

# St. John the Evangelist Religious Education Parent/Student Handbook

## St. John the Evangelist Religious Education Program

St. John's is dedicated to helping our students grow in faith in a loving, safe environment that spreads the true message of our Catholic faith; so that our students may come to recognize the love of Christ and to help them participate more fully in the life of the Catholic Church.

### Program Policies for 2020-2021

In order for our Program to run smoothly and ensure safety measures while your children are in our care, we ask that you please read our Parent/Student Handbook in its entirety. Included you will find guidelines for safety, student behavior while attending our program, as well as guidelines for our policy on absences and tardiness for our students. Please read over the policies for our Program, which follows the guidelines of the Archdiocese. You will be asked to digitally sign your registration form. Your digital signature will serve as your agreement in following the policies of the program stated in this handbook throughout this program year.

In light of our current circumstance with the Covid-19 pandemic, we may have to alter some of the policies pending the guidelines from the CDC, state and local government, and from the Archdiocese. Any amendments required for the safety and well being of our students are to be considered agreed to with your digital signature. We will make all necessary amendments known to our parents and guardians via email or Flock note messaging.

### Safety Policy

#### (\*In-person and for online/virtual learning)

These rules are set in place to ensure the safety of our students attending our Program and we follow the guidelines set by the Archdiocese. Your cooperation is crucial to your child's safety.

1. All children in our program (grades 1-8) are to be escorted by their parents to their classrooms and parents remain with their child until the Catechist arrives. \*  
**(\* This policy may be subject to change pending CDC/Archdiocese recommendations and guidelines. We will inform parents/guardians of any changes necessary in regard to change in drop-off, pick-up policies at the start of the program year.)**
2. The Faith Formation building will be locked 5 minutes after the start of sessions and will remain locked until 5 minutes before dismissal. If you arrive after the doors are locked, you will need to go around front to the main entrance and ring the bell. A staff member or hallway monitor will let you in.
3. A **new** Pick-up Release form is required to be filled out at the start of the program by the parent or legal guardian, stating which adult besides the parent has permission to pick up their child. This person is required to be an adult, **18 years or older** (including siblings – no exceptions). Without written permission, we are unable to release your child to anyone other than the parent. **A new Pick-up Release form is required each program year.**
4. Parking is in the **Main Church parking lot only**. It is illegal to park on the street in front of the Chapel, on McMahan Pl., or in front of the Convent. The only place to park is in the Main Church parking lot. Please use the lit walkways to gain access to the Program's lot.
5. The Faith Formation parking lot will be closed during sessions and the lower lot is available only for volunteers who assist in the Program. All volunteers have placards on their cars and are the only cars permitted to park in this lot throughout the program year.

6. At dismissal time, the doors will be opened 5 minutes before the end of sessions and all parents will gather in the Gym until the bell rings. At that time, please pick up your child from their classroom and remain with them in the hallway until you exit the building. (**\*The dismissal policy may be subject to change pending CDC/Archdiocese guidelines.\***)
7. Pending the guidelines in place from the CDC/Archdiocese at the start of the program, facial masks, social distancing, hand sanitizing, and other safety measures may be required for in-person learning. These guidelines will be given to parents before the start of the program and may be subject to change based on current safety guidelines provided to us at that time.

### **Mass Participation**

**It is expected that all children in our Religious Education Program attend Mass each weekend and on Holy Days of Obligation.** This is an integral part of your child understanding and growing in their faith. Parents are first and foremost the example of the faith to their children. We are here to assist you in helping your child learn the teachings of the Catholic Church and enhance what is being taught at home. We hope to assist you throughout the year in providing your children with the best faith foundation for their future. \*Should Masses not be available in person or if your child has an underlying health issue that prevents them from attending Mass in person, they would be required to watch Mass at home via some online or televised Catholic Mass to fulfill their obligation of the Church. (For Sacramental students and families, see Sacramental requirements below.)

### **Weekend Mass Schedule**

#### **Main Church**

Saturday 4:00pm, 5:30pm, 7:00pm Spanish Mass (OLQA)

Sunday 7:30am, 9:00am, 11:30am, and 5:30pm

#### **Sacrament of Reconciliation Schedule**

Main Church: Saturdays 3:15-4:00pm, 5:00-5:30pm

OLQA: Monday – Friday after 12:00pm Mass, Saturday after 9:00am Mass

Spanish 6:00-6:45pm

### **Sacramental Program for 2<sup>nd</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade students & families**

**\*All requirements for sacramental students may be amended pending the pandemic situation in our area. Parents will be notified via email if any amendments are necessary.**

Sacramental year students will be given special Mass attendance cards/books to be used throughout the year. By enrolling your child into our Sacramental Program, you are agreeing and committing to bring your children to Mass every weekend, as well as Holy Days of Obligation throughout the year. You are also agreeing to use our method of recording Mass attendance weekly and that you will bring your child's record booklet to session monthly to be recorded. (\*If we are still in a state where Mass is not available because of the pandemic, then Mass reflections will be required to be completed and handed in weekly as proof of attendance.)

