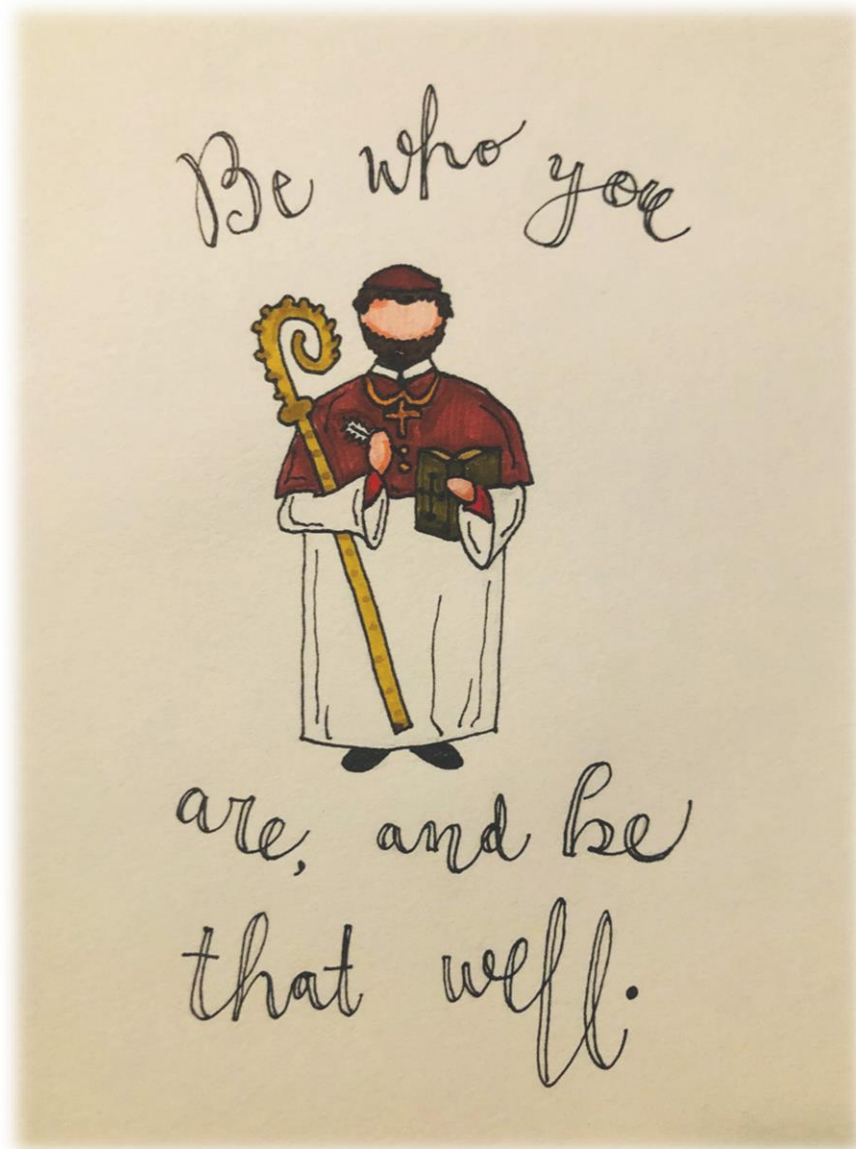


St Francis de Sales Catholic Church

Religious Education Handbook

2025-2026



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Dear Saint Francis de Sales RE Parents,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Religious Education program at St. Francis de Sales parish. The St Francis de Sales RE office is excited to assist you in the great mission to which you have been called of educating your children to become lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ! Our catechists are dedicated to accompanying the children on their faith journey and will create lessons to enhance their learning.

Religious education at St. Francis de Sales is designed to complement and supplement the faith formation your children receive at home, not replace it. Therefore, it is important that you continue to teach your children at home, primarily by living out the Catholic faith we profess. To ensure your children get the most out of their faith formation it is important for you do to three things.

First, take your children to Mass every Sunday and regularly to receive the Sacrament of Confession. These sacraments are privileged encounters with Our Lord through which we experience his great love and mercy. Through these sacraments, our faith is strengthened, and we are united more closely with Christ.

