

**ST JAMES RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION PROGRAM**

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**FAMILY**

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*Enlisting Witnesses for Jesus Christ*



St James Religious Education Program

309 S Stewart Road

Liberty, MO 64068

816-781-4343 ext 206

Dear Religious Education family,

We welcome you and your children to another year of religious education at St James. We're looking forward to another great year of learning, fellowship and developing a deeper faith for ourselves and our children.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has declared the theme for this catechetical year to be "Enlisting Witnesses for Jesus Christ." This year's theme invites us to reflect on the role each person plays, by virtue of their baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. Parents are the primary guiding force in their children's lives — we are here to support you in that task.

Attendance is very important for all of our offerings — weekly classes, parent meetings, special events — but your child can't benefit from what we have to offer if they're not here.

Regular attendance each week offers more benefits than just learning the material presented — your child is forming relationships with their peers and with their church. We want your child to reap the benefits of belonging to a community of faith. Remember, too, that coming together each week to listen to God's word and share in the Eucharist is an essential part of our faith.

We're all looking forward to another wonderful year!

Cecilia Richardson

Director of Religious Education

# **Program Policies**

## **First Day of Classes**

On the first day, we ask parents to accompany their children for our kickoff Family Day. We will have activities for the children and for parents, and a chance for parents to meet each of their child's catechists. Plan to spend the first day with your child.

## **Class Time & Dismissal**

Classes on Sunday mornings begin at 9:00 and end at 10:30. Classes on Wednesday evenings begin at 6:30 pm and end at 8:00 pm. On Sunday mornings, Pre-K students go directly to their classrooms, while the K-5 students meet in the gym. Preschool students are dismissed in their classrooms at 10:25, older students at 10:30. All students should be picked up by their parent or another trusted adult at the classroom door. For the safety of all our children, as our parking lot has become increasingly hazardous, **ALL students departing the building must be accompanied by an adult.**

## **Volunteers**

Our program is successful solely because of the time, talents and effort of all of our volunteers. We have one of the warmest & most welcoming communities you will find. Please check your registration form for areas in which you could add your talents to the rest of our faith community. If you don't think you could be effective in a classroom, we still have plenty of other activities where you could shine.

## Attendance

Consistent attendance gives your child the tools to have a value-filled spiritual life. Due to the shortness of our term and the amount of material each class must cover, our catechists have a very tight schedule and can't backtrack for those who missed the previous week. Of course, we all have understandable occasions when a class must be missed, but everyone benefits if those occasions are kept to a minimum. If there is a reason why your child will miss class on a regular basis, please talk with the catechists so they can help you keep your child current. Your commitment on your child's behalf to give them a solid education in their faith will reap many rewards for both you and your child.



## Inclement Weather Policy

"Parents should use their best judgment" is our overriding policy. If the weather makes you uncomfortable, please don't travel in conditions you aren't sure you can safely navigate. For those enrolled in Sunday morning classes, if we have to cancel classes, you will receive an email to the email address you provided at registration. For those enrolled in Wednesday evening classes, we will use the Liberty Public Schools as our guide—if your child did not have school that day, we will not have class that night. We will also post a message on the RE office phone, **781-4343 ext 208.**

## **Textbook & Website**

We use the **Finding God** textbook series from Loyola Press. Loyola also offers a wonderful internet resource, **[www.findinggod.com](http://www.findinggod.com)** which has a Parents section with lesson plans for each of the grades & chapters. If your child needs to miss a session, you can check with the catechist to find out what material will be covered, and then do the lesson at home so that your child stays current with their classmates.

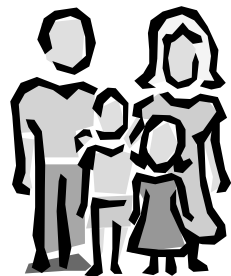
## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

Parish officials, including Directors, teachers, volunteers and non-professional personnel are required by Missouri law to report or cause to be reported, any actual and/or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to the Division of Family Services.

## **CIRCLE OF GRACE PROGRAM**

Our diocese uses the Circle of Grace program for children's personal safety. This program teaches children skills that will help keep them safe from dangerous or abusive situations. Children also learn to ask for help when they need it in any situation.

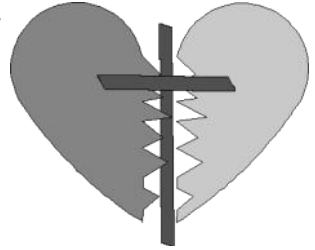
Children learn more about and are more likely to follow these guides when they have multiple opportunities to practice and talk about safety with their family.



# **Sacramental Preparation**

## **First Reconciliation & Communion**

Generally speaking, children begin preparing to receive these sacraments in the second grade. However, parents are the best judge of when a child is ready to receive and able to understand the sacraments' impact. Our diocese requires that children have completed at least one year of religious education before beginning sacrament preparation. This gives the child a base of general understanding. Preparation for receiving both sacraments (Reconciliation and Eucharist) is done primarily by the parents in the home—underscoring our belief that parents are the first and best educators.



