

# **Holy Cross Church**

## **Office of Religious Education**

# **Parent Handbook**



**Holy Cross Church  
Office of Religious Education  
30 Ward Avenue  
Rumson, N.J. 07760**

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### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to offer everyone a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. To this end we are committed to promoting strong Catholic Families by assisting parents in their God-given role of educating their children in the faith, fostering and nurturing the faith of parents and their children and encouraging family participation at weekly Mass and the faith life of the parish.

### **Policies & Procedures**

In order to achieve consistency as well as to avoid misunderstanding, we present the following statements of expectations, policies, and procedures regarding the Religious Education Program here at Holy Cross for students enrolled in our program. Please read and share this info with your child(ren). Please keep this information in a place where you can refer to it as needed. *Submitting your registration forms affirms that you agree to comply with ALL policies and requirements of our Religious Education Program.*

### **REGISTRATION**

Families must be registered, active members at Holy Cross to participate in the Religious Education Program. Families new to the parish and /or families who wish to enroll children in the program for the first time must contact the Office of Religious Education to register. Parents of currently enrolled students will receive re-registration materials in the mail.

### **ENROLLMENT**

In keeping with the guidelines established by the Diocese of Trenton students are required to attend religious education classes continuously from first through eighth grade. Faith formation takes place in developmental sequences and skipping years does not allow for adequate faith formation. Children who miss a grade level of their formation will be required to make-up that formation year before moving to the next grade level.

### **COMMUNICATION**

The primary means of communication with parents/guardians will be facilitated by email.  
Please notify the office immediately if your email address changes.

### **EMERGENCY CLOSING**

If it is necessary to cancel religious education classes because of inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances volunteer staff and parents will be notified by email.

## Catechetical Sessions

**SACRAMENT PREPARATION:** Students grades 1, 2, 7 & 8 will meet in-person. Attendance at ALL sessions are required. Please take great consideration in planning activities around your child's class times.

### **GRADES 1 & 2: Sacramental Preparation for Reconciliation and Eucharist.**

Grades 1 & 2 Classes will meet in-person on a weekly basis. Enrollment for Grades 1 & 2, for Sunday/Tuesday classes are on a first come, first served basis. Once a class or session fills up, we will place students wherever there is room as well as the classroom staff needed.

Grades 1 & 2 Sundays (weekly) 9:00 – 10:15 AM.

Grades 1 & 2 Tuesdays (weekly) 4:00 – 5:15 PM

### **Grades 7 & 8: Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation**

Attendance at ALL sessions is required.

Please take great consideration in planning activities around your child's class times.

Grade 7 will meet two Mondays a month from 6:30 to 8:15 pm.

Grade 8 will meet once a month, twice in January from 4:15 to 8:00 pm.

### **GRADES 3 to 6 - Home Based Family Faith Program**

Parishes around the country are moving toward Family Faith Programs. The **Family Home Based** approach has been proven to ease the stress of busy family schedules, while empowering parents as the primary catechists of their children to learn, share, and grow in the faith together. Countless studies show that those important lessons that carry us through our lives are learned at home, including faith and the spiritual life.

Parents will learn along with their children as they work together to complete weekly lessons. To nurture faith and community, families will come together for Mass, Family Faith and Parish Events.

## PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS for PARENTS

The Parish Religious Education Program builds on the faith formation at home. As parents, the promise you made at your child(ren)'s Baptism to raise your children in the faith is fulfilled by your active participation in your child's religious education are fulfilling the promise you made at their baptism to train your child(ren) in the faith.

### **Active participation in your child(ren)'s faith formation includes:**

- **Attending Mass every week with your child(ren) as a family.** It is virtually impossible to expect a religious education program to succeed if the central act of worship is ignored. Attendance at class and Mass is very important. Religion Education Classes are NOT a substitute for Mass. Parents are responsible for working with their children on their Mass Reflection Sheets and making sure reports are submitted in on time.
- **Making Religious Education the #1 Priority.** Whether your children are coming into the classroom or enrolled in the Home Study Faith Formation program (grades 3 -6), the time you have set aside for religious education is the priority over all other activities.
- **Make time each week to review and discuss each session's lesson with your child(ren)** thus, extending the lessons learned in the classroom throughout the week.

- **Work with your child(ren) to learn by heart their prayers** and participate with your children in the life of our Parish Community; Working with your child(ren) to complete any homework assignments as well study and prepare to pass tests/assessments.
- Reviewing the **Religious Education Program Policies, Rules and Regulations** with your child(ren). Students are expected to obey the program policies, rules and requirements.

## VOLUNTEERS

Parental involvement is the key to the success of the Religious Education Program. It helps you know more about your own faith and encourages your child by showing you value Religious Education enough to give your gifts, time and effort. We encourage all parents to help out in some way. We are always in need of catechists, classroom aides, substitute teachers, and hall monitors. VIRTUS training and fingerprinting are mandated by the Diocese. We provide teacher training, materials and support.

