

## **FAMILY HANDBOOK for RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**Admission Policy:** We accept children of any race or nation without discrimination and accommodate those with special needs to the best of our ability. Parish registration is a requirement. Under certain circumstances children from another parish will be allowed to attend our program.

**Attendance:** Continuity in the learning process is essential. Make every effort to guarantee your child's regular attendance at religious education classes; use the yearly calendar distributed in August as a resource. Contact us if a child is absent several consecutive times and ask the catechist for make-up work.

**Absences:** Excessive absences affect the child's learning. More than 3 absences a semester is considered excessive and could result in the child not being ready to move on or to participate in the sacrament program.

**Alcohol / Tobacco / Drugs/ Pet Animals** are not permitted in the Parish Center.

**Behavior:** Children are expected to respect one another in words and actions. To benefit from a lesson, children should be attentive and cooperative. Toys, games and electronics should be left home. The code of conduct should be their guide to good behavior. Time-out will be used if a child disrupts the focus of the class and does not respond to correction. Parents will be notified of repeated mis-behavior. A meeting with the D.R.E., catechist and family might be necessary to reach a resolution.

**Calendar:** A calendar of classes and holidays for the school year is sent home in August. Additional calendars are available in the office and on our parish website. The calendar is difficult to plan because our children attend both the year-round and the ten-month schools.

**Catechists:** Volunteer parishioners serve as religious education teachers. These catechists earn *certification* through the Diocese and keep this current. Their fingerprints are processed and on file as is every Sacred Heart staff member's. These catechists are dedicated to assisting you in passing on the faith to your children. You are encouraged to chat with them before or after class or by appointment.

**Change of Address/ phone # / e-mail:** Notify the office when there is a change. It is important that our information is accurate.

**Class Time:**

Mondays....	3:45 pm to 5:00 pm	--	Grades K through 5.
Mondays....	5:30 pm to 6:30 pm	--	Grades 6 - 8 (Youth Group)
Mondays....	5:30 pm to 6:30 pm	--	Confirmation Years 1 & 2

**Communication:** Parents/ guardians and catechists work in partnership to help the child grow in faith. Good communication is essential to the success of this process. Sometimes misunderstandings or questions arise. Bring these to the attention of the catechist or director before or after class or call if you prefer an appointment.

**Emergency communication:** If a condition arises that cancels a scheduled class or event, every effort will be made to contact families via message to home phone, cell phone and email.

**Confidentiality:** When you register in our program, your family information is added to our catechetical database. This information and information in the child's record folder is for our use only and will not be released to any group inside or outside the parish unless parent/guardian permission is granted in writing.

**Curriculum:** Resources are reviewed annually and selected based on grade level. Doctrine, liturgy or morality and is correlated to the Diocesan Curriculum for each grade level. Each grade has specific prayers and saints to learn.

**Custody:** The catechetical staff wishes to cooperate with special custody arrangements of families to the best of their ability. Verbal requests are not sufficient; a copy of the proper legal documents must be presented to the D.R.E. to be kept on file. Procedures will then be arranged.

**Discipline:** One of the catechist's first concerns is to maintain an atmosphere in which the children feel comfortable and accepted so they can share faith and enjoy an optimum learning environment.

**Children should behave respectfully & courteously in words & actions towards adults and peers.**

**Children should participate positively and be on task.**

**Children should respect parish property and the property of others.**

**Consistent disruptive behavior will result in time-out and/or parent conferencing.**

**Dismissal:** All children will be picked up outside their classrooms by the designated parent or guardian. The D.R.E. and/or a catechist will be present until the last child is picked up. Children will not wander off or accept a ride from someone else.

**Children will be released to the adults whose names are listed at registration.**

**If someone else is picking up the child, the D.R.E. must be notified.**

**Early Dismissal:** If absolutely necessary, a child will be excused for an early dismissal but the parent/guardian must send a note, call in, or come to the office in advance. **For an early dismissal, the child and adult are asked to check out in the D.R.E. office.**

**Dress Code:** Appropriate clothing, such as their school attire, is required. Other clothing should be similar; modest body coverage and no offensive slogans. Shoes must be worn.

**Electronics:** Are not allowed in the religion classroom except for cell phones which must be on vibrate.

**Family:** Family and faith growth are important to us at Sacred Heart. You are the primary teachers and role models for your children; we are here to assist and support you in this. Contact the catechist or D.R.E. if you have a concern and hopefully we can resolve the matter.

**Family Catechesis:** During the year, there are monthly events designed for the family to grow in faith. Consult the calendar for these and plan to come!

**Family Handbook:** is available in the D.R.E. Office or on our parish website.

**High School:** Teens are encouraged to join our parish *Youth Gathering* which meets in the Parish Center the second Monday of every month from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. **Grades 9 through 12**, who anticipate receiving Confirmation, should enroll in the Confirmation classes held Mondays, 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm in the Parish Center.

**Home-Schooling** is not permitted. Under special circumstances, the child(ren) must be registered in our program and use materials provided by the D.R.E. An end-of-the-year evaluation will be done by the D.R.E. Home-schooling is not permitted for the Sacrament Preparation Sessions.

**Homework** is rarely given. Rather, after each class children will have papers with activities from their lesson. Use these as a springboard for discussing faith with your child.

