

Parent Handbook
2009-2010

St. John the Apostle Religious Education Program
1805 Penbrook Terrace
Linden, NJ 07036-5346

Telephone: (732) 388-1253
Website: www.sjanj.net/ccd.html
E-mail: mangelo@sjanj.net

Classes held in the Parish School at
Valley Rd. and Ridgeview Ter., Clark, NJ

Mondays: 7-8:15 p.m., grades 1-8
Tuesdays: 3:45-5:00 p.m., grades K-5
Wednesdays: 7-8:15 p.m., grades 1-8

Table of Contents

<u>Section Title</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Purpose and Use of this Handbook	3
Philosophy	3
Parental Responsibility	3
Weekly Mass	3
Mass Schedule	3
Sacrament of Reconciliation	4
Registration	4
Fees	4
Sacramental Preparation	4
Parent Participation	5
Parent-Catechist Meetings	5
Report Cards	6
Religious Education/Home Communication	6
Emergency Closings	6
Attendance	6
Required Books and Lost Books	7
Students' Code of Conduct	7
Dress Code	7
Discipline Policy	7
Volunteers and Visitors	8
Health and Safety	8
Dismissal	8
Parking Lot Safety	9
Non-Discrimination Policy	9
Telephone Index	9
Parish Staff	9
Religious Education Staff	9

Purpose and Use of this Handbook

This handbook has been prepared for the benefit of all who participate in the Religious Education Programs at St. John the Apostle Parish. The handbook exists to foster the efficient operation of these programs by providing pertinent information. This handbook is not intended to and should not be considered to create any additional rights for students, parents, or guardians. In appropriate circumstances, the Director of Religious Education (DRE) and/or the Religious Education Program Coordinator have the discretion to take actions other than those specified in the handbook.

This handbook is subject to change at any time when determined to be necessary by the Program Coordinator and/or the Director of Religious Education. If changes are made to the Handbook, parents will be notified promptly.

Philosophy

In the Religious Education Program at St. John the Apostle Parish, we see all children and all of the members of their families as Children of God. We see ourselves as assistants to parents in their God-given role as the primary educators of their children in the Catholic Faith. **The Religious Education Program exists to help parents find the resources to educate their children in what it means to be Catholic and in fostering in their children a love of and a relationship with Christ and His Church.**

To this end, the Religious Education Program at St. John the Apostle Parish seeks to provide children with opportunities for Church Visits, Mass, and Reconciliation when available to supplement the children's home and classroom experience.

Parental Responsibility

By enrolling their children in the Religious Education Program at St. John the Apostle, parents are expected to participate with their children in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the Sunday Obligation as well as for Holy Days of Obligation. Parents are also expected to regularly participate in the Sacramental Life of the Church (specifically, Penance and the Eucharist) and to include their children in these Sacramental celebrations as the children are eligible to participate in them.

Weekly Mass

All students in the Religious Education Program at St. John the Apostle Parish are expected to participate in the Sunday Mass. Religious Education Classes cannot and do not substitute for the Sunday Liturgy. See the section entitled "Parental Responsibility" above. The commitment to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation is especially important in the years in which a child is preparing to receive a sacrament.

Mass Schedule

For Sunday Obligation: Saturday Evening: 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.;
Sunday: 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12 noon, Youth Mass: 7:00 p.m.

In General for Holy Days of Obligation: Eve of the feast: 7:00 p.m.
Day of the Feast: 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 12 noon, and 7:00 p.m.

***Always check the church bulletin or the parish website for the most up-to-date listing!!!!

Holy Days of Obligation in the United States:

January 1: Mary, Mother of God, 40 Days after Easter: Ascension Thursday, August 15: Assumption of Mary
November 1: All Saints' Day, December 8: Immaculate Conception, December 25: Christmas Day

Sacrament of Reconciliation

A good schedule for receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation is once a month. We pay our various bills on a monthly basis and it's a good idea to "settle our account with God," so to speak, on a monthly basis as well. Parents should bring their children to the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly once they have made their First Confession (usually during the second grade year). The Confessions Schedule is as follows:

Sunday-Saturday after the 7:00 Mass
and Saturday afternoon from 1:00-2:00.

