

St. Laurence Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) Parent/Student Handbook  
Effective: September 2016

St. Laurence Catholic Church  
572 Jewett Street,  
Elgin, IL 60123  
847-468-6900



Pastor: Rev. Andrew Mulcahey  
fr.a.mulcahey@gmail.com

Coordinator of Religious Education: Briana Collins  
streligiouseducation@gmail.com  
847-468-6900

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*“Catechesis aims to bring about in the believer an ever more mature faith in Jesus Christ, a deeper knowledge and love of his person and message, and a firm commitment to follow him. In many situations, however, catechesis must also be concerned with arousing initial faith and sustaining the gradual conversion to complete adherence to Jesus Christ for those who are on the threshold of faith. With God’s grace, catechesis develops initial faith, nourishes the Christian life, and continually unfolds the mystery of Christ until the believer willingly becomes his disciple.” (National Directory of Catechesis, 55)*

### **Introduction:**

While every effort has been made to include in this handbook as much information needed, no handbook can be all inclusive. From time to time, changes, additions or deletions need to be made. Those changes are communicated to parents through our newsletters and web site. All parents are invited and urged to contact the Pastor or program administrator with any concerns.

### **2016/2017 Program Goals:**

1. Create opportunities for students and families to encounter Christ, grow in relationship with Him, and grow as disciples.
2. Strive to be not only an encounter with Christ, but also a “minister of mercy”, for our students, families and team in word, action and demeanor.

### **General Program Information:**

For Kindergarten through Sixth grade students, Religious Education classes are held on Wednesday evenings, from 6:00 – 7:15 PM, inside St. Laurence Catholic School. For Seventh and Eighth grade students (Confirmation), classes are held on Sunday mornings from 9:30 -10:45 AM, in St. Laurence Catholic School. Classes are held inside the school classrooms, with each PREP grade meeting in the same grade level classroom that the St. Laurence school students meet - unless otherwise communicated or specified for extenuating circumstances. This ensures that your son/daughter’s learning environment is age-appropriate.

### **Vision for Catechesis in the Diocese of Rockford:**

The diocesan vision for catechesis believes that faith formation for parishioners of all ages should be guided and directed by the following theological and pastoral principles:

1. Catechesis is Christ-centered
2. Catechesis is Evangelizing
3. Catechesis is Systematic and Comprehensive
4. Catechesis is Modeled on the Catechumenate
5. Catechesis Interprets and Illuminates the Human Experience
6. Catechesis Inculturates the Gospel Message
7. Catechesis is Lifelong
8. Catechesis is the Responsibility of the Entire Parish
9. Catechesis Respects Human Dignity
10. Catechesis Necessitates Ongoing Catechist Formation

*Diocesan Document*

**Catechist Information:**

All Catechists have:

1. Completed the Diocese's Protecting God's Children for Adults (VIRTUS) program
2. Undergone a criminal background check
3. Agreed to the Diocese's Pastoral Code of Conduct
4. Signed the Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Misconduct
5. Signed the Code for Pastoral Use of Technology and Social Media, and
6. Signed the Guidelines for the Use of Technology and Social Media

In addition, all Catechists have agreed to participate in continuing education classes.

**Attendance "Policy":**

We would like your son(s)/daughter(s) to have the most enriching year as possible. The only way we can assist toward that goal is by them attending class. Students should NOT miss more than 3 classes for the entire academic year. Confirmation students should NOT miss more than three (3) classes for each academic year during the Confirmation preparation years.

If students miss more than the above specified amount, they need to either complete make-up work or repeat that grade again. A student's make-up work and or their repeating a grade will be up to the determination of the Pastor and/or Coordinator of Religious Education.

Absences may be excused for illness, emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances that are well-communicated to either the Pastor or the Coordinator of Religious Education.

**Student Drop-Off/Pick-Up Policy:**

For all students Kindergarten through Fourth Grade, parents must walk student(s) to their classrooms and pick them up from their classrooms at the end of each class. In an effort to increase security for the students, parents/family members/family friends of students grades K-4 grade must sign their name when they pick up their child from their respective classrooms. For Fifth and Sixth grade students, as well as Confirmation-age students, they may wait in the parking lot for their parents to pick them up.

