

# St. Francis of Assisi Religious Education Program

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## PARENT HANDBOOK 2023-2024

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### ST. FRANCIS PHILOSOPHY

We, the faith community of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, believe that Religious Education is a process of initiation into the faith community of the Church.

**It [Religious Education] nurtures and prepares people to participate in the ministries of prayer and worship, building community, and service to the poor.**

*(The Christian Initiation of Children, Duggan & Kelly).*

We believe that a person comes to know Jesus and responds to God's message at home and in religious education faith sessions.

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The measure of the success of our educational ministry is how well it enables our children to hear the message of hope contained in the Gospel, to base their love and their service upon this message, and to achieve a vital personal relationship with Christ.

*(To Teach As Jesus Did, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).*

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# MISSION STATEMENT

Religious Education at St. Francis of Assisi is a process in which children:

- LEARN** the stories, beliefs, traditions and prayers of the Catholic Community.
- INTEGRATE** experiences of life and faith traditions in order to develop meaningful Christian lives.
- PARTICIPATE** in worship and acknowledge the symbols of the Catholic faith as celebrated in Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

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St Francis of Assisi Parish † Orland Park Illinois † 60467  
Contact Page

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# **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

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## **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

Emergency closings due to inclement weather or any other reason will be posted on the parish website [www.sfaorland.org](http://www.sfaorland.org) and [www.emergencyclosingcenter.com](http://www.emergencyclosingcenter.com). Go to either website and find out the closing status of St. Francis at anytime.

Families will be notified by telephone, email or, if possible, through notices in the various School Districts should the closing occur during the day. St. Francis will automatically close if Orland School District 135 closes due to inclement weather.

## **EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

In the event of a family emergency you may call (708) 460-0155 and speak to a member of the Catechetical staff or leave your name and number and someone will contact you. If you are unable to contact the RE office, please call the Church at (708) 460-0042 and follow the prompts for emergency calls.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN CUSTODY ISSUES**

St. Francis of Assisi RE Program assumes that both parents have equal access to their child, even if the parents are separated or divorced. The RE staff will permit either parent to have access to the child while at the Catechetical site, and will release the child from the site to either parent, or to a guardian unless provided with legal documentation that states otherwise. Parents/guardians should provide a copy of legal documentation to the Catechetical office for our file related to custody issues.

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## SECURITY PROCEDURES

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### **DROP-OFF/PICK-UP**

The inside doors to the St Francis Center are locked at all times. Children can be dropped off at the doors by the crosswalk **no earlier than 15 minutes** before the start of their religious education session, and a staff member or adult volunteer will greet your child and direct the child into the building where the child can sanitize their hands and go directly to faithroom. No adult except staff or registered volunteers will be allowed into the building during the RE session.

Parents/guardians may join the cars waiting in the dismissal line at the end of the RE session. No adults, siblings, caregivers, etc, will be allowed to wait outside the building for regular dismissal or for early dismissal. Parents will display family name in the window of their car and children will be called out for dismissal by family name.

### **LATE ARRIVALS**

The afternoon session begins at 4:30pm and ends at 6:00pm. Saturday morning begins at 8:30am and ends at 10:00am. **All inside doors are locked at those times.** Children dropped off after session has begun will be allowed into the building following arrival guidelines.

### **EARLY DISMISSAL**

A parent or guardian may call (708) 460-0155 upon arrival and inform us of early dismissal. Every car must have family name displayed in the window. Staff/registered volunteer will then call child down for early dismissal. Adult will wait for child outside in their car.

### **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

Individual situations that would necessitate an adult accompanying a child into the building should be discussed with the Director of Religious Education for approval prior to the RE session.

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

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### **1. TO CREATE A WELCOMING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BASED ON THE GOSPEL OF JESUS**

#### **REGISTRATION POLICY**

Registration includes completing and signing the registration form, updating the emergency file and, for new families, submitting a copy of each child's baptismal certificate. Tuition is due at the time of registration. If payment is a problem, the parent should contact the Director of Religious Education to make payment arrangements.

Registration for new and returning families is at the Religious Education (RE) office located in the St. Francis Center. Registration packets are made available to currently enrolled families in the spring each year and should be returned no later than your child's last RE Session.

Children who move into the parish mid-year may enroll in RE for the current year if they are transferring from another RE program or Catholic School. Children, who have had no previous religious education and move in mid-year, will be enrolled for the next school year.

#### **SESSION SCHEDULE AND LOCATION**

Religious Education sessions are held for grades 1-8 in the St. Francis Center located at 15010 S. Wolf Rd, which is at the western end of the campus, on top of the hill. RE sessions are scheduled, for alternating weeks from September through May, for Grades 1-8 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the afternoons and Saturday morning. There is also a digital online program for those unable to attend in-person sessions.

A list of scheduled sessions for your child's class is included in your Family Packet. The full RE Calendar can be found at [www.sfaorland.org](http://www.sfaorland.org) by clicking on the "View Calendar" button.