Alternative times can be scheduled by appointment with one of the parish priests by calling the Rectory at (908) 486-6363.

Registration

Registration is conducted on a first come, first serve, rolling basis. Forms are available in April and are sent home with currently enrolled students before being made available to others. You are advised to return the registration as soon as possible after receiving it. Families registering by June 30, 2009 were given their first choice of class day. Maximum class size is 17 students.

The last week to start classes is October 5, 2009.

Required paperwork:

1. Completed registration form
2. Copies of the child's sacramental certificates (baptismal, communion)
3. Supply a Transfer letter if your child has completed Religious Education in another parish or school. The previous parish's religious education office will usually send one directly to St. John's by parental request.
4. Submit Registration Fee-*If your family is experiencing a financial difficulty, please contact the Religious Education Office.*

Fees

Registered Parishioners of St. John the Apostle Parish: \$75/1 child \$125/2 children \$150/3 or more

Non-Parishioners: \$150 per child

Homeschool fee: \$40/1 child \$65/2 children \$90/3 or more (*homeschooling is permitted for all eight grades*)

Late fee (registration received after June 30): \$10 per family

Sacrament Fees:

First Penance/First Holy Communion: \$40

Confirmation: \$60

These fees are used to cover the costs associated with the sacrament preparation years, including but not limited to: Bibles, candles, retreats, and printing.

Sacramental Preparation

In order to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Penance for the first time, First Holy Communion, or Confirmation the following requirements must be met:

1. The child must be baptized and have a baptismal certificate on file in the Religious Education Office (please call the Religious Education Office for information on baptism for a school-aged child).
2. The child must participate in the Religious Education Programs here at St. John the Apostle for two years. "Parish Hopping" for sacraments is discouraged.
3. Students must have a basic understanding of the course content.
4. Families must attend Mass every Sunday.

First Reconciliation:

In addition to the requirements above, parents must participate in one of three scheduled First Reconciliation parent meetings. This requirement is waived if you have had a child make his or her first confession at St. John's in 2006, 2007, or 2008.

First Holy Communion:

In addition to the requirements numbered 1-4 above, parents must participate in one of three scheduled First Holy Communion parent meetings. This requirement is waived if you have had a child make his or her First Holy Communion at St. John's in 2007, 2008, or 2009.

Confirmation:

In addition to the requirements numbered 1-4 above, the following conditions must be met:

1. Students must attend all eight years of religious education prior to confirmation.
2. Students must attend the Upper Room Confirmation Sessions scheduled on Thursday evenings during Lent.
3. Parents must participate in one of three Confirmation parent meetings. This requirement is waived if you have had a child make his or her Confirmation at St. John's in 2007, 2008, or 2009.
4. Parents and students must both agree to a covenant with St. John the Apostle Parish. The family's terms of this covenant are:
 - a. Participation in an Inscription Mass.
 - b. Successful completion of an interview with a priest of the parish. Interviews are scheduled by appointment in late January and early February. Students can be questioned on the curriculum from 7th and 8th grades and the red Confirmation Workbook.
 - c. Completion of red Confirmation Workbook to be collected by the priest at the interview. This workbook is intended to be completed at home with the parents.
 - d. Participation in the Confirmation Retreat.
 - e. Completion of 20 hours of community service by the day of the Confirmation Retreat.
 - f. Participation in the Confirmation Rehearsal in the week immediately prior to Confirmation.

Students who meet all of the terms outlined above will be confirmed at St. John the Apostle Parish in the spring of 2010.

Parent Participation in the Religious Education Program

Parents are expected to be involved in all aspects of the Religious Education Program at St. John the Apostle Parish. We welcome any help and constructive criticism. Parents are always welcome in the Religious Education classes and are encouraged to see their children's catechists with any concerns or inquiries. Full participation in parent meetings, retreats, and all activities is expected.

Parent-Catechist Meetings

In the last week of January, we will conduct Parent-Catechist Conferences. Meetings take place during regularly scheduled class time. As such, children will not have class at that time. Report cards will be handed out at this meeting. Report cards must be returned the following week so they may be reused for the end of the year.

Report Cards

Report Cards are distributed in January and in May. Please return your child's Report Card to his or her catechist the next time class meets. If the report card is not returned in January, one cannot be sent home in May.