Second, pray daily with your children and for your children. Communication is the foundation of any relationship. Prayer is how we communicate with God. By praying with your children, you help them foster their relationship with Our Lord. Prayer is the primary means of obtaining grace for us and those whom we teach.

Third, continue your own faith formation. Faith formation is a lifelong process. By exhibiting this continual process, your children observe the importance you put on learning about the Faith and will be excited to learn about it too. The more you learn the more you'll be able to share with your children.

Please be sure to watch your email throughout the year for important Religious Education news and updates. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns about your children's faith formation at d.taylor@saintfrancisparish.org.

Sincerely In Christ,

Diane Taylor

Director of Religious Education

Mission

The Saint Francis de Sales Religious Education program strives to support parents in handing on the Catholic and Apostolic Faith to their children by offering a systematic presentation of the Faith in union with and in fidelity to the Holy Roman Catholic Church founded by Jesus Christ.

Role of Parents

Religious education, or catechesis, is only part of any child's faith formation. In raising up children in the Faith, parents are primarily responsible for ensuring their children's regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church and for witnessing true Christian discipleship daily, especially in the home, the "domestic church".

Regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and a lived experience of Christian discipleship within the home are essential for cultivating good soil in which the seeds of faith imparted during Faith Formation classes may take root and grow. Without good soil in which to take root, these seeds of faith will become scorched and wither away (see Matthew 13:1-9).

Saint Pope John Paul II taught that, "Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis. Furthermore, in places where anti-religious legislation endeavors even to prevent education in the faith, and in places where widespread unbelief or invasive secularism makes real religious growth practically impossible, 'the church of the home' remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis. Thus, there cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this ministry of being their own children's catechists and to carry it out with tireless zeal" (*Catechesi tradendae*, 68).

Curriculum

Textbooks:

Grades K-5

Word of Life, Augustine Institute | Ignatius Press

Spirit of Truth, “*The Sacraments*”, Sophia Institute

Grade 6

Spirit of Truth, “*Sacred Scripture*”, Sophia Institute

Grades 7 & 8

The Sacrament of Confirmation, The Didache Series | Midwest Theological Forum

Online Faith and Life Series is available for families with children in grades 3-6. Completion of material is due on or before June 1st.

Saint Francis de Sales Religious Education offers a systematic presentation of the truths of the Catholic faith for all grades. Textbooks have been found to be in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Students are issued one workbook per academic year. Students in grade 6 are issued a Youth Bible to use throughout the 3 middle school years. They should bring their materials to every class. Replacement workbooks and bibles are available for the current list price plus shipping and handling. Parents should contact the director of religious education if their child needs a replacement book or bible.

Standards of Learning:

The Standards of Learning are set forth by the Diocese of Arlington which determine successful grade-completion and a student’s ability to advance through the program. These standards are in place to ensure all students throughout the diocese receive a full, systematic presentation of the truths of the Catholic faith from kindergarten through grade 12. To assist students in learning and retaining the knowledge they receive in their classes, homework and quizzes may be assigned to students.

Prayers to Memorize

Students are expected to master the prayers at their grade level, in addition to knowing the prayers from previous years. This can be achieved through repetition.

Each class will begin and end with a prayer. The Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines list basic prayers to be learned for each grade level. Praying together regularly at home will help reinforce a life of prayer and help students learn the prayers.

Learning the prayers is cumulative. Students should know the prayers for the years prior to their current year.

Grade	Prayers to Know (cumulative)	Evaluation method
Pre-K Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sign of the Cross• Guardian Angel Prayer• Glory Be	No formal evaluation
Grade 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genuflection• Our Father• Hail Mary• Grace Before Meals	Evaluated Orally
Grade 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act of Contrition• Form of Sacrament of Reconciliation• Examination of Conscience• Ten Commandments	Evaluated Orally
Grade 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• St Michael the Archangel• Seasons of Lent and Advent• Forms of Prayer	Evaluated Orally
Grade 4:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act of Faith• Act of Hope• Act of Charity• How to pray the Rosary	Evaluated Orally
Grade 5:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apostles' Creed• Nicene Creed• Fatima Prayer• Hail Holy Queen• 4 Mysteries of the Rosary	Evaluated Orally
Grade 6:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Divine Mercy Chaplet	Evaluated Orally
Grade 7:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Angelus• Memorare• Stations of the Cross• Benediction and Adoration	Evaluated written
Grade 8:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Come Holy Spirit• Divine Praises	Evaluated written

Prayers in **bold** are required prayers to know based on the Standards of Learning from the Diocese of Arlington.