## **2. TO OFFER YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE A COMMUNITY WHERE RELATIONSHIPS MAY BE FORMED AND WHERE THEY CAN GENUINELY GROW IN FRIENDSHIP, TRUST AND PRAYER.**

### **ATTENDANCE**

Children should attend sessions regularly in order to provide a continuity of religious education and faith formation, and to develop a sense of Catholic identity.

Absences are reported by calling the RE office at (708) 460-0155 and following the telephone instructions. Parents will be contacted if there are unreported absences.

In the event of an early dismissal, the parent/guardian and or other persons designated to receive your child must have a family name card displayed in their car window. Early dismissal authorization should be called in by parent.

Excessive tardiness and absences will result in a meeting with the Religious Education Director.

The parish website contains information on current lessons and homework. The parish website, <http://www.sfaorland.org/religious-education.html>, for information on a missed faith session. Children are expected to complete any missing assignments at home and be prepared for the next RE faith session.

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Children are responsible for bringing all required materials to each faith session. These materials include all books and assignments.

Children should respond with respect and be courteous toward catechists, office aides, other RE volunteers, and other parish ministers involved with the RE program.

Children should respect each other, and respond in a kind and compassionate and Christian manner to any child they encounter in the RE program.

Children should respect the property of St. Francis of Assisi Center and Church, as well as the property of any child or adult involved with the program. Any damages will be the child and the family responsibility.

Children are expected to attend and participate at Sunday Mass with their family, especially their specific grade level Masses, as well as Holy Days of Obligation. Viewing video Masses online is acceptable.

Children are not allowed to chew gum, wear hats or cleats inside the Church or the St. Francis Center.

Children who are absent should access the parish website, [Religious Ed Webpages](#), or contact the Religious Ed Office for missed lessons or homework.

### **3. TO ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN LITURGY AND SACRAMENTS**

#### **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Celebration of the sacraments is a time when we recognize the presence of God in our lives in a special way. Children and their parents participate in sacramental preparation programs and celebrations within the parish community without preference to program or school.

Parent/Guardian/Child meetings are designed to provide parents/guardians with faith formation in order to minister to the religious experience and faith development of the children. These meetings provide parents with the opportunity to develop and build community with other parish families experiencing the sacramental process. Most meetings will be livestreamed. A link will be emailed to parents.

#### **RECONCILIATION**

All children receiving religious instruction in the Archdiocese of Chicago are required to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation prior to First Eucharist. The preparation process focuses on the understanding of God's love and the reception of that love in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Please refer to the Eucharist Parent Handbook for more information.

The sacrament becomes the focus of the program again in fourth grade when the child is better able to identify and discuss the moral aspects of living a Christian life and the importance of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

#### **EUCHARIST**

First Eucharist preparation and celebration includes all children of the parish who are eligible to receive the sacrament. Handouts will be included at the First Eucharist Parent Meeting for further information on preparation requirements.

## **CONFIRMATION**

Confirmation is received in Grade 8 as part of a two-year preparation process beginning in Grade 7 that is designed to integrate Catholic Tradition, Catholic Social Teaching, Prayer and Spirituality with the daily living experience of today's young people.

## **4. TO FOSTER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

### **SUNDAY ENVELOPES**

Every family receives contribution envelopes when they are registered in the parish which support the stewardship values of Time, Talent, and Treasure. The children are taught about the value of the gifts that God has given to them and their responsibility to use those gifts in service to others. Families are encouraged to register for online giving to support the stewardship efforts of the parish. Online contributions ensures that St Francis is able to provide ministry to parishioners and those in need.

### **CAPITAL PLEDGE DRIVE**

Parents with children in the religious education and sacramental preparation programs are asked to support the parish and the Capital Pledge Drive, as an example to their children of living out their stewardship responsibilities and commitment to the St. Francis community.

### **CATHOLIC ACTION**

St. Francis sponsors a number of outreach events during the year. Families are encouraged to plan for these activities and to participate fully. The children are taught at an early age that living a Christian life means sharing our personal time, talent and treasure with not only our families, but also with those who need it most.

## **5. TO ASSIST PARENTS TO PREPARE THEIR CHILDREN TO CELEBRATE AND RECEIVE THE SACRAMENTS**

### **PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION**

Family participation models a living, conscious and active Christian faith and reinforces the values and attitudes for living that faith. Families that enroll in the St. Francis Religious Education program sign a commitment in which they agree to act in accordance with these values and attitudes.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

Parents are encouraged to assist in the RE program and sacramental process. There are a number of events and activities that require additional hands now and then. Parental/guardian involvement in the sacramental process role models Catholic Identity.

### **CATECHESIS**

Parents/guardians are a child's first teacher. Children imitate what they see and hear. Parents/guardians are expected to be a role model to their children of Christian response and Catholic identity. This requires weekly Mass, Holy Days of Obligation and other obligations of our faith.

### **PRAYER**

Prayer is important in developing our relationship with God. Parents should teach their children the Mass responses and the prayers that are a mainstay of Catholic life. The responsibility of the parent is to pass on the faith by incorporating what the child learns in the faith session with their daily life.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN/CHILD MEETINGS**

Sacramental preparation incorporates sessions that are meant to develop an understanding of, and provide a foundation for, reception of the sacraments. It is important that the parent/guardian places the highest priority on attendance at these preparation sessions or viewing instructional videos.