We believe that a good system of reviewing a child's progress is one that:

- Fosters communication between the catechist, child, and parent regarding the child's growth and needs.
- Builds the child's self-respect and self-concept
- Lets parents and students know that we perceive each student as a unique individual.

Religious Education/Home Communication

All students should have a folder for CCD. The folder is to be brought back and forth each week, containing any work or homework for class. Information to go home to parents will be sent in this folder. **Please check your child's folder each week to see if any information has been sent home.**

Emergency Closings

It is sometimes necessary to cancel Religious Education classes due to inclement weather. Any time St. John the Apostle School is closed (the parish school follows closings for the Clark Township Schools), Religious Education classes are cancelled.

In the case of an emergency cancellation, parents will be notified by the catechist or by the Religious Education Office.

Information about emergency closings can also be obtained by calling the Religious Education Office answering machine at (732) 388-1253.

Attendance

Regular attendance in Religious Education classes is mandatory for students to be promoted to the next grade level. Parents are required to report their child(ren)'s absences by calling the Religious Education Office at (732) 388-1253. If there is a worksheet to be completed, it will be mailed home or sent home with a classmate.

Any child who is absent from seven (7) classes during the course of the year will have missed **one-fourth** of the course content taught. There are three options for such a student:

1. Make up the missing work as prescribed by the catechist and submit assignments as required *during the school year*.
2. Make up the missing hours and assignments during the summer.
3. Repeat the grade.

We believe that a candidate is more prepared to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation if he or she has learned the key concepts at each grade level. It is imperative that students attend Religious Education for grades 1-8 in order to be adequately prepared to receive the grace given by God in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Required Books and Lost Books

The Religious Education Program at St. John the Apostle Church employs two curricula from Loyola Press. Kindergarten uses Loyola Press' God Loves Us program. Grades 1-8 use Loyola Press' Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts for their curriculum.

Students in grades 1-8 should bring their folders and textbooks to class each week. Students in grades 6-8 should also bring their Bibles every week.

Lost Textbooks cost \$15 to replace. **Lost Bibles** cost \$5 to replace.

Students' Code of Conduct

Students must always show respect for all of their brothers and sisters in Christ. The list of our brothers and sisters in Christ includes, but is not limited to: catechists, other volunteers, fellow students, parish staff, and parishioners.

Lack of respect toward persons or property or irresponsibility (i.e.: consistently forgetting books, incomplete assignments, etc.) will not be tolerated. Students are expected to maintain this standard of behavior:

- No student may enter a classroom without the supervision of a catechist or aide.
- Heelys sneakers are not permitted on the St. John the Apostle Parish Property. Any students who use the wheels on their Heelys will have their wheels confiscated.
- No running at any time, especially on or near stairs.
- No shouting or profane language.
- No gum chewing.
- Students are not permitted to congregate near open or closed windows.
- Students are not permitted to travel the St. John the Apostle campus alone. They must always be accompanied by another student, or by a volunteering adult.

Dress Code

It is expected that students will dress in a way appropriate to the setting and content of Religious Education classes. Appropriate means:

- No short shorts or tank tops
- No clothing items containing profane language or pictures or slogans which are at odds with Church teaching
- No gang paraphernalia
- No hats/caps are to be worn indoors.

Discipline Policy

“Discipline” comes from the Latin words *disciplina* which means “learning” or “teaching,” and *discipulus*, which means pupil. Our discipline policy seeks to stay true to its Latin roots by teaching the student the correct way to choose his or her actions.

Because of the limited time students spend in the Religious Education classrooms every week, catechists understand that it is of utmost importance that students stay in the classroom. In the event that a child causes a disturbance that a catechist is unable to resolve, the following steps are taken:

1. The child is escorted to the Religious Education Office by a hall monitor or teacher's aide to spend the remainder of the class time in the office.
2. The Religious Education Coordinator will talk with the child, considering the child's point of view. The child will be given a think sheet to help him or her consider the problem from all sides.

