



*Saint Joan of Arc  
Religious Education Handbook*

*updated July, 2019*

## **Religious Ed Office Contact Information**

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## **PURPOSE**

The primary objective of Religious Education is to pass on the faith in a loving, caring and sharing Christian Community. In partnership with you, the parents and guardians, we seek to develop the faith and love of Christ within these children.

“The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.” Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 221.

In accordance with the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC), we remind parents and guardians that Christian Community begins in their own homes first and foremost. The GDC says, “Children perceive and joyously live the closeness of God and Jesus made manifest by their parents in such a way that this first Christian experience frequently leaves decisive traces which last throughout life.”

You are the primary Religious Educators of your children through your example and daily life. Parents should understand that Christian formation is not limited to preparation of a sacrament, but rather must continue as long as one lives. This includes instruction in basic doctrine, scripture and worship, and relating this to daily living.

## **CURRICULUM**

Each grade level concentrates on specific topics and themes, and includes learning about church teachings, Scripture, liturgy and prayer, feasts and seasons, Mary and the saints, and Christian morality. The material is presented in a way that is meaningful to the child, and the curriculum is structured so that each year provides a foundation for the next year. Students who skip years are missing valuable background.

## **REGISTRATION**

Registration is due by the second week of August so books and supplies can be obtained. Information for Religious Education registration is published in the Sunday Bulletin, the electronic parish newsletter, on the parish website [www.Saintjoanofarc.net](http://www.Saintjoanofarc.net) and sent via email to families already in the RE program.

Families new to the RE program, and all students entering 1<sup>st</sup> grade will need to provide copies of the children’s Baptismal certificates to the RE office with registration. Only the dates are required if Baptized at St. Joan of Arc Parish. If Reconciliation or 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion were received elsewhere, documentation must be provided. The church of the child’s Baptism holds the records for all sacraments. Therefore, St. Joan of Arc will provide that church with appropriate information after reception of the sacraments of 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion and Confirmation.

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Please notify the rectory of any change of address and/or phone number at home or work. Our records must be kept up to date in case of emergencies. Also notify the Religious Ed Office by email for any changes in email or phone numbers.

## **CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS**

St. Joan of Arc Religious Education (RE) program presumes that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorce or separated. Thus, unless informed otherwise, and in writing and with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have unqualified access to the child, the RE program will permit either to have access to the child while at the catechetical site and will release the child from the site to either parent.

## **TUITION**

Families can choose to pay in full or pay over time, with final payment by March 1 of the current school year. Once registered, you will receive periodic invoices with the amount of your remaining balance.

Payment can be by check, or *Give Central* is a safe, secure, and paperless way to make payments via credit card, debit card, or electronic check. You can set the date, amount, and frequency (one-time or ongoing) of your payment with just a few clicks. Go directly to [www.givecentral.org/location/179](http://www.givecentral.org/location/179) and select the item for "Religious Education Tuition".

In order to fund the RE program, we rely on fees and tuition paid by families as well as general parish funds allocated to this program. If a family is experiencing financial difficulty and is unable to meet the payment deadline, we request that you meet with the DRE. Please contact the Parish Office if there is ever a mistake on your invoice so the appropriate corrections can be made.

### **Tuition and Fees include:**

General: Books, resources and supplies for RE classes September through May.

Sacrament fees: Sacrament & Liturgy preparation, additional materials, and sessions for parents.

<b>TUITION</b>	<b>Parishioner</b>	<b>Non-Parishioner</b>
• One child	\$260	\$350
• Two children	\$415	\$560
• Three or more children	\$560	\$755

### **Additional Fees:**

First Sacraments Fee (Eucharist and Reconciliation)	\$60
Confirmation Fee (Does NOT includes Retreat)	\$80
Retreat Fees	TBD
Returned Check Fee	\$25
Replacement Book Fee	\$25

## **TRANSFERS & WITHDRAWALS**

Children transferring into St. Joan of Arc's RE program are required to provide information of previous religious education. Copies of Baptismal and other sacrament certificates are required.

