

Virtual Program Parent Handbook
2021 – 2022

St. John the Apostle Religious Education Program
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Virtual CCD
Thursdays: See attached pg. 4, for schedule grades 1-8

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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) has 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 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. If there is a disruption to our ability to facilitate on-site services, you will be notified by the Director of Religious Education and guided to virtual options. 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.
Sunday: 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12 noon

In General for Holy Days of Obligation: As announced

***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:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday after the 7:00 pm 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. Registration is available starting in April and is online only, at www.sjanj.net (under Religious Education/CCD).

Virtual classes for 1st and 2nd grade start September 2nd. 6:30 pm 1st grade and 7:15 pm 2nd grade.

Virtual classes for 3rd and 4th grade start September 9th. 6:30 pm for 3rd grade and 7:15 for 4th grade.

Virtual classes for 5th and 6th grade start September 16th. 6:30 pm for 5th grade and 7:15 for 6th grade.

Virtual classes for 7th and 8th grade start September 23rd. 6:30 pm for 7th grade and 7:15 for 8th grade.

Required paperwork:

1. Completed online registration.
2. Completed digital Communication Policy Acknowledgement
3. Copies of the child's sacramental certificates (baptismal, communion)
4. 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.
5. Submit Registration Fee- *If your family is experiencing a financial difficulty, please contact the Religious Education Office.*

Fees

REGISTRATION fees for in class CCD, Home School CCD, or Virtual CCD:

\$150/1 child \$250/2 children \$350/3 or more

SACRAMENT fees:

\$65/Reconciliation/First Holy Communion, \$80 Confirmation

These fees are used to cover the additional costs associated with the sacrament preparation years

Payment MUST accompany registration and is accepted in cash, check or credit card. Check should be made payable to St. John the Apostle.

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 Saturday evening or Sunday at a Roman Catholic Church.

First Reconciliation / First Communion

In addition to the requirements above, parents must participate in one of two scheduled First Reconciliation / First Communion parent meetings. These meetings are scheduled for October 12th or 13th at 7:00 pm.

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. All candidates and parents must participate in one of two Confirmation meetings. These meetings are scheduled for October 5th or 6th at 7 pm.
3. Students must attend Upper Room Confirmation Preparation Sessions, dates TBD scheduled for the Fall of 2022.
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 or deacon of the parish. Interviews are scheduled by appointment in May. Students can be questioned on the curriculum from 7th and 8th grades and the Confirmation Workbook.
 - c. Completion of Confirmation Workbook to be collected by the priest or deacon at the interview. This workbook is intended to be completed at home with the parents.
 - d. Participation in the Confirmation Retreat scheduled for March 26th at 10 am.
 - e. 20 hours of community service beginning in June of 7th grade and completed by September 1, 2022. Community service tracking sheets are available in the CCD office and in the virtual classrooms.
 - 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 Fall of 2022.

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 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 month of January, we will conduct Parent-Catechist Conferences. Meetings will be scheduled by your child's Catechist. Progress reports will be discussed including attendance and participation.

Religious Education/Home Communication

The information you provided when registering your child/children online is used to communicate updates to you. For example, if a virtual class cannot be facilitated, the Catechist will email you. Updates related to the program will come from the Director of Religious Education, Deacon Michael York.

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 emailing their Catechist. If there is a worksheet to be completed, it should be completed and submitted the next session your child attends.

Any child who is absent from three classes during the course of the year will have missed **30%** 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. 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 the Alive in Christ textbook from Our Sunday Visitor. Eighth grade students attending classroom studies will use Chosen.

Students in grades 1-8 should bring their textbooks to class each week. Students in grades 6-8 should also bring their Bibles every week. **Lost Textbooks** cost \$20 to replace. **Lost Bibles** cost \$20 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.

During monthly Zoom meetings, students must have video on throughout the class. No other electronic devices unless directly related to the classroom activities should be used during this time.

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.
- No cell/smart phone use during class time.

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.

Students enrolled in virtual courses are expected to conduct themselves as if they were in the classroom. Should behaviors arise that disrupt the learning experience for others, a meeting will be scheduled with the Director of Religious Education, the catechist and the parent(s).

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 Director of Religious Education, complete a volunteer application, pass a criminal background check, and complete the Virtus “Protecting God’s Children” child sexual abuse training.

All visitors to the Religious Education Program must have prior approval from the Director of Religious Education in order to enter the building during CCD class time.

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

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 Director of Religious Education need to be aware. Such conditions include: food allergies, asthma, learning disabilities, etc. This information is held in the strictest confidence.

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.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the Archdiocese of Newark continues to serve the young people of (INSERT PARISH & TOWN HERE).

Parish program facilitators will deliver virtual programming and content for its participants, through online platforms. The program(s) will use software, tools and applications provided by third-parties that participants, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and/or staff will access via the internet and use for purposes of communication, programming, and potential content creation. These platforms may include but are not limited to: Google Classroom, GoToMeeting, Webex, and Zoom.

To enroll in any of these programs, you must provide your consent and release for your child to participate in these online applications for distance-based, virtual program purposes. Please be aware that each application collects different information about its users and has its own privacy terms and conditions to which members must adhere and which parish or diocese cannot control or assume responsibility. Please review these carefully before registering your child.

Our commitment to keeping the children and youth we serve safe is always our number one priority. To that end, we will actively monitor participant activity of children while engaged in our digital learning

platforms. It is parents' responsibility to monitor their child's internet usage as a whole, including their use of any internet sites that are outside of our digital learning platforms. All online activities contemplated hereunder must also comply with the Archdiocese of Newark Safe Environment Protocols and must also follow any use requirements developed by the Archdiocese of Newark and/or the Department for the Protection of the Faithful.

Telephone Index

Religious Education Office: (732) 388-1253
Rectory: (908) 486-6363
St. John the Apostle School: (732) 388-1360

Parish Staff*

Rev. Mauro Primavera	Pastor
Rev. William Halbing	Parochial Vicar
Rev. Gabriel Camacho	Parochial Vicar
Rev. Alex Pinto	In Residence
Deacon Michael D. York	Pastoral Associate
Dr. Deborah Egan	School Principal

Religious Education Staff

Deacon Michael D. York	Director of Religious Education
Mrs. Daria Olesinski	Program Assistant

* If you would like to contact a priest please call the rectory at the number above.