**Late Arrival/Early Pick-Up Policy:**

If your family arrives late to Wednesday evening PREP, please walk your son(s)/daughter(s) to the main office door, ring the bell, and sign in at the main school office. From there, please walk each of your son(s)/daughter(s) to their classroom(s). If your son(s)/daughter(s) arrives late to Sunday morning Confirmation, please have them enter through the main school door, sign in at the main office, and proceed to class.

If you/a family member needs to pick up your son(s)/daughter(s) from Wednesday evening PREP early, you may do so by coming to the main school door and signing in. The office personnel will call your son/daughter's teacher and have your son/daughter come to the main office to meet you. If your son/daughter needs to be picked up by a non-family member, a note needs to be signed by a parent, and received by the Religious Education Coordinator prior to the scheduled pick-up.

In the event of an emergency, and a note was not sent in advance, a parent must call the Pastor, Fr. Andrew Mulcahey, or Briana Collins, the Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE). If neither the Pastor nor the CRE answers his or her phone in the event of an emergency, the non-family member should come to the school, enter through the main school building door, and

Speak with the office personnel – where the Pastor/CRE will be located, and the student then released. For the safety of that student, a parent or family member will need to be reached via phone prior to that student being released, for the safety of that student.

### **Behavior Rules and Expectations:**

1. Respect our shared community, respect others, and respect one self.

We are grateful to share space and certain resources with the St. Laurence Catholic School students and the Church. Students should not in any way damage, vandalize, or alter any church, school or classroom furniture, nor any church, teacher or student belongings. If any student was found to have damaged, vandalized or altered any of the aforementioned, the student's family will be asked to repair or replace said item(s). Students also should not remove or steal anything belonging to the school, its students, or any clubs or associations in any way affiliated with the school or church.

Similarly to respecting space, all students and staff must respect one another – which include another's belongings, personal space, and human dignity. There should not be any unwanted or inappropriate touching between students, between staff members, or between students and staff. Furthermore, there is to be no harassment, bullying or any unwanted or inappropriate conversations or discussions. Finally, students must respect one self.

2. Students should be as attentive and cooperative as possible for each student, and not intentionally trying to be distracting to the classroom learning environment.
3. If outside activities or "homework" is assigned in class, students are expected to complete the activities or "homework" within the specified timeframe.
4. NO food or drinks of any kind.
5. NO paraphernalia of any kind.

### **Tuition:**

Tuition and all contributing costs should be paid before April 1<sup>st</sup>. For any family that would like to set-up a payment plan, a separate "Payment Plan Letter" should be filled out – for the purposes of maintaining organization and consistency. This form can be found on the Religious Education page on the St. Laurence Church's website.

### **The Observer:**

The Observer is the official newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Rockford. At St. Laurence we believe in supporting this Diocesan effort by asking all our Parish and School families to purchase a yearly subscription. By doing this, each family will stay up-to-date on the events and news of our diocese. Furthermore, the Observer is incorporated into the classroom and a part of the learning process at St. Laurence.

### **Students with additional classroom needs, including physical and/or developmental disabilities:**

St. Laurence Religious Education Program administrators or catechists do not discriminate or wrongfully "categorize" any student by academic, physical nor developmental ability levels. Every student is treated with dignity and worth, and respected as a child of God.

Religious Education Programs and personnel are not automatically privileged to information that pertains to your son/daughter's physical or developmental abilities. Examples of

this information include, but are not limited to, Individual Education Plans, documents prepared by their school or doctor, etc. With that said, at St. Laurence, we believe in making every effort to educate your son(s)/daughter(s) in the most beneficial, least restrictive environment as possible. Because of that, we rely entirely upon the information you provide us. We seek to adapt and adjust content to the understood physical or developmental level of your son/daughter, again, per the information we receive from you.