There will be mandatory Sacramental parent meetings/practices during the year, as well as a Family Catechesis event you will be required to attend with your child. You will be asked at registration to sign and commit to helping your child fully prepare for their sacramental preparations throughout the year and attend all required parent activities and meetings throughout your child's sacrament year.

The parent meetings are set up to help answer any questions you might have and keep everyone informed of the important dates, expectations throughout this special preparation year. You are required to attend all parent meetings. If you are unable to attend during the scheduled meeting time, you need to reach out to the director to make arrangements to meet at another time.

Our Family Catechesis events are intended to strengthen your family's understanding of the faith and/or a particular aspect of the faith. This also allows a special opportunity for you to participate together and share your faith together as a family.

There are required Sacramental fees for both Confirmation and Communion that will be due in November of 2020, along with formally registering your child for the reception of their Sacrament.

You will receive your child's sacramental calendar by November 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. This calendar will contain sacrament dates practice dates, Family Catechesis dates, etc. Please mark your calendars of all these important dates, as attendance is required for these events.

### **Tardiness and Early Pick up Policy**

To help prevent disruptions to the classes already in progress, please make every effort to arrive on time. Should a child repeatedly be tardy (3 or more times), the Director will address the issue and a switch in session placement may be suggested to accommodate the family's schedule.

**With the exception of a family emergency, early pick-ups are not permitted.** Please plan your schedules accordingly and we ask that you make every effort not to schedule non-emergency appointments on the day of your child's session. The Director will address any repeated early pick-ups and a switch in sessions may be suggested to accommodate the family's schedule.

### **Home Study/Online/Virtual Classroom Program Policy**

This is a new program developed out of necessity of the current situation we are in due to the pandemic. If you register for this program, you will be held to the same expectations and requirements we have in place for those families registered in our traditional in person program.

As there is a Virtual Classroom aspect to this program, your child is expected to attend their Virtual class scheduled every other week, just as they would if attending in person. The students should be on time for their class, come prepared, act respectfully to their teacher and fellow students and follow the behavior guidelines set up at the start of the class. Behavior policies will be the same as we have for the in person class.

Since this a new program, we reserve the right to make amendment to our policies as deemed necessary for the safety and well being of all our students in this program. By registering into this program, you are agreeing to follow all policies, including any amendments deemed necessary by the Director for the well being of the students, volunteers and overall program.

### **Dress Code**

Children are expected to wear modest clothing, which reflects the dignity of our Religious Education Program, as well as the reflection of who we are and what we believe here at St. John's. All children are expected to be appropriately dressed while attending our Program.

Modest dress would include no short skirts, short shorts (during the warmer months, Bermuda length would be acceptable), tank tops, spaghetti straps, low cut tops, short dresses, etc. Clothing may not contain any messages, which are negative, offensive, disrespectful, or having anything deemed as degrading or demeaning of the human person in any way.

Discretion will be left up to the Director as to what is acceptable. Any child who is not in compliance with the dress code or dressed inappropriately will be sent to the office and the parent will be called to either bring alternative clothes or to pick up their child from the program.

### **Special Needs/Medical Conditions**

Please inform the Director at registration if your child has any special needs or medical conditions, so that we can make any special accommodations needed for your child. This information should be included on your child's Emergency Form.

Medication of any kind is not permitted on a student. If special emergency medication is necessary for your child, please speak to the Director about the Archdiocese's policy on emergency medicine (Ex. Epi-Pens) and there is a form that you will need to fill out for your child.

For children who have special education needs, a copy of your child's IEP is requested to help us serve your child in the best way possible.

### **Food Policy - Allergies**

St. John's Religious Education program is a "Food Free" building during sessions. No food is permitted into the building. Please have your child eat & drink any snacks prior to coming into the building. Any food brought into the building will need to be discarded upon entry.

### **Absentee Policy**

Regular attendance is expected throughout the Program calendar year and especially with our shortened in-person sessions throughout the year. We do understand that children get sick or an emergency may occur. However, please make every effort to bring your child to class on time each week for the continuity of the Program and for your child to get the most of out of the Program.

1. Two absences will be permitted during the Program calendar year. Since we will only be meeting approximately in person 15 times during the program year, absences are only permitted for reasons of sickness, family emergencies, etc. Please keep your commitment to regular attendance so that your child/children receive the most benefit from their weekly lessons.
2. If your child is going to be absent, please email [FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org](mailto:FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org) to inform the Director that your child will be absent and include the reason for their absence for our records. Your child is required to complete the classwork scheduled for that week and it must be submitted prior to the next class lesson.
3. If more than 2 absences occur with the in-person learning, your child may be required to do a summer make up session to be able to be promoted to the next grade level. Summer make up lessons will incur an additional fee for the time needed to complete the make up session and assessment of your child. The summer fee will be \$20 per lesson and assessment per child. The Director will determine the child's readiness upon final assessment to be promoted to the next grade level.
4. If a child is enrolled in a Sacramental year (2<sup>nd</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>), it is imperative that he/she attends class regularly and does not exceed the permitted absences. If more than 2 absences occur during in-person sessions, it will be determined by the director if make up sessions need to be scheduled and/or that a student should be delayed in making their Sacrament until the following year.