Written program information and attendance records must be provided to St. Joan of Arc within 30 days of registration from ALL previous RE or Catholic school programs. Children transferring out of St Joan of Arc will be provided with program information upon request after all fees have been satisfied.

The RE office should be informed in advance of withdrawals from the program so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

## **RELIGIOUS ED SCHEDULE**

Each family will receive an RE Calendar, which is also found on the parish website. If schedule changes occur, we will issue a new calendar with revisions via email and/or send one home with your children from class.

Classes are held on most Sundays from 9:15 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. Special Sacrament preparation sessions for parents, students and Confirmation sponsors throughout the year are also on the calendar.

Our classes meet only once a week, so every class is very important. We expect our parents to be responsible in the understanding that Religious Education should take precedence over some other activities and all students need to attend classes regularly. We try not to hold classes on 3-day weekends to allow for family time on these weekends.

## **ATTENDANCE at MASS & PRAYER at HOME**

Gathering to celebrate the Eucharist is both a privilege and responsibility for Christians. Families are strongly encouraged to come and worship with their children every Sunday. Religious Education Classes on Sunday are not a substitute for Sunday Mass attendance. Classes are scheduled so that families can attend the 10:30 a.m. Mass together following class.

- Usually once each month at 10:30 a.m., we celebrate a Family Mass. Families are encouraged to participate together as ushers, greeters, or other liturgical ministers if appropriately trained.
- "Children's Liturgy of the Word" (CLW) is for pre-K – 1<sup>st</sup> grade children twice a month, as a way for the children to hear the Scripture readings at their own level. They return to their families for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Like anything else, prayer must be practiced regularly if it is going to be learned well or become a habit. The religious education program offers a framework to introduce prayers and to integrate them with what the children are learning. **The only way that children can actually learn the prayers is to pray them at home on a daily basis.** See the student textbooks or talk with their teacher about the prayers they will be learning.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE**

Your child is expected to attend all the classes for the entire year. A child may be excused only for serious reasons. If a child is absent, it is the responsibility of the parent to email the catechist with the child's name, grade and reason for absence. Lessons missed should be obtained from the teacher and made up at home with a parent.

Students with more than 2 absences per semester will have their progress reviewed by the catechist and the Director of Religious Education. Multiple absences may result in the child repeating the level so that proper sacramental preparation is completed. Absences are counted from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class.

Tardiness disrupts the class so please arrive on time. Children are considered tardy at 9:20.

## **BOOKS AND HOMEWORK**

Your children's workbooks are a great resource of Catholic prayers and traditions. Explore it with them! Look in the back of the book where you will find key elements of the Catholic Faith.

Children will bring home their workbooks each week. Please make sure that they bring it with them to class. If a book is missing, please check with the teacher and/or the "Lost & Found" in Church.

If a catechist reports that a child does not have their book for consecutive classes, a new textbook will be issued with a \$25 replacement charge.

Children may be required to do some homework. This will provide the parents time to assist their child in their faith formation. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their child is bringing everything that is required for class each week.

## **SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE**

All the catechists and other volunteers and employees who have contact with the children have undergone a security and background check. In addition, each one is a participant of the Virtus training program, an initiative of the Archdiocese which is in compliance with "Protecting God's Children."

In cooperation with the USCCB and the Archdiocese of Chicago Office for Protection of Children & Youth (OPCY), we will be providing age-appropriate Safe Environment Training to all of the students in our Religious Education program. This training will be offered during the course of the school year at one of the Sunday sessions, and further information will be sent to the parents when the date for training has been determined.

Classroom attire should reflect the willingness to learn and not be a distraction. Students shall contribute to the learning experience by cooperating with the catechist. Basic classroom rules will be explained and followed, such as

- Respect yourself, others, and things
- Contribute to the learning environment through listening and participation
- Follow program and classroom procedures

If the child is regularly disruptive, the parent or guardian will be called to pick up the child and disciplinary actions will be determined commensurate with the situation.

**SJA IS A PEANUT FREE SCHOOL.** Food of any type is not allowed in the classrooms.

Toys or sports equipment are not allowed. If a parent deems it necessary for a child to have a cell phone, it must be silenced and put away during class.