**Human Sexuality:** The development of the child's sense of identity and self-worth and respect for the person is woven into the weekly text lessons and corresponds to the Diocese guidelines for education in human sexuality.

**Mass:** A child's faith foundation comes from the family. Worshiping together as a family is a beautiful way to strengthen your faith and grow together as family. Children do not understand the "Mass" but they do understand it must be special because your family attends faithfully.

**Medical:**

**Medication** It is preferred that medication be given to the child before coming to class if possible. If absolutely necessary, a parent/guardian may come at medication time and administer the medication to the child. If this is not

possible, the medication, with written directions, can be given to the D.R.E. to administer.

**Medical condition** of a child as reported by family on the registration form is passed on to the catechists on a need-to-know basis and kept confidential.

**Medical release form** is part of the registration packet and a signature of parent/ guardian is required by the Diocese.

**Medical emergency** In the event that your child suffers an injury or becomes ill during our session, every effort will be made to contact parent/guardian using the home and cell phone numbers indicated on the registration form. If no contact is made, the emergency contact person will be called. If necessary, the doctor and/or 911 will be called.

**Newsletter:** A monthly newsletter with calendar reminders and updates will be sent home with each child. Parents are asked to look for this each month and read it.

**Parish Center Office**

**Rita J. Sheridan, DRE**

**Phone 941- 639-9545**

**Email [rsheridan@sacredheartfl.org](mailto:rsheridan@sacredheartfl.org)**

**Policies and Procedures:** Each year the family is asked to review the handbook at our website or from the D.R.E.'s office and at registration time, to sign their agreement to support these.

**Prayer:** There are many ways to pray and the catechist uses these with the children along with the required memorized prayers of the Church.

**Registration:** In August, families are asked to *register* in order to keep our records accurate. The fee is \$25 for one child and \$40 for two or more children. Fees are payable to Sacred Heart Church; partial payments are accepted. The fee will be waived for families who cannot afford it.

**Release Forms:** Required by the Diocese of Venice are part of the August registration packet. These are to be signed and returned along with the other registration forms.

**Retention:** If a child has dropped out of the program during the year or has excessive absences, retention could result.

**Sacrament Preparation:** Programs are separate and in addition to the religious education classes and involve parents. Church law states that the preparation and reception of sacraments occur in the parish where the family is registered. At least one year of prior religious instruction is required. All Sacrament prep programs are 2 years.

Information and a calendar are available for each sacrament preparation program.

Preparation for *Reconciliation* and *First Communion* is open to any child age 7 or older whose family is registered in the parish. At least one year of prior formal religious education is required.

*Sacrament of Confirmation Preparation* - Teens in grades 9 through 12 are invited to participate in the two year preparation program if their family is registered in our parish. This consists of weekly religious education sessions and scheduled preparation sessions for teens, parents and sponsors.

**Safe Environment** is a Diocesan Child-Abuse Prevention Program offered as an annual lesson for each grade. Attendance is expected; if attendance at the first scheduled class is missed, the class must be made up.

**Saints:** The saints are important in the history and heritage of our church as role models of what we can be. A saint name is used in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Each grade focuses on learning about several saints.

**Special Needs Children** are welcomed into our program if we can adequately accommodate their needs.

**Supervision:** Children who arrive early for class are not allowed in the classroom until the catechist or aide arrives. They will be supervised in the Center. Children must remain in the Parish Center until they are picked up.

**Visitors:** Parents/guardians are welcome to visit their child's class at anytime and a child may bring a relative or friend to class as a visitor with the approval of the director and catechist. Stop in the D.R.E.'s office first.

**Weather Emergency:** Classes will be canceled if weather conditions or predictions are severe and threatening. We follow the directives from the county officials that are issued via public media. Use your own judgment if there is a sudden change in weather; do not take risks.

**FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR CHILDREN WE ASK YOU  
TO REVIEW THESE GUIDELINES WITH YOUR  
CHILDREN:**

- 1/ When you arrive and enter the Center, stay inside.**
- 2/ Do not enter the classroom until your teacher is present.**
- 3/ Be courteous in words and actions to everyone.**
- 4/ Avoid words or actions that could hurt others.**
- 5/ In class: Listen, Participate, Be on task and Ask questions.**
- 6/ Leave gum, candy, toys, games and fun things at home.**
- 7/ Respect Church property as you use the Center.**
- 8/ Always walk ... inside and outside.**
- 9/ At dismissal watch for your pickup... Do not wander off...**
- 10/ Go home with the person who always comes for you. If someone else comes, tell your catechist before you leave.**

**Parents, please:**

- 1/ When you drop off your children for class watch until they are safely inside their classroom with the catechist present;**
- 2/ If the usual person is not coming for your children at dismissal time, let the D.R.E. know... send a note, call or stop in before class.**
- 3/ Tell your children to wait for their regular pickup and do not accept a ride from anyone else, even friends who are being helpful.**
- 4/ If you are delayed at dismissal time do not worry; the D.R.E and/or a catechist remains with children until all are claimed!**
- 5/ Make your child's attendance a priority in your busy day and notify us of absences.**
- 6/ Contact us with questions or concerns; we're here for you.**