## ATTENDANCE

Our Catholic faith is a “way of life.” Regular attendance is very important for your child’s spiritual and moral development and enables them to enter into a greater understanding and relationship with God. By getting your child(ren) to class each week you are validating the importance you place on their religious education.

- **Parents are expected to take great consideration in planning activities around their child’s scheduled class times.**
- **All students are expected to attend ALL sessions in accordance with the Diocesan requirements for classroom instructional time.** It is difficult for a child to learn if they are not in class. A student who misses a class misses a valuable lesson that cannot be entirely recovered. Three excused absences (Grades 1 & 2) will be granted for illness or family emergency only (NOT sports, dance or activities). A physician’s note may be required.
- Students with an excessive number of absences may not be prepared to move on to the next level and thus required to repeat the year nor be prepared to make their Sacrament. In the case of prolonged illness, a physician’s note will be required. Please let us know if your child has health problems or there is a serious family situation so that we can assist you and be there for you.

Students arriving late or leaving early not only disrupts the entire class but misses valuable lesson time. IF it is absolutely necessary for a child to leave before the scheduled end of class time (family emergency), the **Office of Religious Education *must be notified in advance*** by the parent/guardian requesting that the child be dismissed and the time he/she will be picked up and by whom.

- Early Dismissal: Students leaving early miss valuable lesson time. **Students must be in class a minimum of 60 minutes to get credit.** In the case of illness or an emergency, the parent/guardian will be called to come pick up their child. Parents of students who are frequently arriving late or leaving early will be asked to make a time to meet and discuss their child’s attendance.
- The parent/guardian must come into the school to sign-out their child. The student will remain in the classroom until their parent-guardian signs them out. Please DO NOT send a note to your child’s teacher requesting an early dismissal

## REPORTING AN ABSENCE

- **If your child is ill please do not send them to class. If your child is unable to attend class, it is required that the parent/guardian call the Office of Religious Education to report the absence and the reason for the absence.** Students with the help of their parents will be required to make up the missed lesson.
- If a student becomes ill during class time, the office will call the parent and request they pick-up their child. In this case, parents of first or second graders, should go to the **center doors of the school**. For parents of 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> graders, parents should come to the center doors of the school. While the parent is signing out their child, a staff member will bring the student to the school office and their parent/guardian.

## SACRAMENTS

### **First Reconciliation and First Eucharist**

Preparation to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharist in the *second grade* is a two-year formation process. Students are required to have completed the level one year of religious education in preparation to receive Reconciliation and Eucharist for the first time the following year.

### **Confirmation**

The formation process to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church is a six-year formation process that begins in the third grade and culminates with the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation in the spring of the eighth grade year. Parents will receive specific dates, expectations and requirements regarding each of the two formation years.

In keeping with the guidelines established by the Diocese of Trenton, students are required to have attended religious education classes *continuously* from first through eighth grade to be considered for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

All grade levels of religious education are important, each assisting the child to grow in deeper knowledge of God, an awareness of the responsibilities as a disciple of Jesus and member of the Catholic parish community and Church. Students must also possess knowledge of the faith including the Commandments & Beatitudes, Sacraments, Scripture, the Church, worship, prayer and Catholic Christian Service.

Students who drop out of Religious Ed after First Communion will need to complete courses for all grade levels they have missed to be confirmed.

## CURRICULUM

Our Religious Education Program incorporates into our curriculum at all levels, a method of catechesis that brings together the classroom lesson and the Sunday Mass experience. Each week time is dedicated to listening to the Gospel, and reflecting on the “Good News” through discussion. This time also provides an opportunity for the class to share their worship experience.

As a family, it is important to take time each week before and after Mass to talk about the Gospel message as well as the ways in which the entire family can share the love of God and live the Gospel in the home, school and community. Religious education classes do not take the place of Mass.

## **MASS**

The most important thing we do as Catholics is to participate at mass on a weekly basis. The Mass is about Praising God and giving thanks. The Mass is a school for prayer. At every Mass the readings, homily and the prayers of the Mass provide us with wonderful lessons in our faith!

As part of their faith formation curriculum, students with the help and direction of their parents will complete and submit a "Mass Reflection Form" on any 8 Masses they attend at Holy Cross Church. The four first semester reports (September – December) will be due in December. Four second semester reports (January – March) will be due before the Religious Ed year ends (date TBD).

## **CATHOLIC FAMILY LIFE CURRICULMN**

*Growing with God-Loyola Press* provides a comprehensive moral catechesis adopted by the Diocese of Trenton for all Religious Education Programs and Catholic Schools. Catholic Family Life Curriculum offers support for parents to pass on the teachings of the Church, as well as moral, virtue and safety education to their family.

