

**Religious Education Handbook
for**

Parents & Students

**St. Jude Parish
Mountain Top, PA
&**

**St. Mary, Our Lady Help of Christians
Dorrance, PA**

2025 - 2026

A NOTE TO THE PARENTS

Please read and discuss the information in our handbook with your child(ren). Parents are the most important examples of learning and living our Catholic Faith. Therefore, your participation is extremely important in successfully passing on the Catholic Faith to our children. Our dedicated volunteers in the religious education program are here to assist you and work with you. After you have read this booklet, please sign the bottom portion of this page, cut it off, and return it to your teacher.

Or Sign online with:

<https://forms.gle/H4q1Fx2vvDpWRSdG7>



We have read and agree to the guidelines governing this handbook.

Parent(s)Signature:_____

Child's Name(s):_____

Date:_____

Teacher's Name:_____

Grade:_____

Mission Statement:

It is our mission to teach all students in grades K - 12, who are enrolled in the religious education program to the best of the instructors' abilities. The catechists will assist the parents to help their children to develop spiritually. Students will learn about their lives, their faith, and how to live their faith.

Class Schedule

St. Mary's of Dorrance:

- Classes are Sunday from 9:45 - 11:00. Class begins immediately following mass. Students should report to the church. Students are to be picked up at their classes and will not be permitted in the parking lot unattended.

St. Jude's

- Sunday classes begin at 9:30am and end at 10:40 am. Monday classes are from 6 PM until 7:10 PM. Classes are held in St. Jude's School. Students are to report directly to their classrooms.

Confirmation Prep

- Meets approximately two Sundays per month (see calendar) beginning at 6:00pm in St. Jude Church. Concludes at 7:30pm in St. Jude School.

Admission Policy:

Students in Grades K - 12, who are members of Saint Mary, Our Lady Help of Christians Parish are to attend the Religious Education classes. High School students fulfill this requirement through our Youth Ministry Program. Student Enrollment forms must be completed with complete names, addresses, names of parents, birth date, baptismal date, and place of birth and baptism. If the student was baptized in another parish, s/he must submit his/her baptismal certificate upon enrollment. Also, the student should note the present grade in school, phone number, and any additional information that would be helpful to make her/his instruction successful. If a child would like to enroll in the program, but belongs to another parish, s/he must obtain a letter from the pastor of that parish noting permission and any previous religious education that was received.

In order to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation, it is necessary for the students to complete all work needed in preparation for each of these Sacraments. If a student plans to be confirmed when the sacrament of Confirmation is scheduled for our parish s/he must be a regular participant in the religious education program and have completed all requirements. Continuous enrollment is mandatory. Each grade level has specific criteria in the knowledge of the basic prayers and understandings of the teachings of their faith appropriate for their age level.

Attendance

Classes are held from September through May. A calendar is given to each student. Please put it in a prominent place and use it as a reference when you are making family plans.

Regular attendance is crucial for your child's religious formation. If your child is absent, it is expected that they will work with a parent and make up the lesson at home. Excessive absences could result in your child having to repeat the grade. Please limit absences to two a semester. Please let us know if you are having any trouble and we can make adjustments as necessary.

Student work from absences will be checked. Students requiring additional time to make up work from absences will attend the Make up class at the end of the year.

Late Arrival/ Early Dismissal

When students are on time and attend the entire session, classes run smoothly and everyone learns more. Since class times are short, it is extremely important that students arrive on time and are not pulled out of class early for other activities. All parents are to use front entrance for classes. Doors to the building will be locked 15 minutes after the start of the class and will reopen 10 minutes before the class is over.

If you must pick your child up early from class, please send a note to the teacher and they will have the child sent to the front door for early pickup.

Cell Phone Policy:

We understand that children may need to bring a cell phone with them to class each week. However, it has come to our attention that during class, use is cause for distraction within our classrooms. Therefore, upon entering the classroom all students will place their phones in a designated bin. Phones can be retrieved after class.

Program:

We follow the curriculum guidelines outlined by the Diocese of Scranton's Office of Religious Education. The textbooks are from Loyola Press: Finding God. The second grade class will use the Blessed: First Communion and Blessed: First Reconciliation book by Dynamic Catholic. Students will receive their textbooks at the beginning of the year and are expected to bring their textbooks to class each week. If a student loses their text book, you can purchase a replacement for \$25. We do not have texts to loan out. The student will not be given a second text until it is paid for. *Please note: 7th grade students will use their textbooks for 7th & 8th grade years.*

Safe Environment

As per the diocesan policy the required Safe Environment Lesson will be taught during the course of the Religious Education year. All teachers are trained to teach this curriculum, as has been diocesan policy for several years. Parents who wish to view the lesson plan for the specific grade level lesson can do so by visiting dioceseofscranton.org.

Parent Involvement

Long before your children were old enough for any formal religion program, they were already beginning to grow in faith. They had already been living and growing in the midst of a community of faith - their family. Faith filled moments permeate all of family life. From

Baptism to bedtime prayers to holiday traditions, faith is taught in families first. As parents, you are uniquely able to teach your children “in the practice of faith,” because you are yourselves persons of faith, living as a Christian in today’s world.

The Church views your role as parents in the religious formation of children as both a privilege and an obligation. When you presented your child to the Church for Baptism, you promised that you would undertake the responsibility “of training your child in the practice of faith.” This obligation and privilege extends to your participation in the Religious Education program with your children.