## **6. TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP VALUES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING**

### **OUTREACH PROJECTS**

Stewardship is an important part of the Religious Education program. Children are taught the importance of giving of themselves to support the community that is Church. The concepts of Time, Talent and Treasure apply to everyone who believes in God. The children are provided with opportunities to live out their faith by helping others who are most in need. Outreach Projects related to each grade level mass, and to the liturgical seasons, are assigned and the children are asked to contribute toys, food, clothing and other items that are given to organizations for distribution to those in need.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Discipline is teaching the child to control his/her behavior and to respect the rules of the faith community. Respect is the key element to a disciplined environment. The catechist in charge will handle minor discipline action. It is understood that obscene language, insolent behavior, bullying and any other serious misconduct will not be tolerated.

The catechist will refer discipline problems of a serious nature to the administrative staff. In cases where lack of self-discipline is extreme, the parents will be called and may have to meet with the Director of Religious Education.

Personal property brought into the center will be inspected if there is reasonable belief that the individual is violating the rules, regulations and policies of the St. Francis of Assisi Catechetical program.

Cell phone usage is not permitted during faith sessions. Cell phones will be held until the end of the session by staff, if used by students during faith session.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARD**

The Religious Education Board is comprised of parishioners who serve for a three-year term. The Board meets quarterly to listen, support, and advise the Director of Religious Education and the Pastor regarding curriculum, discipline, building and maintenance and financial issues that may occur during the course of the year. The members of the Board currently have children in the parish or sacramental preparation programs.

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*St. Francis of Assisi Parish Religious Education program is operated under the auspices of the Catholic Bishop of Chicago, a corporation sole, in the Archdiocese of Chicago.*

*Insofar as is reasonable, St. Francis of Assisi will make accessible its Catechetical programs to persons with disabilities. The parish will assist with alternate options for catechesis should a person be unable to participate in the regular program of catechesis.*

*Statements in this handbook are subject to amendment with or without notice. The religious education program will attempt to keep you informed of all changes as soon as practical; however, some changes might be made immediately due to unforeseen circumstance.*

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## **CURRICULUM**

The St. Francis of Assisi catechetical program provides for the education, formation, and sacramental preparation for children, teens, and families of the parish in accordance with guidelines and recommendations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### **GRADES 1-8**

The St. Francis of Assisi catechetical program provides for the education, formation, and sacramental preparation for children, teens, and families of the parish in accordance with guidelines and recommendations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Sadlier publisher's series *Christ in us*, provides support for the curriculum that encompasses scripture, doctrine, and liturgy. These three important elements are interwoven throughout each grade level. This balanced approach ensures that our children and teens come to know, love, and live the rich heritage of faith we are proud to profess in Christ Jesus.

The doctrines are drawn from the four pillars of faith as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These important teachings are developmentally presented to help our children and teens recognize the way Catholics believe, worship, pray, live, and study scripture makes a difference in their lives.

The [Christ in Us website](#) for Grades 1-8 acknowledges that religious education and faith formation is much more than just the printed materials the children and families receive in the catechetical and sacramental programs. The site provides resources for additional study for the parent and child.

Books and materials for the year are provided at the initial faith formation sessions or as directed by the religious education office. Children are expected to bring all materials and books to each session, and to be prepared for each faith session.

The home is the primary source for faith formation. St. Francis of Assisi expects parents to be the example of faith in their homes for their children and teens. Family commitment to daily prayer and weekly Mass attendance should be part of the family ritual of prayer. Videos of daily Masses are available on the St. Francis of Assisi website, [www.sfaorland.org](http://www.sfaorland.org). Many of our traditions at each grade level were developed to assist parents/guardians in achieving those goals. Please review homework responsibilities and check the RE website regularly for schedule information, lesson summaries, and suggested activities for family participation.



# PARENT AGREEMENT

PLEASE READ AND SIGN BELOW. RETURN SIGNED PAGE AT THE **FIRST** RE SESSION WITH YOUNGEST CHILD.

St. Francis Parish and the parents/guardians of the children enrolled in Religious Education (RE) are committed to work together in the process of Religious Education, namely, to initiate the children into the faith community of the Church; assist the children in coming to know Jesus and respond to His message; to nurture and prepare them to participate in the ministries of prayer and worship, building community, and service to the poor.

## Parents/guardians are asked to

- Send their children on a **REGULAR** and **CONSISTANT** basis to RE sessions (or regularly and consistently complete Remote lessons)
- Attend weekend Mass or view Livestream
- Support the parish through financial offerings and sharing of **TIME** and **TALENT**
- Attend all parent meetings or view Livestream
- Complete all requested at-home parent/child activities.

**This handbook spells out, in detail, the commitment of the parish. By signing this AGREEMENT, I am confirming that I have read this handbook and understand the process and requirements of our parish RE programs, as well as my commitment to carry out my responsibility to my child/children.**

**Please sign below:**

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**Parents/Guardians Signatures**

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**Print Last Name**

**Date**