Safe Environment Training for Students: Circle of Grace

The Diocese of Arlington and Saint Francis de Sales Catholic Church are committed to providing a safe environment to all children entrusted to our care and assisting each child to grow in grace and wisdom. Therefore, all students enrolled in Religious Education at St. Francis de Sales are offered safe environment training using the *Circle of Grace* program.

Circle of Grace aims to help students understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help when needed through their relationships with trusted adults. Circle of Grace is NOT a sex education program.

More information will be given to parents at the start of the school year before the training begins. Although it is not recommended, parents may choose to not have their child participate in the training. In that case, they are asked to sign an opt-out form.

Special Religious Development (SPRED)

Saint Francis de Sales parish offers a special religious development program for students ages 6-16 with special needs. This program welcomes persons with developmental disabilities into a group where they would become prepared to participate in the liturgical life of the parish and become prepared to receive the sacraments of initiation. Registration is through the religious education office and is open to parishioners in surrounding parishes.

The SPRED group meets on Saturday mornings 10:00 am-12:00 pm approximately 12 times per year from September through April.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Excellent attendance is expected of all students enrolled in Religious Education at Saint Francis de Sales. Students are permitted no more than four absences in an academic year, excused or unexcused. Illness and significant family events such as weddings and funerals are acceptable reasons for missing class, though they do count toward the four permitted absences. Sporting practices or events, sleepovers, and camping trips are not acceptable reasons for missing class. Students who miss more than the permitted number of classes must meet with the Director of Religious education and/ or Pastor, along with their parents to determine the student's eligibility to advance to the next grade of religious education.

Tardiness creates a serious disruption to the class. With only one and a quarter hours per week, we appreciate your cooperation in getting your child(ren) to class ON TIME each week. Students arriving after class has started must sign in before going to the classroom.

If your child must leave class early, please inform the RE office prior to class starting. We will do our best to have your child in the office for pick up. Students will only be released to those persons listed as authorized to pick up.

Parents should notify their child's catechist and the director of religious education in advance when their child will be absent from class. If there are extenuating circumstances which prevent a student's full participation in religious education, parents should contact the DRE.

If your child is sick, please do not send them to class. Notify the RE office and the catechist to report the absence.

Arrivals and Dismissals

All students should go directly to the gym upon arrival and wait with their class. We will begin with a prayer before releasing students to his/her classrooms. Classes begin promptly at their designated start time. (Sunday 9AM Session 1 and Sunday 10:45AM Session 2; Monday 3:30PM Session 1 and Monday 5PM Session 2).

For dismissal, parents with children in grades Pre-K through 1st grade are asked to pick up their child at the classroom door, all other children will be released from the gym. Students in grades 4-8 may pick up younger siblings (who are in grades pre-k through 1st grade) and meet their parents in the gym. Please pick-up promptly at the designated end time. (Session 1 Sunday: 10:15AM; Session 2 Sunday at 12:00 Noon; Session 1 Monday: 4:45pm; Session 2 Monday: 6:15PM)

Safety and Emergency

The Arlington Diocese Office of Risk Management requires us to secure the building while students are present. All visitors must enter through the front doors and sign in.

The DRE will conduct safety drills with the students throughout the year. Drills will include a fire evacuation drill and a lockdown drill. The first drill will be in September.

All visitors to the religious education building must sign the visitor log upon entering the building.

Student Expectations

Student conduct should reflect Christian attitudes and virtues. Students are expected to attend and participate in their religious education class and be respectful towards their teacher, their classmates, and their environment. Disruptive students may be asked to sit in the RE office and a parent will be notified.

