

Holy Redeemer Catholic Church  
*Religious Education Program*

***2023-2024***  
***Parent Handbook***

Office of Faith Formation  
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**Fr. Jason B. Gries, Pastor**  
**Anne M. Stofleth-Martin,**  
**Pastoral Associate**

## MISSION STATEMENT

*THE MISSION OF THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION IS TO ASSIST ALL PEOPLE IN LEARNING AND LIVING THE MYSTERY OF JESUS CHRIST.*

To serve this mission, through the help of God's grace, we offer formal and informal instruction and formation whereby each individual may embrace a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and live as His follower to the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

Sincere cooperation between parish staff and member families is necessary to bring about the formation of children and youth. Such formation includes their

- ✠ growth in understanding and acceptance of **Catholic doctrine;**
- ✠ awareness of, and active participation in, **Catholic liturgical and sacramental life;**
- ✠ embracing the fundamental principles of **Catholic morality;**
- ✠ exercising the life of **Catholic prayer.**

## PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

**Parents are the primary educators responsible for the spiritual growth of their children.**

The goal of the parish staff is to assist you in this awesome responsibility. As stated in The Catechism of the Catholic Church # 2226:

“Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years... Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.”

Pope John Paul II stated in 1979, On Catechesis in Our Time # 23:

“Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Jesus Christ works in fullness for the transformation of human beings.”

As Catholics, **we have an obligation to attend Mass each weekend** and teach our children about the Mass by word and example. It is the parents’ responsibility to insure that their children attend Mass weekly. **Religious Education does not take the place of Mass nor does it fulfill the obligation of participating in the Mass.**

## PARISH STAFF AND FAMILY

The term *catechist* is used in a broad sense to designate one who, directed by the parish staff, participates in formal and informal religious education ministry. All members of a community of believers are called to share in this ministry of witnessing to the faith.

Recognizing that **parents are the primary catechists of their children**, the parish staff understands that the family, as the domestic church, is the place where faith is planted and nurtured. We are committed to assist you in the cultivation of the on-going development of faith already begun in your home. We encourage each individual, adult and child, to develop his or her personal gifts and to grow, as Jesus did, in wisdom and grace.

We wish to offer children opportunities to strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ by hearing and experiencing His words within the witnessing parish community. To this end the parish staff strives to:

- ✠ provide an environment where Gospel values are fostered.
- ✠ Provide opportunities for prayer, reflection and liturgical celebrations to stimulate each one’s relationship with Christ.
- ✠ Provide intellectual challenges appropriate for each level.

- ✚ Invite and encourage parish catechists, as witnesses of the Good News, to participate in opportunities to update and deepen their faith.
- ✚ Offer sacramental programs that invite family and parish participation.
- ✚ Challenge our students to bring the teachings of Jesus into their lives and, by service to others, into their families and the larger community.

These goals are best met in parish community life. Together as a Christian faith team of parish staff and family, we, by reason of our Baptism, can profess and bring to fulfillment the values and promises of the Kingdom of God.

## PROGRAM FEATURES

The Elementary and Junior High Religious Education Program at Holy Redeemer is designed for students not attending a Catholic school. All catechists and catechesis are under the direction of the Office of Faith Formation and the guidance of the Pastor. It is our expectation that all parish children are schooled in the Religious Education Program or Religious Education of Holy Redeemer School.

Traditional classes are available for children who are 5 years old by August 1st through eighth grade, and are staffed by trained volunteer catechists. This program is Sunday Mornings, 10 AM – 11:30 AM (following the 9:00 AM Mass.)

Each grade explores the four pillars of the Catholic faith: Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer, on an age appropriate level. The books used are United States Conference of Catholic Bishop (USCCB) approved, based on the curriculum designated for each grade level. Kindergarten through 6th grade uses the “*Word of Life*” series from The Augustine Institute and the 7th grade – 8th grade uses “*Faith and Life Series*” from Ignatius Press. Curriculum guidelines and series correlations are available in the Office of Faith Formation upon request.

**REGISTRATION** – Registration forms are available online at [www.holyredeemerchurch.org](http://www.holyredeemerchurch.org) or from the Office of Faith Formation at any time.

To be considered as having completed a year in religious education, **a student must register into the Religious Education Program and begin attending classes before September 1.** Exceptions may be made in cases of prolonged illness or if the child is new to the parish and has been enrolled in another Religious Education program or a Catholic School.

**2023-2024 FEES** – There is a flat fee of \$60 per student per year. **Fees are due on the first day of classes, but may be paid in advance.** Please contact the Pastoral Associate if you are unable to make payments at this time. Payment options are available.

Families who withdraw children from the program **will not** receive a refund.

**CLASS TIME** – Sessions are on Sunday mornings at 10 AM – 11:30 AM (following the 9:00 AM Mass). Your cooperation in eliminating unnecessary tardiness is greatly appreciated.

**ARRIVAL TIME** – **No child may be dropped off at the school before 10:00 AM on Sunday.** All Kindergarten through 4th grade students are to be escorted to their classroom by their parents or legal guardians. All Kindergarten through 4th grade students will be released from the classroom to their parents or legal guardians. No student is to remain outside of the building, waiting until it is time to go to his/her classroom or for pick up at the conclusion of class.