Should you and your family feel that a Catholic Faith-Formation Program that takes on a different structure may be a better fit, there are a number of local SPRED (Special Religious Development) programs.

“SPRED was established in 1966 as an agency of the Archdiocese of Chicago to train and guide parishes to provide faith formation to persons with developmental disabilities and/or learning problems and become integrated into parish life” (SPRED Brochure).

If you are interested, contact the CRE and they will help you locate a local age-appropriate program.

### **Communication:**

All communications will come either via mail, email, or via Flock Notes. Please monitor the email listed on registration materials to stay up-to-date.

### **Flock Notes:**

Flock Notes has made contacting families that much simpler. The email and cell phone number for both parents, and or persons otherwise specified, will be entered into our Flock Note Database.

In the event of an emergency or class cancellation, all parents will receive a text message and email notifying them of the change.

### **Sacrament Preparation:**

All specifications listed below are up to the determination and subject to change per the discretion of the Pastor.

Reconciliation/First Communion Program: Students preparing to make their first Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are expected to attend Religious Education classes for two years prior to making both sacraments. They are also expected to attend Mass regularly.

#### Confirmation Program:

General:

1. All students must attend Mass 3 out of 4 weekends per month at St. Laurence (either Saturday or Sunday)
2. All students must attend Confirmation class 3 out of 4 Sundays per month (9:30am – 10:45 am in St. Laurence School)
3. All students must select a saint name and complete an essay about their chosen saint. Further instructions provided during the course of the year.
4. All students must complete 20 hours of service, with 5 of those hours being “Evangelization Hours”.

- a. Evangelization hours are hours that are spent specifically speaking or living out our Catholic faith.
  - b. We ask that students don't complete service hours for their immediate family. For example, babysitting their brother/sister.
5. All students must satisfactorily pass (at least 70%) an end of year test. The test will cover our Catholic faith and the material covered in class (Chosen and Theology of the Body).

**In the event of an Emergency:**

***Weather:***

The Parish Religious Education Program is fully prepared in the event of a fire, tornado, or necessary lock-down situations.

In the event that our school needs to enter into lockdown mode, an administrator will make every effort to communicate with the parents updates/ further instructions, taking into consideration that the safety of the students must come first while they are in the building.

***Medical (Student):***

The administrator has all Student Medical Emergency Forms readily available. 9-1-1 will be called and the emergency contacts will be notified as soon as possible, the order depending on the degree of severity of the situation. The school also has an AED readily available.

**In the event of class cancellation:**

Both parents, and or persons otherwise specified on registration documents, will receive a text message and email when class has been cancelled due to weather or other extenuating circumstances.

**Formation in Christian Chastity Curriculum:**

“The Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth People, adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002, requires parishes and schools to provide formation for children in the areas of safety and the integrity of their persons. To assist our families with this important task, the Rockford Diocese developed the “Diocese of Rockford Formation in Christian Chastity and Safe Environment Program,” and uses as a principal source *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Our philosophy is to involve parents directly in the formation of their children.

The Diocesan Formation in Christian Chastity and Safe Environment... is mandatory for all Catholic primary schools and Parish Religious Education Programs in the Diocese of Rockford.”

“The “Diocese of Rockford Formation in Christian Chastity and Safe Environment Program” consists of two parts – a Formation in Christian Chastity program to be taught in every grade from Grades 1 through 8, and a Safe Environment program taught in Grades 1, 3, 5 and 8.”

*From Diocese of Rockford Website*

The complete curriculum can be found on the Diocese of Rockford Website.

**Asbestos Management Plan:**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency promulgated in October 1987, the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act 40 C.F.R. Part 763, the law regulates asbestos containing building materials in schools. In compliance with this law, the Rockford Diocese hired Cape Environmental Management to inspect and write management plans for its' parish schools. This 1988 plan gives the guidelines for operations and maintenance. All work performed is accomplished by the guidelines and regulations set forth by all of the appointed government agencies. A Management Plan is on file at the school office for your inspection.

For more information, speak to either the Pastor or program administrator.