The Precepts of the Church provide all Catholic Christians a guide for practicing their faith. The Precepts of the Church invite us to:

- Attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
- Confess your sins at least once a year.
- Receive the Sacrament of Eucharist at least during the Easter Season.
- Observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
- Help to provide for the needs of the Church.

Parental Meetings:

Parents are required to attend the opening parent meeting. Additionally, two parents are asked to attend the two scheduled family meetings (retreats). Please see the student calendar for reference. Additionally, parents of students in the second grade will meet separately in preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion. Many meetings will be held throughout the year. It is important to watch for letters that will come home and listen for announcements in church. Parents may request meetings with the teachers or the Director of Religious Education, and teachers may ask to see the parents during religious education time.

Parents who are interested in volunteering to help their child’s class are welcomed to do so. Clearances will be required as per the Catechist Handbook.

Sacramental Preparation

First Communion and First Reconciliation preparation takes place in first and second grade. Because sacraments are part of our life in faith, parents will accompany their children on the journey by attending special parent sessions.

Confirmation formal preparation begins in 7th grade and is completed in 8th grade. First through eighth grades must be completed in order to receive Confirmation. Confirmation is the affirmation of growth in a mature Catholic faith and is an important rite of passage. Therefore, there are special sessions that parents are expected to attend in support of their child’s decision for the sacrament.

Mass Attendance

If we define catechesis as echoing the faith in one’s own life by sharing it with others, then Sunday Mass becomes the ultimate experience of such learning. There is nothing that we do as

“church,” that doesn’t have its origin in the Sunday Mass. For us the liturgy is the “source and summit” of our faith. It is what makes us truly Catholic.

In forming our children in this faith, it is essential that they experience weekly Mass. The transforming power of Eucharist, where Christ is truly present, cannot be taught in any classroom, but must be experienced by each individual as they grow in faith.

Mass schedule:

St. Mary’s of Dorrance is Saturday Vigil Mass at 5:30 PM, Sunday morning Mass at 9:00.

St. Jude is as follows: Saturday Vigil Mass at 4:00, Sunday Masses at 8:30 and 11am.

Class Expectations:

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. It is the student's responsibility to obtain and complete all work missed during an absence.

Students are expected to participate in lessons and discussions, listen to and show respect for instructors, aides, classmates, and guests. If the catechist must leave the teaching area, students are to remain seated and quiet, and continue working on their lesson. Catechists must try to obtain coverage if they must leave their instructional area for any reason.

Behavior Code

1. Students meet in their respective classrooms. They will maintain a quiet and prayerful attitude before, during, and after class.
2. When in class, students follow the instructors' directions and work to the best of their abilities to learn and participate in the lessons and activities.
3. Students are not to bring any dangerous or offensive items to class.
4. Students are to show courtesy to the instructor, aides, classmates, and guests by raising their hands and waiting to be recognized before speaking, and by listening when others are speaking.
5. If a guest enters the class, the students continue to work and read unless the guest has come to speak to them.
6. Students must be respectful of the items in the classroom and the desks. They must not touch any item that is not for use in Religious Ed. Any damage of an item will result in the family being responsible for its replacement.
7. Cell phones must be off and secured in the class bin or student bags.

If a problem arises with a student’s inappropriate behavior, the student will be spoken to by the teacher and/ or Director of Religious Education. The second time a problem with the student’s behavior occurs the parent/ guardian will be contacted. If the student’s inappropriate behavior continues, a parent/ guardian must accompany the student to the next class session and sit in on the class for that day.

Emergency Closing

If it is necessary to cancel classes on Sundays or Mondays, you will receive a text message. At St. Jude’s the FlockNote App will be utilized with text messages and emails sent out. St. Mary’s text messages are sent out by teachers. If Crestwood School District is closed or has an early dismissal, there will be no Religious Ed Class.

As winter weather is sometimes unpredictable, this system is not foolproof. It could be snowing at 5:30 PM and cover the roads by class time. As parents, please use your best judgement in these circumstances. Your child(ren) will not be penalized if you choose to keep them home in such instances in the name of safety.

Emergency Guidelines:

Everyone is protected against discrimination and has a privacy right. Medical information is confidential. Catechists must use appropriate caution when attending to all students' injuries. They will wear protective gloves whenever possible at the time of an injury, and will keep areas clean of bodily fluids to protect your children in case of emergency.

Student Security

The parish religious education program abides by the provision of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of the non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, we will provide the non-custodial parent with unofficial copies of records. 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 an official copy of the court order. (*Religious Education and the Law: A Handbook for Parish Catechetical Leaders*, p. 51)

Fees

No student will be turned away from receiving religious instruction due to finances. Please call the parish office if you would like information on payment assistance. This information is kept confidential.

St. Jude Communication:

Should a parent/ guardian need to consult with a teacher or the Director of Religious Education, please contact the parish center (474-6315 ext 228) or email tscanlan@stjc.org.

The St. Jude Religious Education Office utilizes the FlockNote App for important information, monthly newsletters, closings, emergencies, etc. If you are having any issues with receiving emails or text messages, please inform us.

St. Mary's Communication:

Catechists will provide their phone numbers to the parents so they may be contacted in case of an emergency and vice versa. In order to contact the parish office, please call 570-868-5855. You may also contact the Director of Religious Education via email at stacey.panas@gmail.com.

Records are kept concerning attendance, baptismal certificates, student enrollment forms, and parental permission slips. All records are kept strictly confidential.