**CALENDAR** – Prior to the beginning of the school year, a calendar listing class days, assemblies, sacraments and other special events will be available. Flyers announcing individual special events or changes to the calendar will be sent home throughout the year and posted on the parish website, as deemed necessary.

**ATTENDANCE / MAKE-UP WORK**– Attendance is taken each week. We appreciate your efforts to promote regular weekly attendance by your child. If you know that your child will be missing class, please call and inform the Office of Faith Formation [812-424-8344 x 324] or email at [asmartin@evdio.org](mailto:asmartin@evdio.org) ahead of time. The catechetical staff will appreciate the notice as the number of children attending may affect a lesson plan. The catechetical staff is instructed to call the parents if a student misses more than two consecutive classes.

When your child is absent they will be marked with an unexcused absence. Because it is our obligation to evaluate the readiness of the candidates for reception of sacraments, no more than **three unexcused absences** will be permitted during the course of the Religious Education year. To do so may result in a review with the Pastoral Associate, Pastor and the Parent/Guardian. **The possible consequences could be postponement of sacrament reception at this time, or in the case of non-sacramental prep years, the possibility of not moving to the next grade during the following year.**

If a child must leave class early, a parent note must be presented to the catechist before class starts, and the catechist will send the note to the office. The catechist will send the child to the office at the time stated on the parent note. The parent must meet the child at the school office to sign the child out.

**Attendance at Mass is an integral part of the religious education program. It is expected that students enrolled in the program be fully aware of their Sunday Mass and Holy Day obligation and fulfill that obligation faithfully by attending Mass with their families.**

**DRESS CODE** - Appearance should be clean and neat. The following are not allowed:

- \* bare feet,exposed thighs, midriffs, backs or shoulders,
- \* mini-skirts,
- \* t-shirts with un-Christian messages

**CLASSROOMS** – Classes take place in the North-wing (Junior High Wing) on the second floor.

**MATERIALS** – Each student will be provided with a textbook, activity book, and a pen or pencil. A folder with paper or a notebook may also be provided at the Catechist's discretion. The Fifth grade will also receive a Bible for use for current and future years of formation. These materials are to be brought to class each week unless otherwise stated by their catechist. **Families will be charged the cost of replacing lost books.**

Additional materials for sacramental preparation will be provided along with accompanying syllabus.

**REPORTING ILLNESS AND INJURY –**

- \* Any and every illness or injury of a student in the Religious Education Program should be reported immediately to the Pastoral Associate.
- \* Universal Precautions will be used, including gloves, bleach/disinfectant for spills and leak-proof bags for collecting fluid-soaked items. No person should come into contact with blood or any other bodily fluids without taking necessary precautions.
- \* Only the Pastoral Associate or Lead Catechist will administer first aid, unless they designate someone who is more qualified, such as a parent, who is a medical professional.
- \* If a student is seriously ill or injured, no one should move the injured person, unless he/she is accompanied by his/her parent/guardian or secondary emergency contact.
- \* If a student's parent/guardian or emergency contact cannot be reached, the Pastoral Associate will immediately call emergency medical services and have the injured student transported to the emergency room.
- \* The Pastoral Associate will accompany the student until a parent/guardian arrives.
- \* Medical information forms, including emergency contact information, must be kept on all students and readily accessible in case of emergency.
- \* The Religious Education Program will defer to diocesan policy and procedure on all matters concerning the health and safety of students and Religious Education personnel.

Emergency Medical Forms need to be filled out for **each student** in our program. They may be found in the Registration Packets. Although we anticipate no real need to use these, diocesan policy requires us to have them on file. We appreciate your cooperation.

**SAFETY ISSUES** – Please use **only** the tunnel doors from Church or the School Office (door #2) door for entering or leaving the building. The parking lot at the beginning and ending of Masses is very busy and dangerous.

Children in Kindergarten through Fourth will only be dismissed when an adult or older sibling comes to the School Office door for them. **Thank you for your help in these important matters.**

**CLASS CANCELLATIONS** –If a situation arises where Sunday classes need to be canceled, announcements will be aired through the radio and television media, South Central Communications (WIKY), 14 WFIE-TV, and 7 WTVW-TV.

**COMMUNICATION** – All parents will be provided a calendar of activities and important sacramental dates at the beginning of the school year. Catechists may send home flyers as the need may arise. The e-newsletter, the Parish Newsletter, and Parish bulletin are on the Parish website: [www.holyredeemerchurch.org](http://www.holyredeemerchurch.org).

**GUESTS** – Peer Guests are welcome to join a class (friends, cousins, etc.); however, a guest must be registered as a visitor in the program and an emergency form must be signed by a parent or guardian for their protection as well as the integrity of the Religious Education Program.

**DISCIPLINARY ACTION** –If, in the opinion of the Pastoral Associate, or an individual catechist, a student does not comply with the Code of Conduct, a student may be sent to the office during class time, and his/her parents will be called to pick up their child. Upon notification of the Pastor, repeated or serious offenses may be grounds for suspension or expulsion from the program. Parent conferences may be called at the discretion of the Pastoral Associate.

