so happy to welcome you to a new year of Religious Education!

- ★ **Grades Preschool-5th and H.S.** typically meet three Sundays a month from 9:00-10:15 a.m.
 - *Preschool is offered for children who are at least 4 years old*
- ★ **Grades 6th-8th** will meet on Wednesday evenings.
- ★ **Location:** Grades Preschool-5th, Parish Hall ♦ 6th/7th/8th, YG Room ♦ HS, YG Room
- ★ **Weather/R.E. Notices (PreK-12th): Sign up at www.remind.com – Class Code: @PK1ST456SE**
 - Remind is the only way you'll be contacted regarding weather cancellations, etc. If you're not receiving messages, please let me know. Please note, this code is only for religious education.
 - This also serves as the main form of contact for special children's ministry activities throughout the liturgical year.

Catechists

Thank you for blessing our children with your time and talent!

Preschool: Katie Grate &
Laura van Roessel

K/1st Grade: Allen Swygart

2nd Grade: Arica Swygart

3rd Grade: Eric & Becca Thomas

4th/5th Grade: Ruth Keesler & Rose Thiel

6th/7th/8th Grade: Fr. Thomas Zehr
& parent assistants

9th-12th: Bobbie Charleswood & Amy Buchs
(Fr. Thomas will typically teach the 2nd HS
class of each month)

<u>Preschool-5th Grade & HS</u>	<u>6th/7th/8th Grade</u>
6 th /7 th /8 th grade has a separate schedule	This class will meet on Wednesdays from 7:00-8:30 pm as noted below.
9:00 am-10:15 am (between the Masses)	
September 7, 14, 21 October 5, 19, 26 November 2, 9, 16 December 7, 14, 21 January 4, 11, 18 February 1, 8, 15 March 1, 8, 15 April 12, 19, 26	September 10, 17 October 8, 22 (Also, TOB retreat on Oct. 26, 4-7 pm) November 5, 12 (Also, TOB retreat on Nov. 16, 4-7 pm) December 3, 10, 17 January 7, 14, 21 February 4, 11, 25 March 4, 11, 18 April 15, 22, 29
	Thank you for your cooperation and understanding as we try something new! Having middle school on Wednesdays will accommodate the larger class size. Also, we encourage these students to help in another class (especially preschool) on Sundays. Please let me know if you're interested!

Religious Ed. Curriculum

- **Preschool:** Catholic Icing's Catholic ABC's: A Hands-on Preschool Curriculum
- **K/1st grade:** Allelu! by OSV and the New St. Joseph Catechism for First Communion
- **2nd grade:** Encounter with Christ by OSV and The New St. Joseph Catechism for First Communion
- **3rd grade:** Our Holy Faith Vol. 3: Prince of Peace by Tan Books
- **4th/5th grade:** Our Holy Faith Vol. 4: Bread of Life by Tan Books. They will also have a special focus on the liturgical year.

- **6th/7th/8th grade:** Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School from Ascension Press and Catholic Social Teaching for Youth by Catholic Sprouts
- **9th-12th grade:** Quick Catholic Lessons with Fr. Mike, vol. 1 from Ascension Press and will also engage in talks with Fr. Thomas once a month about current events and how they relate to our faith.

We are going to begin getting groups of two classes together. This year, 3rd grade will be on its own. Next year, they will be combined with next year's incoming 3rd graders (to make a combined 3rd/4th grade class as in the past). Then, that combined class will remain together each year through Confirmation. This way, we hope that the combined Confirmation class will get to know each other better since they will be together for several years.

Guidelines for receiving the sacraments

1. The student must attend religious ed. for one year prior to sacramental prep. Confirmation students must attend 6th grade prior to beginning the two-year Confirmation prep cycle (Confirmation is held every other year).
2. Students wishing to receive these sacraments must fill out an application before preparation begins. Please return completed applications to Mrs. Swygart.
3. Students must attend classes on a regular basis. Absences must be made up.
4. Parental involvement is a very important part of religious education. Sponsor involvement is also very important for Confirmation prep.
5. Students are expected to fulfill the obligations of preparation for the reception of each sacrament. More information can be found at stmichaelwaterloo.com/eucharist and stmichaelwaterloo.com/confirmation.

First Reconciliation and Communion

- **Dates** – A parent information letter containing all dates will go home with students during the first month of the R.E. school year. First Communion will be Sunday, May 3, 2026 during the 10:30 a.m. Mass.
- **Dress code** – First Communicants are modest and reverent in dress to receive Our Lord for the first time. Information sheets will go home with parents containing the dress code.
- **Prayer Lambs** – The Prayer Lamb Program pairs adult parishioners with children who are preparing to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation and Communion. An adult or a couple may sponsor a child. Adults send notes of prayer to their First Communicants each month throughout the school year. Prayer Lambs will be assigned during the month of October. Please contact Mrs. Swygart if you'd like to be a Prayer Lamb.

Confirmation is offered at St. Michael the Archangel every other year. Our Confirmation preparation is covered over the course of a 2-year cycle:

- **Year One (this year): We focus on 7th grade curriculum and Theology of the Body**
- **Year Two:** We focus on 8th grade curriculum and Confirmation-specific content

Because of the nature of our preparation program, students must have completed their 6th grade year in R.E. before starting the 2-year Confirmation prep. We celebrate Confirmation August 24, 2025. Eighth graders will complete the second required year of the prep cycle. Ninth graders will advance to high school RE. The next Confirmation will tentatively be in August 2027.

Theology of the Body (TOB) is a curriculum based on St. John Paul II's 129 lectures given during his Wednesday audiences in St. Peter's Square. It is not just a chastity program; it is St. John Paul II's ***vision of the human person***. This truly engaging curriculum is **required** for all middle-school students in our diocese. Five of the chapters will be covered during class. Three of the chapters will be covered during 2 Sunday evening "retreats." Please see separate schedule for these dates. Parents, we encourage you to preview this content in advance and/or sit with your child during class. We will have a parent meeting to go over this content before anything is presented to the students.

Safe Environment Training

During the first half of the school year all students through 12th grade will take part in safe environment training. While it is mandated, we know that this is important personal safety information that every child should have. Stephanie VanderHorst, a nurse and midwife, will be teaching the presentations to each grade level.

The main points covered are:

- * **God made us and loves us. God made our bodies.**
- * **We each have personal space.**
- * **We should treat others and ourselves with respect and care.**
- * **Some touches are safe and some are not.**
- * **We have warning signs ("sirens") when we are in danger and we need to pay attention to these signals.**
- * **If ever in danger, not being respected, or being touched in an unsafe way, get away.**
- * **Get help from an adult. Keep telling and asking until you get the help you need.**
- * **There are adults in your life to care for and protect you.**

If you have any questions or want to review any of the training materials, please contact me. Because we have to report Safe Environment Training attendance to the diocese, if you choose not to have your child in class for the presentation, you will need to sign the parent refusal form and return it to your child's teacher. If your child does not attend the training, we will send the materials home for you to review with your child. Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring the protection of all our children!

Adult Bible Study will meet during RE class time. Parents, we encourage you to join! This is great time to learn about our faith and connect with other parents while the children are in class. Please let me know if you're interested! The group will start the book of Matthew in September.

Please pray for the success of our Religious Education program, our dedicated volunteers, and our precious children as we look forward to beginning a new school year!

All for Him,

Arica Swygart

Director of Religious Ed.