To assist parents in teaching their children good decision-making in light of the Church's teachings on faith and morals we will provide age appropriate lessons for parents to complete with their children at home and submit to their child's teacher when complete.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

Students will be tested on the essential beliefs of the Catholic Faith and traditional Catholic prayers. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure their children are prepared to complete and pass their tests. Please work with your child(ren) to learn the required prayers for their grade level.

## **TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM LEARNING GRADES 1 & 2**

To complete their year of Faith Formation Traditional Classroom Students are required to:

- Attend Mass each week on Saturday or Sunday.
- As part of their faith formation curriculum, students with the help and direction of their parents will complete a "*Mass Reflection Book*" on Masses they attend at Holy Cross Church. Four 1<sup>st</sup> semester reports due in December, four 2<sup>nd</sup> semester reports due in March.
- Attend ALL class sessions. Three excused absences granted for illness or family emergency ONLY (not sports, dance, trips or activities). In the case of illness, a physicians' note will be required and make-up work will be assigned.
- Be on time for class.
- Parents must report an absence to the Office of Religious Education prior to class time.
- Bring required books, materials to class each week.
- To replace a lost Religion Book: \$30 To Replace the *Growing with God* Lessons: \$5
- Come to class with a good attitude ready to learn.
- Pass all assessments (80%) on essential beliefs, doctrines and prayers.
- Complete any required Home Work Assignments.
- Complete with Parents the 5 *Growing with God* worksheets (front and back of each worksheet). Submit by deadline.
- With their family attend 2 Parish Faith & Culture Events. Submit required documents.
- ***All work must be completed as required and submitted by the end of year DEADLINE for a student to show readiness to receive the sacraments and move up to the next grade level.***

## **HOME BASED FAMILY FAITH FORMATION GRADES 3 to 6**

- **To successfully complete their year of Faith Formation students are required to:**
  - Complete ALL Curriculum Requirements by the course deadline;
  - Parents will work together with their children to complete their Religion Book lessons online through the Word of Life Portal.
  - Demonstrate mastery of the material by scoring a Best Score of 80% on assessments.
  - Attend Mass each week with family.
  - Work together as a family to complete (8) Mass Reports on Masses attended at Holy Cross Church.
  - Student and family (at least one parent) attend required Family Faith Events and Parish Faith and Culture events.
  - Parents with student complete the required 5 Growing with God worksheets (front and back of each worksheet).
  - Submit any required worksheets, Mass Reflections, Faith & Culture Documents, Growing with God worksheets to the Office of Religious Education by the course deadline.
  - ***All work must be completed as required and submitted by the end of year DEADLINE for a student to move up to the next grade level.***

## **HOLY CROSS CONFIRMATION FORMATION GRADES 7 & 8**

Preparation and formation to receive the sacrament of Confirmation will take place over two years beginning in seventh grade and ending in the eighth grade. The sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated in the spring of your child's eighth grade year.

Grade 7 Classes meet TWO Mondays a month from 6:30 to 8:15 pm

Grade 8 meets ONE Sunday a month (Twice in January) from 4:15 to 8:00 pm

### **Grade 7-Year 1 expectations:**

- Attend Mass each week In-Person! As part of the formation curriculum, candidates will complete with parental supervision and submit "Mass Reports" on any 8 Masses they attend at Holy Cross Church during the year.
- Attend ALL class sessions. Two excused absences will be given for illness or family emergency ONLY. (NOT sports, dance or activities). Documentation/Physicians' note will be required.
- No late arrivals or early dismissals permitted.
- Come to class with a good attitude, prepared and ready to learn with required books and materials.
- Pass a Confirmation Mid-Term and Final (80% or above) on essential beliefs, doctrines and prayers.
- Complete a minimum of 10 service hours by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year, and complete a reflection worksheet for each project. The remaining 5 hours can be completed over the summer and fall. A minimum total of 15 hours are required for Confirmation.
- Give increased attention to prayer, begin to think about choosing a Sponsor and Confirmation name.

## **Grade 8 - Year 2 expectations:**

- Attend Mass each week In-Person! Students will attend the Sunday 5 pm Mass with their class each time we meet. Families are strongly encouraged to join us for these Masses.
- Attend ALL class sessions. One excused absence will be given for illness or family emergency ONLY. (NOT sports, dance or activities). Documentation/Physicians' note will be required.
- NO late arrivals or early dismissals permitted.
- Come to class with a good attitude, prepared and ready to learn with required books and materials.
- Choose a Saint whose name you would like to take for Confirmation and write a report.
- Choose a Sponsor.
- Attend and participate in a Retreat.
- Complete a minimum of 5 hours of service & worksheet for each project.
- Submit Confirmation paperwork on time.
- Attend the Reconciliation Service.
- Attend and participate in the Confirmation practice and liturgy.