At the beginning of the school year, catechists will communicate their expectations of behavior while the students are on parish grounds or while on field trips. No manner of corporal punishment will be tolerated in disciplining students.

**PICTURES** – Holy Redeemer Catholic Church reserves the right to take photos of participants of Holy Redeemer Parish Programs. These photos will be used in accordance with the normal business practices of the Parish, examples being in the Parish bulletin, the e-newsletter, Parish website or Parish promotional materials. Photographs of children will not be used without written permission from at least one of the parents. Signature serves as permission.

**COMPUTER LAB USAGE** – Your child's class may use the school computer lab at some time during the year. All users are expected to use the computers and computer networks in a responsible, ethical, and polite manner. Teachers will provide guidance and monitoring of the program to the best of their ability as a regular instructional activity. Controlling all materials on a global network is impossible and an industrious user may discover inappropriate information or perform inappropriate actions in spite of adult supervision. Misuse of the internet can result in loss of that child's privilege to use the lab again. The parent/guardian is responsible for any damage caused by the student's inappropriate use of the internet system.

## **PARENTS & SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Parents of students preparing for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are required to attend Parent Sacramental Preparation meetings. These dates are listed on the Religious Education calendar.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

### **Holy Redeemer Religious Education Conduct Policy -**

Holy Redeemer Religious Education pledges itself to the spiritual development of all parishioners. This policy focuses on the children and youth attending religious education classes, Sunday mornings, Liturgy of the Word, and Sacramental preparation. Enrollment in the religious education programs at Holy Redeemer indicates the readiness to comply with our policy and guidelines.

The religious education program will support the efforts of families to develop responsible, Christian values in our youth. Character formation begins at home. You are the first and foremost teachers in your child's life. In an effort to foster the development of self-disciplined Christian values in its youth, Holy Redeemer Parish expects students to behave in a responsible and moral manner. Students are responsible for their actions. Catechists, the DRE or the Priests will take appropriate action when inappropriate conduct is exhibited. It takes only one student to disrupt the entire faith learning of a classroom. The continued disruption of class by a student will not be tolerated.

Holy Redeemer believes that appropriate conduct is promoted by acknowledging good conduct and by positive reinforcement of individuals and the group. Rules exist for the protection of the group and the orderly operation of the program.

Religious Education classes are a time for sharing God's Kingdom. This sharing is a privilege and must be treated as such. Catechists deserve full support and cooperation. This includes listening, following directions, and participating in the activities of the class. **Cell phones or other entertainment devices not required for class are not permitted.**

### **CHRISTIAN CODE OF CONDUCT – as an expression of my Christianity**

1. **I WILL SHOW KINDNESS**
2. **I WILL HELP OTHERS WHEN ASKED**
3. **I WILL LISTEN WHEN OTHERS SPEAK**
4. **I WILL HONOR AND OBEY THOSE IN AUTHORITY**
5. **I WILL RESPECT OTHER PERSONS AND THEIR PROPERTY**
6. **I WILL PARTICIPATE IN CLASS**
7. **I WILL LOVE AND ACCEPT MYSELF (AS GOD MADE ME)**
8. **I WILL DEVELOP THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN ME**
9. **I WILL PUT MY FAITH INTO ACTION**



## 10. I WILL TREAT ALL PARISH PROPERTY WITH PRIDE AND RESPECT

### SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

The Religious Education Program follows the “Directives for the Safe Environment Program” at Holy Redeemer Parish and all policies and procedures promulgated by the Diocese of Evansville.

The Safe Environment Program was set forth by Bishop Siegel in response to the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Bishop Siegel’s vision includes the following points:

- Youth are to be recognized and valued by all as true gifts from God.
- Education and training to recognize the signs of violation of children and young people shall be provided to all paid staff members, volunteers engaged in ministry to and for children, and parents.
- Education shall be provided for children about the potential for abuse, especially sexual abuse, and ways to respond should they be victims of it.
- Paid staff members and volunteers who have regular contact with children in the course of their work shall be evaluated so as to determine their suitability for association with children and young people.
- Paid staff members and volunteers shall accept responsibility to report immediately any suspected acts of abuse of children and young people in their charge to appropriate civil and church authorities without concern for retribution from the accused or employers/institution in whose name they minister.

**RIGHT TO AMEND** – This handbook is meant to provide the parent/guardian with helpful information on how parish staff and volunteers intend to go about the work of Parish Religious Education. It is not meant to cover every situation that may occur. Holy Redeemer reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified, in writing, if changes are made to any procedure or information contained in this handbook.

**PARENTS SHOULD READ THE ENTIRE PARENT HANDBOOK  
BEFORE SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT.**

The Handbook can be found on the Parish website at  
<https://www.holyredeemerchurch.org/k-8-religious-education.html>

***Parent Signature Page***

I have read the 2023-2024 Parent Handbook and agree to follow the Religious Education Program policies and procedures as stated.

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Parent signature

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Date

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Parent signature

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Date

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