Students should dress comfortably according to the weather, but modesty in dress should always be maintained. Articles of clothing with inappropriate images or sayings (drugs, alcohol, profanity, weapons) are not permitted. Tight-fitting clothing, pajamas, and clothes with rips or holes are unacceptable. Clothing must cover all private areas as well as shoulders and midriffs. Shorts and skirts must fall past the middle finger when arms are held straight down at the side. Pants must be worn at the waist. Hats must be removed while inside the building.

Cell phones, smart watches and similar devices must be turned off and out of sight. At no time during class are students permitted to use these devices unless the catechist requires it for a specific activity. Otherwise, all devices must be turned off. Parents, please do not ask your child to call or text you during class time.

Expectations of Catechists

Catechist

Parents are the primary educators of their children, and catechists support parents in this duty by providing a systematic, age-appropriate presentation of the faith, which adheres to the curriculum of the parish religious education program and the standards of learning for each grade as set by the Diocese of Arlington's Office of Faith Formation.

Catechist's qualifications are to be:

- A practicing Catholic 18 years or older, in good standing with the Catholic Church.
- In full compliance with the Office for the Protection of Children/Young People (OPCYC) before beginning and while serving in ministry.
- Willing to continue his/her ministry training and work towards certification.

All catechists must strive to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to communicate the Faith effectively. They must have a solid understanding of Catholic doctrine and worship, scripture and tradition, and Church history. In addition, catechists must have the necessary communication skills and ability to use various methodologies; they must understand how people grow and mature, and how people of different ages and circumstances learn.

Catechists will establish classroom rules and a routine at the beginning of the school year and present them to their students on the first day of class. He/she will treat students with respect and foster a positive and encouraging learning environment.

Catechist will address disruptive behavior by following the necessary steps to resolve the issue. The catechist will speak to the disruptive student in class, contact the parent/guardians,

and the director of religious education. If the disruptive behavior persists, the student may be removed from class.

Registration

Religious education is open for all students in the parish in grades pre-K through 12th grade. Students enrolled in Religious Education at Saint Francis de Sales Catholic Church must be registered members of the parish or provide a letter of permission from their pastor granting permission for them to be enrolled in Religious Education at Saint Francis de Sales. Registration of non-parishioners is subject to approval by the Director of Religious Education and/or Pastor. Students who are homeschooled are encouraged and welcomed to participate in the Religious Education Program.

Parents or legal guardians must complete and submit a new registration form at the beginning of each academic year. When a child is enrolled in Religious Education for the first time, a copy of their baptismal certificate must be provided to be kept in their records, unless the child was baptized at Saint Francis de Sales in Purcellville, Virginia. The copy of a baptismal is necessary for the reception of First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. Students who transfer from another parish religious education program must provide a record of their last grade completed, attendance, and any sacraments received. A student's individualized education (IEP) plan must be indicated on the registration form.

Sacramental preparation is completed when children have attended formation for two consecutive years. First Communion I and II are taught in Grades 1 and 2; Confirmation I and II are taught in Grades 7 and 8. Students in sacramental years (grades 1 & 2 and grades 7 & 8) are required to participate fully in the two-year program.

With approval of Pastor and DRE, children who have not received sacraments may enroll in RCIC for Grades 4-6 or RCIT for Grades 7-High School. Decision of placement will be made by the DRE for children who have missed formation years.

Tuition and Fees

One Child: \$120

Additional Children: \$25 each

Late fee (after August 15): \$50

Sacrament Fee:

First Holy Communion \$25

Confirmation \$40

Class Schedule

<u>Session Day/Time</u>	<u>Grades</u>
Sunday, 9:00 am – 10:15 am	Pre-K – 8 th , RCIT (high schoolers only)
Sunday, 10:45 am- 12:00 pm	Grades 1-8
Sunday, 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	High School Philosophy/Theology
Monday, 3:30 pm-4:45 pm	Kindergarten – 5 th
Monday, 5:00 pm – 6:15 pm	Kindergarten - 8 th , RCIC
Saturday, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Special Religious Education Development (SPRED)

Registration Closes September 30

Electronic Communication

The religious education office will use email as the primary source of communication for parents. **Constant Contact** is the primary platform used in the parish email system. Please check your inbox and junk folders frequently. DO NOT hit “unsubscribe” - this is a permanent choice and will result in information not reaching you. To resubscribe you will need to notify the parish office.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, Saint Francis de Sales Religious Education follows the Loudoun County Public Schools regarding closures. When Loudoun County schools are closed or have early dismissal or cancel after-school activities due to inclement weather, Youth and Adult Religious Ed and classes are cancelled.

