

Parent Handbook
2023 – 2024

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

Telephone: (732) 388-1253
Website: [www.sjanj.net/religious education](http://www.sjanj.net/religious%20education)
E-mail: myork@sjanj.net

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

Wednesdays: 7-8:00 p.m., grades 1-2
Wednesdays: 7-8:10, grades 3-8
Thursdays: 4:30-5:30 p.m., grades K-2
Thursdays: 4:30-5:40 p.m., grades 3-8

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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 in person, 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 attendance must be recorded each week by initialing the sign-in sheet in the back of the church, or when attending Mass at another parish, by providing a copy of the bulletin, signed by the priest celebrant.

Mass Schedule

For Sunday Obligation: Saturday Evening: 5:30 p.m.

Sunday: 8 a.m., 10:00 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, 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:

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). Maximum class size is 15 students.

Wednesday onsite, in classroom starts September 20th at 7:00 pm. Thursday onsite, in classroom starts September 21st at 4:30 pm.

Required paperwork:

1. Completed online registration.
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. Classes will only be assigned when payment is received.*

Fees

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

\$200/1 child \$300/2 children \$400/3 or more

SACRAMENT fees:

\$100/Reconciliation/First Holy Communion, \$100 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 the First Reconciliation / First Communion parent meeting. The meeting will be in the Fall and announced in advance.

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 a Confirmation information meeting. The meeting will be in the Fall and announced in advance.
3. 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 23rd at 10 am.
 - e. 20 hours of community service beginning in June of 7th grade and completed by September 1, 2024. 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 2024.

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. Parents are asked to provide snacks or meals to children prior to their attending our Religious Education Program. This helps us to keep classrooms clean and minimize distractions during the short duration of the program's sessions.

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

The information you provided when registering your child/children online is used to communicate updates to you. For example, if your child does not feel well during a class session, we will call the contact number(s) you provided. If the building is closed for inclement weather, we will email you. Updates related to the program will come from the Director of Religious Education, Deacon Michael York.

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, e-mail notifications will be sent out to those families who have provided e-mail addresses on the registration forms.

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 should be completed and submitted the next session your child attends.

Any child who is absent from five (5) 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 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:

- No student may enter a classroom without the supervision of a catechist or aide.
- No running at any time, especially on or near stairs.
- No shouting or profane language.
- No gum chewing.
- 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.
- No cell/smart phone use during class time. The teacher has the option of collecting all the phones at the beginning of class and returning them at the end. If a student uses a phone during class, it will be “taken away” and returned at the end of class.

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 Director of Religious Education 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 Director of Religious Education will attempt to help the child to find a reasonable solution to the problem.
4. If a child is sent to the office a second time, the Director of Religious Education, the catechist, and the parent will work together with the child to come to a solution to the problem.
5. 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.

6. Students enrolled in virtual courses (when offered) 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

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 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.

Dismissal Policy

See the section called Security Procedures.

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.

Security Procedures

1. Parents will not be able to access the main or annex building at drop off or dismissal time for CCD.
2. Parents dropping off children in cars, enter at the Valley Road entrance. Cars should pull up to the parking lot door entrance of the main church/school building, let your child/children out and **immediately depart. You may not "idle" in the drop off zone or leave your car unattended.** Exit the main parking lot on Crescent Parkway (the street that borders the opposite side of parking lot, which has houses across the street). The area for dropping off children has written in large letters on the pavement "Drop Off Zone". You may also park your car in one of the parking spaces and escort your child/children to the door.
3. Parents will be required to wait outside the main parking lot door or annex door to pick up their child/children.
4. The main parking lot entrance will be closed to car access on the Valley Road side during dismissal.
5. Dismissal procedure by grade:

Children in grades K through 2 will be dismissed by their teacher at the main parking lot door according to the following schedule. The teacher will remain with their class until all children are picked up at the parking lot door.

Wednesday CCD 7 PM to 8:00 PM

Thursday CCD 4:30 to 5:30 PM

Children in grades 3 and 4 will be dismissed by their teacher at the main parking lot door according to the following schedule. The teacher will remain with their class until all children are picked up at the parking lot door.

Wednesday CCD 7 PM to 8:10 PM

Thursday CCD 4:30 PM to 5:40 PM

Children in grades 5 to 8 will be able to leave the buildings without a teacher escort and meet their parent outside at 8:10 PM Monday and 5:40 PM Tuesday.

6. Parents wishing to enter the building to visit the CCD office during CCD class times will need to have a prior appointment. Call the religious education office at 732-388-1253 in advance. Parents requesting early dismissal of a child or dismissal to a parent other than the guardians noted in registration must call the religious education office at 732-388-1253 with as much notice as possible.

8. All Classroom doors must be locked from the inside by the catechist once CCD class begins. Any student arriving late must knock on the door. Students leaving the class room during session to use the restroom, upon returning must knock on the door to regain entry. If a student needs to leave the floor or building while CCD is in session, he/she must have approval from Deacon Mike at the Religious Education Office. Catechists can call the CCD office (311) if necessary, from inside the classroom.

9. The Annex outside doors are to remain locked and closed once CCD begins. These doors automatically stay locked. Classroom doors must be locked while CCD is in session. Outside doors are not to be propped open. At this time, the Annex is in use by CCD on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Parents picking up children at the Annex must remain outside the building until CCD ends.

Students arriving late to the Annex, that is, after CCD has started, must use the intercom (at the annex outside door) to request entry. This is the same procedure used by the St. John's school, during the day.

10. Classrooms have phones which allow catechists to dial 911 in the event of an emergency, from inside the classroom.

11. Catechists will not dismiss students early to pick up younger brothers or sisters attending CCD. Catechists will continue to stay with all children who are not picked up by a parent in grades K – 4 at the parking lot door of the main building or the annex door. After 10 minutes upon completion of CCD and a parent has not picked up their child, that child will be brought by the catechist to the Religious Education office, where the parent will be called by Deacon Mike.

13. Students will participate in safety and security drills during CCD class time.

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. Peter Volz

Parochial Vicar

Rev. Gabriel Camacho

Parochial Vicar

Deacon Michael D. York

Pastoral Associate

Dr. Deborah Egan

School Principal

Religious Education Staff

Deacon Michael D. York

Director of Religious Education

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

Deacon Mike,

I have read or will read the attached CCD Parent Handbook for 2023-2024 and I agree to abide by its contents.

PRINT Child's Name: _____

PRINT Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Please remove this page and return to the CCD office! Thank you!