We begin preparation for Reconciliation in the fall with a parent meeting offered on 2 different dates to better accommodate parents' schedules. We do respectfully require that all parents who wish to have their child receive the sacrament attend two (2) parent meetings—one for Reconciliation and one for Communion. We post the dates & times of these meetings in the bulletin, on the calendar and in the newsletter emails that every family receives. At the first meeting, parents have the opportunity to purchase the set of books that you will use with your child, as well as have a quick "refresher" course over the sacrament. We are here to be your resource and your support for this important time in your child's life. After you have had time to work with your child, you will be able to schedule, using the Signup Genius link, your child's "readiness" interview with either Fr. Mike or Fr Timothy.

These are group interviews and very friendly & low-key. We ask that at least one parent accompany your child to the interview (as an observer, not a participant). We celebrate the sacrament with communal penance services in November & December for the entire family as well as the child.

We prepare for First Communion in a similar manner. We begin the process in January with the a parent meeting. Readiness interviews are scheduled as for Reconciliation, as well as your selection of your preferred Mass date & time. We celebrate First Communions at all of the Masses for four weekends, beginning after Easter. In the spring we have a bread-baking retreat for all children preparing for First Communion.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: IF YOUR CHILD WAS NOT BAPTISED HERE AT ST JAMES, YOU WILL NEED TO PROVIDE A COPY OF YOUR CHILD'S BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A COPY, YOU WILL HAVE TO CONTACT THE BAPTISING PARISH AND HAVE THEM SEND A COPY. PLEASE ALLOW ENOUGH TIME TO COMPLETE THIS STEP.**

*\*If your child has not been baptized, please contact Cecilia Richardson regarding the Sacraments of Initiation for your child. \**



## **Discipline Policy**

We ask all our students to sign a behavior contract signifying their compliance with our standards of expected behavior. Students are expected to show respect for their teachers, respect for other students, respect for our facilities and respect for themselves. They are to participate in all activities and lessons in a positive and constructive manner. Students who consistently fail to meet these minimum standards, and who show no improvement upon parental involvement, may be asked to leave the program. It should be noted that our catechists are volunteers from the parish community and most are not professional teachers trained to deal with extremely disruptive behavior in the classroom.

That said, discipline is generally not a problem. We ask parents to be responsive to their child's catechist when told of classroom misbehavior. On our part, we will work with parents whenever possible to help their child get the most out of their RE experience. Parents and catechists share the same goal of teaching & inspiring our children to a love of God and an appreciation of our faith.





## **WHAT DO WE EXPECT OF OUR PARENTS?**

Parents have the primary responsibility for their children's religious education. This is a duty that we know parents take seriously. Religious Education classes are provided by our parish to help parents in this task and to supplement the children's basic faith formation which occurs within the home environment. It is important for parents to:

- Help your child arrive on time and attend class regularly each week.
- Help your child to remember to take any books or folders to class each week.
- Follow arrival and dismissal procedures as outlined in this handbook.
- Read all materials and notices sent home with your child. Read the weekly family newsletter.
- Take your child to Mass with you regularly. *Magnifikid* magazine is a very useful tool to help your child understand what is happening at Mass. (Check with the RE Office to subscribe.)
- Engage your child in discussion of the topics covered in class.
- Keep in contact with your child's catechist by telephone or by occasionally stopping by your child's classroom.
- Support the catechist by reinforcing positive classroom reports and by cooperating with the discipline expectations.

## **WHAT DO WE EXPECT OF OUR PARENTS? (CON'T)**

- Practice our traditional Catholic prayers and worship together as a family. Pray together, attend Mass together.
- Attend parent meetings and sacramental preparation sessions.
- Notify the Religious Education office of any special needs your child has regarding learning, behavior, emotional stress, etc.
- Be available to help with special classroom events or program projects.
- Be involved with and attend whole parish events such as Family Days, Soup Suppers, etc.



## HOPE Program

The HOPE program is a way to support our parish that doesn't actually cost us anything at all. All that we have to do is purchase gift cards to the merchants where we shop normally. You use the gift cards in place of using a debit card or writing a check—you purchase, for example, a \$100 Price Chopper card, take it to the store and buy \$100 worth of groceries....but because the merchants sell those cards at a discount to us, the parish has received 5% of your grocery tab. Cards are available for most of the usual places we shop, and many others can be ordered. It's a great way to have our area merchants support the wonderful things going on here at St James!



## Lenten Soup Suppers

Now a much-loved annual event, we are again hosting a series of Soup Suppers on several Wednesdays in Lent. Families in various grades will be asked to volunteer to bring a crock of soup or a loaf of bread to share. Each evening, the children in the "host" grades will participate in the prayer service, help serve the soups & breads, and help clean up. We sponsor a charity each year and ask those attending to donate in lieu of paying for dinner.

These evenings are open to the parish and co-sponsored by our faith formation programs. Expect to hear more about this as we get closer to the dates. These suppers were always a **big** hit, so be sure to plan to save those evenings on your calendar!



**Important Information:**

Catechist's Name

Phone #

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Director of Religious Education:**

(Preschool through 5th grade)

Cecilia Richardson

781-4343 ext 208

**Director of Youth Ministry:**

(6th grade through high school)

Denise Whelan

781-4343 ext 210



**Fees**

**Preschool through 8th Grade:**

\$55.00 for one child,

\$100.00 for two children,

\$125.00 for three or more children

**Sacramental Prep:**

Cost of materials, usually @\$20.00 each

If fees present a financial hardship, please contact the RE office. Our programs are open to all parishioners, regardless of their ability to pay.