Sunday morning cancellations will be sent via email to families by 7am Sunday morning.

Visitors

All visitors must sign in at the front desk upon arrival.

No visitors, including parents, are permitted to assist with or attend religious education classes without approval of the director of religious education. Permission to do so should be obtained at least one business day prior to class. Classroom visitors must be compliant with the Catholic Diocese of Arlington child protection requirements including a background check and VIRTUS training.

Sacramental Preparation

First Penance & First Holy Communion

Preparation for First Penance and First Holy communion takes approximately two years and typically begins in first grade. Students who begin their religious instruction in their second-grade year will be enrolled in the Grade 1 class. Parents are required to attend a parent meeting during their child’s second year of preparation.

Students preparing for the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion must have attendance at or above 80%. This included acquiring no more than 6 excused and/or unexcused absences.

Important Dates for First Penance & First Holy Communion 2025-2026

- Parent Meeting – January 25 or 26 during religious education classes.
- First Penance – January 31
- First Communion Retreat – March 14 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
- First Communion Rehearsal – May 8 TBD
- First Communion Mass – May 9 TBD

Confirmation

Preparation for Confirmation takes approximately two years and typically begins in the seventh grade. Students who have missed a year or more of classes since their First Holy Communion must enroll at the grade level that corresponds with their knowledge of faith per the Diocese of Arlington Standards of Learning. Parents are required to attend a parent meeting at the beginning of their child's first year of preparation.

Students preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation must have attendance at or above 80%. This included acquiring no more than 6 excused and/or unexcused absences. Early dismissals and late arrivals must be kept at a minimum and should not equate to more than 75 minutes (1 class).

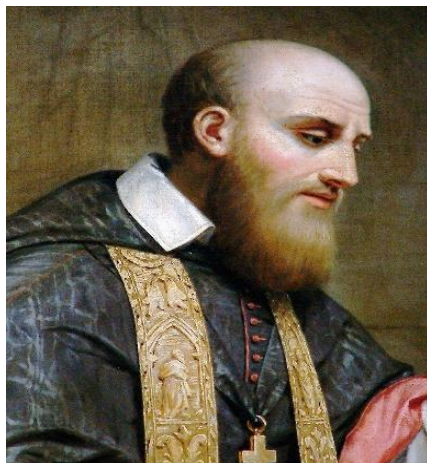
In addition to regular class attendance, homework, and quizzes, students preparing for confirmation are required to complete *20 hours of community service, * written saint report, * letter to the pastor requesting the Sacrament of Confirmation, *Interview with the Pastor, *attend the retreat, *and a final exam*.

Details will be provided at the parent meeting.

Important Dates for Confirmation 2025-2026

- Parent Meeting – September 21 & 22 during religious education classes.
- Interviews with the Pastor January 25 – February 13
- Confirmation Retreat – April 10, 2025
- Confirmation Rehearsal – April 23, 2025 6:00 pm
- Confirmation – April 24, 2025 7:00 pm

For students in ninth grade and above who have not yet received Confirmation, parents should contact the Director of Religious Education about registering for Rite of Christian Initiation for Teenagers (RCIT).



*“Cook the truth in Charity
until it tastes sweet.”*
~St. Francis de Sales~

Frequently Asked Questions

Registration:

When does registration for fall classes take place?

Registration for religious education classes is from June 1 to August 31

Who needs to register?

All new and returning students must register each year including rising eighth graders.

What must I do to register?

Registration can be made either in person by filling out the paperwork or online through the parish website. If you are new to the parish, you must first register your family with the parish prior to enrolling your child(ren) for religious education classes. All new students must also submit a copy of their baptismal certificate with the registration form.

Where and when are classes held?