## **POLICIES, RULES AND PROCEDURES**

### **ARRIVAL**

Parents and students are to use the Main Doors of the School. Parents can either park and walk their child into the school or drop their child(ren) off by the Main doors.

### **DISMISSAL**

- Parents are to park and come into the school to pick up their child(ren).
- Students will remain seated in their classroom until their parent comes for them.
- NO student will be allowed to leave the school unless they are with their parent/guardian. At dismissal time, a member of the staff will open the doors so parents can enter the school and pick up their child(ren).
- We must be informed in writing N ADVACE if a child is to be picked up by someone other than his/her parent/guardian. This includes car pools.

### **NO FOOD POLICY**

- Parents – DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD(REN) TO CLASS HUNGRY! Make sure they have something to eat before they come to class.
- Unless there is a medical notification **NO FOOD or DRINK of any kind is permitted to be brought into the school at any time!** This includes candy and GUM! Office must be notified in advance if a child has a medical exception.

### **ITEMS TO LEAVE AT HOME!**

***Students are not permitted to bring toys, stuffed animals, spinners, ipods, or sports equipment of any kind to class! This includes skateboards.***



## CELL PHONES

- We suggest that students leave their cell phones at home. If a student needs to call their parents, they can request to use the school phone.
- IF a child must carry a cell phone it must be **turned off** and out of sight in a pocket, backpack etc. Use of a cell phone during class will result in the cell phone being confiscated and parents will be called.

## SAFETY

- For the safety of all the children please drive slow, refrain from talking on your cell phone and be aware of parents and children crossing through the parking lot.
- For the safety of our students and teachers, the doors of the school will remain locked at all times.
- While we would love to welcome visitors, there are legal as well as other issues that prevents us from doing so. During class time ONLY authorized CCD staff will be allowed in the building. ***Please do not send children who are not enrolled in the program with your child on any day.***

**Please help us make these procedures as safe and easy as possible for all concerned.**

## Holy Cross Religious Ed Discipline Code

As Christians, we are committed to live by the example of Jesus Christ. This commitment includes each student's acceptance of responsibility for his/her actions.

*Students who are disruptive disturb the learning atmosphere in the classroom and infringe on the rights of all. All students are expected to show consideration and respect for their catechist and classmates and refrain from any behavior that would prevent learning or cause injury. Our discipline code is meant to ensure a safe and peaceful learning environment for all our students. Students in grades 4 to 6 will be required to read and sign the Program's Zero Tolerance Form.*

It is important to consider that our staff, catechists and volunteers are volunteering their time and talents to teach the faith to your children. They deserve the utmost respect for all of their efforts. They are not expected to cope with discipline problems. It is essential that we maintain an atmosphere in which the students can form a community of faith and to learn.

Students are expected to:

- Strive to act in a manner that makes them proud of themselves
- Respect and obey adults in authority as well as fellow students
- Respect the space and personal property of others including that of Holy Cross school students
- Respect the space and personal property of others including that of Holy Cross School.
- Be courteous in speech and mannerisms.
- Cooperate with program and classroom policy and rules.
- Exercise control in dealing with others

***The following infractions/behaviors include, but are not limited to the following, and are all sufficient reasons for a student to be held back or dismissed from the program.***

1. Disregard for program or classroom rules,
2. Disrespect to teachers, volunteer staff and/or fellow students.
2. Rude or inappropriate behavior or language.
3. Disruption in the classroom or outside during arrival or dismissal
4. Consistent lack of cooperation,
5. Negative attitudes
6. Refusal to participate in class or complete assignments.
7. Use of cell phone/texting during class,
8. Disrespect/destruction of another student's property or school property.

Parents may be asked to pay for property damage caused by their child.

***ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY: the following behaviors will be taken seriously and will be investigated and reported depending on the severity of the incident.***

- Violence/fighting during, coming to or going home from CCD
- Possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons
- Any form of social cruelty including bullying, hitting, constant teasing, name calling etc.
- Threats either written, verbal, internet or physical harm from one student to another.

*In the event a student engages in inappropriate behavior, any or all of the following may occur:*

- a. First Infraction: verbal warning will be issued. If necessary, a call will be made to the students' parent/guardian. \*\*\*Depending on the gravity of the infraction the Pastor may be informed.
- b. Second Infraction: Student will be sent to the office. Parent will be called.
- c. Third Infraction: Student will be sent to the office. Parents will be called. A meeting between parents, catechist and Director of Religious Education will be scheduled.
- d. If the behavior problem persists a meeting with parents will be scheduled to discuss alternatives for their child's religious education and/or permanent dismissal from the program.