3. The Religious Education Coordinator will attempt to help the child to find a reasonable solution to the problem.
4. The Religious Education Coordinator, the catechist, or both will contact the parent to make him or her aware of the situation.
5. If a child is sent to the office a second time, the Religious Education Coordinator, the catechist, and the parent will work together with the child to come to a solution to the problem.
6. If a child is sent to the office for a third time, the Pro-rated tuition will be refunded and the child may be tutored at home with the parent. The child will not return to the Religious Education classroom that year.

Volunteers and Visitors

All persons over the age of 18 who intend to work as a volunteer in the Religious Education Program must interview with the Religious Education Coordinator, pass a criminal background check, and must complete the Virtus “Protecting God’s Children” child sexual abuse training. Volunteers who are sanctioned to work with the children of the parish wear a name tag as identification.

All visitors to the Religious Education Program must check in at the Religious Education Office before proceeding to a classroom. If a parent is coming to pick up a child early, he or she must go to the Religious Education Office before proceeding to the classroom.

All of the catechists, aides, and hall monitors are unpaid volunteers. Students must show respect for these men and women not only for giving so generously of their time, but most importantly because that volunteer is the student’s brother or sister in Our Lord Jesus Christ. Any disrespect or misconduct toward a volunteer at any function or activity will be dealt with according to the discipline policy.

Health and Safety

If a child becomes ill during class time, a teacher’s aide or hall monitor will escort the child to the Religious Education Office, which will contact the parent by telephone. No child will be permitted to leave the school building until being picked up by their parent or guardian.

Since we may need to get in touch with parents/guardians during Religious Education time, we require a cell phone number for parents or an emergency contact number. Please also provide us with any pertinent medical information of which the catechist and /or Religious Education Coordinator need to be aware. Such conditions include: food allergies, asthma, learning disabilities, etc. This information is held in the strictest confidence.

Dismissal Policy

All Students are dismissed on the parking lot side of the building. The reason for this is: the parking lot side has better lighting and there are more people on that side of the building. Please do not ask your child to exit from any other door. The hall monitors will not permit children to exit from the street side of the building.

Parents of children in grades K-5 (or the adult responsible for their transportation) must meet their children at their classrooms. Any children who are not picked up within 5 minutes of dismissal will wait for their parents or other responsible adult in the Religious Education Office. Students will not be permitted to leave class early to pick up siblings. No child in grades K-5 should be picking up other children. Requests for exceptions to this policy for older children and walkers must be done in writing and will be considered on a case by case basis. No exceptions will be made by telephone.

Parking Lot Safety

It is imperative for everyone's safety that all adults driving into the parking lot at St. John's observe the following rules:

- Observe the placement of the barricade in the driveway at the Valley Rd. entrance. Drive around the buildings and enter on the Crescent Parkway or Ridgeview Terrace entrances.
- **DO NOT DRIVE AROUND THE BARRICADE ON THE VALLEY RD. ENTRANCE.** The extra minute it takes to drive around and park in a lined space may mean the difference between health and serious injury for someone in the parking lot. Please remember that you are coming to a church, not to a football game. Be conscious of the children and adults around you.
- Everyone MUST park in a lined space. Religious Education Volunteers in the parking lot will kindly ask you to move your car if you do not park in a lined space. Parking in lined spaces will ease the traffic congestion in the parking lot.

It is our sincere hope that we do not have to involve the local police in enforcing these rules for parking lot safety.

Non- Discrimination Policy

St. John the Apostle's Religious Education Program admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students of the Religious Education Program.

Telephone Index

Religious Education Office: (732) 388-1253

Rectory: (908) 486-6363

St. John the Apostle School: (732) 388-1360

Parish Staff

Very Rev. Robert McBride, J.C.L.	Pastor
Rev. Luke Tran	Parochial Vicar
Rev. Paolo Tanzini	Parochial Vicar
Rev. Philip Latronico	Emmaus/C.Y.O. Director
Rev. Joseph Sheehan	Parochial Vicar (Ret.)
Deacon Ed Campanella	Pastoral Associate
Deacon Michael York	Pastoral Associate
Sr. Donna Marie O'Brien, O.P.	School Principal

Religious Education Staff

Ms. Michelle Angelo	Religious Education Coordinator
Mrs. Amy Giglio	Sacrament Preparation Coordinator
Ms. Eileen Mikusi	Program Assistant
Mrs. Debbie Shrubsall	Program Assistant