Classes are held in the parish education building on
Sunday from 9:00 am – 10:15 am (PreK – 8th grade, RCIT) and
10:45 am- 12pm (1st – 8th grades).
Monday from 3:30pm-4:45 pm (K – 5th grades) and
5:00 pm -6:15 pm (K-8th grade, RCIC).

I do not live in the Saint Francis de Sales boundaries; can I still register my child here?

No, our program is for registered parishioners only. You should register at the parish where you live.

Why do you need a copy of my child's baptismal certificate?

It is necessary to have record of each child's baptism before administering any other sacrament. The Church of Baptism must be notified when one receives a sacrament as they continue to keep record of all the sacraments one receives.

Why do you need my email address?

Email is the easiest way for the religious education office to communicate with parents about class updates, information about sacraments, retreats, and other items related to the program. Please, DO NOT "unsubscribe" to Constant Contact!

Programs:

Is there a class for my high schooler who needs to complete his/her sacraments?

Yes, we offer a high school class on Sundays from 11:00 am – 12:15 pm for students needing to complete sacrament formation (baptism, communion, and/or confirmation). Please follow the same registration process as stated above.

I have a child (grades 3-7) who would like to enroll in the program who is not yet baptized, and/or has not completed First Holy Communion. What do I do?

Depending on the circumstances, the Pastor may find it better suited to baptize the child after he/she has been properly instructed for the sacrament. You should first speak with the Pastor.

We offer a class called RCIC (Rite of Christian Initiation for Children) which prepares the children for First Holy Communion. Preparation for First Holy Communion is a 2-year program. The child would remain in the RCIC class for 2 years unless he/she exhibits full understanding of the sacrament.

Will there be a class offered for high schoolers to continue their religious education?

Yes, there will be a class offered on Sunday afternoons from 4-5 pm for high school students. Father Gould and/or Father Kenna will teach a class. Please read the bulletin for updates.

So, I have signed my child up for religious education. That is all I have to do, right?

Not quite. The Christian family has the fundamental mission and primary responsibility for faith education. Children's faith formation takes place first and foremost in the home and through your living example. Parents must witness, teach and pray with their children on a regular basis and bring Christ to all you do as a family.

How can I as a parent be more involved with what goes on in my child's religious education class?

Pope Benedict XVI said, "the Christian family...a little 'domestic church'...and the larger family of the Church must develop the closest collaboration, above all as regards the education of children." We are a team! The Pastor, DRE, religious education staff, and catechists are here to assist you in the education of your children. We look to find new and useful ways to connect you to what is going on in class. Parents can support the class by staying on top of weekly lessons, reading emails from the catechists, and attending parent meetings. Please reach out to the RE office if you need anything.

Sacraments:

When will my child go to First Reconciliation?

First Reconciliation takes place during second grade in January.

When will my child receive First Holy Communion?

First Holy Communion takes place in the spring and typically falls on the second Saturday in May.

Why is Confirmation a two-year program?

Confirmation preparation begins in the seventh grade and candidates are confirmed in the spring of eighth grade. Over the two years of preparation candidates choose their sponsors, choose a saint, and write a report on their Confirmation saint, work

on completing 20 hours of community service, host a dinner with their sponsor, interview their sponsor, have an interview with Father Gould, and attend a retreat.

Volunteer:

What opportunities are there for me to volunteer in the Religious Education program?

There is always a need for catechists, classroom aides, substitute teachers, and hall monitors.

What training do volunteers need?

All volunteers who have contact with children must complete a background check and attend a Virtus training seminar. Once the background check and training are complete you are “compliant” and may volunteer with the youth programs at the parish.

Who can be a catechist?

Catechists should be persons who love and live the Catholic Faith and desire to share the Good News of Christ with others especially our youth. Catechists are witnesses of Christ to those whom they teach. Pope Paul VI wrote, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

What are the benefits of being a catechist?

Catechists find their role in the Church very rewarding as they are handing on the Faith that was given to us from the Apostles and making disciples for our Lord Jesus Christ. Bringing adults, children, and families into a deeper and more intimate communion with Christ.



St. Francis de Sales Religious Education