## **SACRAMENT PROGRAM**

***Students must have completed one full year of Catholic religious education (here at SJA or elsewhere) immediately before the year in which they intend to receive a sacrament. In order to have complete records, we must have a copy of your child's baptismal certificate on file.***

### **FIRST RECONCILIATION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION – 2nd Grade**

Reconciliation and Holy Communion are distinct sacraments received in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The children learn the meaning of the Sacraments and how to receive them during the class sessions. This is in conjunction with the formation which they receive with their families. **The most important preparation children can receive for the Eucharist is to be regular participants at Sunday Mass.**

Prayers and basic Catholic knowledge must be known before the reception of the sacraments. Students will be assessed by the DRE and catechist as necessary. Multiple absences in Grades 1 or 2 may require the child to repeat that grade level. The DRE along with the catechist and parent or guardian can decide if a child is not ready to receive either sacrament. **Parent/Guardian participation in Sacramental preparation is required for your child's reception of the Sacrament.**

### **Important Dates for First Reconciliation & First Communion Families**

See the current Religious Education Calendar and other communications for specific dates for these important events for families who will be celebrating "First Sacraments."

- First Sacraments Parent Meeting (2nd grade parents)
- First Reconciliation
- First Communion practice (student and one parent)
- First Holy Communion Mass

### **CONFIRMATION – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Confirmation is a personal affirmation of Baptism. It is a public proclamation of full participation in the Eucharistic community. Community, prayer and service are essential elements in the preparation for this sacrament, which is a process that unfolds throughout 7th and 8th Grade. **Parent participation is required for your child's reception of this sacrament.**

The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated with a Bishop of the Archdiocese in the second semester of 8th grade. This is the culmination of the required two-year preparation process, but more importantly it is the recognition and acceptance by the students, their families, and the parish community of these fully initiated young Catholics as they begin a new phase of their lifelong faith journey as they venture further beyond their immediate family and neighborhood.

The “**Rite of Commitment**” is celebrated near the start of the school year at a Sunday Mass to formalize the students’ commitment to preparing for Confirmation, as well as to present these young people to the parish who can pray for them during this journey. Instead of waiting for 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the Rite of Commitment at St. Joan of Arc is celebrated with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade class at a Sunday Mass, which serves several purposes.

- By celebrating the Rite of Commitment near the beginning of 7th grade, it raises the awareness for all the parish and sense of reality for the students that Confirmation prep is a two-year journey.
- It provides an earlier focus on the Sacrament, differentiating it from all the 8th grade activities which tend to have a sense of completion and finality. This should impart a sense of preparation for beginning a new phase of lifelong faith formation and discipleship.
- The required service hours may be distributed across both grades, enabling more meaningful activities to take place, and relieving some of pressure of time commitments in 8th grade.

One of the hallmarks of a Christian community is the aspect of service. The concept of service begins at a young age with a parent encouraging the child to perform acts of kindness and compassion in the home and neighborhood. Parental involvement and assistance in this area is important. The catechist will develop the theme of service with their class and will solicit parental help when needed. Written reflections on service experiences are required.

The students will also choose a Saint as a model and for their Confirmation name. They will need to explore the possibilities and write a reflection on the person they choose.

**Candidates must participate in every phase of the preparation for this sacrament including Parent/Candidate sessions, Sponsor/Candidate interaction, a Confirmation retreat, service projects and reflections, weekly class attendance and regular Sunday Mass attendance.** Each child’s progress will be reviewed by the catechist to decide if the child is ready to receive this sacrament. If all sacramental preparation requirements set forth by the catechist and the RE program are not completed satisfactorily, the catechist and Pastor may delay the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation.

### **Important Dates for Confirmation Families**

See the current Religious Education Calendar and other communications for specific dates for these important events for families who will be celebrating Confirmation.

- Confirmation Parent Meeting (parents and students)
- Holy Fire Event at UIC (Archdiocesan faith event open to 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students)
- Confirmation Retreat for Confirmandi
- Rite of Commitment for Confirmation (7th / 8<sup>th</sup> grade students)
- Confirmation Rehearsal
- Confirmation Mass