### **Class Participation and Preparedness**

Participation is key for your child to receive the most benefits of our program. Your child is expected to come fully prepared for class. This would include bringing their workbook, Bible in the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade level, pencil/pen, and any other supplies requested by the Catechist at the start of the year.

Your child should complete all assignments and homework given by their teacher and hand it in by their next class session.

Should your child lose their book during the year, the replacement book fee is \$30.

### **Homework Policy**

Homework is a useful tool to help children review, use, and retain information learned in the classroom. Our faith is an integral part of our lives, so it is important that the lessons taught in the program are reinforced and practiced at home. Since parents are the primary teachers and role models for their children, we encourage you to talk to your children about what they learned, assist them with their lessons, pray with your children, and help them to put their faith into action so they can grow in their relationship with God.

With our new online program abilities to submit weekly assignments and complete assessments, we will expect that the weekly assignments be completed in a timely manner and be done prior to the next week's lesson whether in person or online. Parents will be notified should a student not complete their assignments on time and asked that they submit them the following day to maintain their level of comprehension before moving to the next lesson.

### **Behavior/Discipline**

For the best learning environment for all of our students and Catechists, it is expected that the students attending our Program show respect to their Catechist, our staff, their fellow classmates, and to the Program's property. Our goal is to provide a loving, safe environment for all our students to learn about our Catholic faith whether in-person or in a virtual classroom.

Expectations for each child who attends our program for both in person and with their online classes:

1. Respect the Catechist and other students in their classroom.
2. Arrive on time weekly and come prepared to class.
3. If attending virtual classroom, arriving on time to the class schedule is expected.
4. Listen to the lesson from their Catechist without interruption or in accordance to the virtual classroom rules.
5. Raise one's hand when wanting to speak or answer a question.
6. Complete any assignment given, as well as prepare for any quizzes or class assessments.
7. Turn off all cell phones or any electronic devices upon entering our program and while attending virtual online class. (See cell phone policy)
8. Respect the property of the Program both inside and outside of the building.
9. Follow all virtual class rules set up by the Catechist and Director of the program.

To help ensure the overall loving and safe environment of the program, we will enforce the following behavior policy for any student who is unable to behave and/or is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in their classroom:

1. Upon a student's disruptive behavior in class (in person or online), the student will be sent to the office or contacted directly by the Director, along with the parent/guardian of the child. The disruptive behavior will be addressed and corrected. A disciplinary form will be filled out and signed by both the student and Director of the program. The child will be sent back to class, make an apology to the teacher, and the discipline form will be filed.

2. Should the disruptive behavior happen a second time and the student is sent back to the office, the disciplinary form will be filled out again and the parents will be contacted to meet with the Director to discuss the behavior. If during the virtual online class, the parents will be contacted and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss if they will be permitted back to the virtual online classroom. The parents will be asked to sign the form this time as well.
3. Upon the third disruptive behavior, the Director will contact the parents to pick up their child and a follow up consultation meeting will be scheduled at a future date to discuss the best option going forward for all involved.

If a child physically harms or endangers any person in our program, they will be asked to leave the program immediately.

### **Cell phones and Electronic Device Policy**

Cell phones or electric devices are not permitted to be used during class time, for any reason. A cell phone may be on the child for emergency purposes only, and the cell phone or any electrical device must be turned off (not muted) during class time. If a cell phone or electronic device is seen being used, it will be given to the Director and the parent may retrieve it at the end of session in the Main Office.

No child or parent is permitted to record, take photographs, video, etc. of any child, classmate, Catechist, staff, or any person while in our Program. This will also be the rule for all virtual online classes. If a child is caught doing so, they will be immediately removed from the classroom and the parent will come to pick up their child. If used online as described above, disciplinary actions will be taken and determined by the Director at that time.

### **Bathroom Policy**

In following our Safe Environment directive, the bathroom policy states that no adults are permitted to use the children's bathroom during sessions at any time. Should you need to use the bathroom while in the Faith Formation building, please see one of the staff members and we will direct you to our family bathroom.

### **Email Communication and Family Information**

Email is our main source of communication with our families. It is necessary for our families to check their emails regularly to see if there are any cancellations or important messages sent from about the Program.

#### **Please note:**

1. If your email, home address, cell, or any other important family information changes, please contact the Faith Formation office immediately to update our records.
2. Please add the Faith Formation email to your contacts so that our messages don't go to a spam folder.
3. Enrolling into our program, you are automatically added to our Flocknote messaging center for the program year and for the Church. This is not for use for regular correspondence, but as a messaging platform. If you any questions about a message and need a response back, please email Mrs. DiBiase directly at: [FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org](mailto:FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org).

### **Emergency Closure Policy**

**For weather related closing**, we follow the Mahopac School District. If Mahopac closes for bad weather, then St. John's programs are cancelled that day. If Mahopac cancels after-school activities due to weather, then we will cancel our activities and sessions as well.

However, if Mahopac has a morning delay, then we will remain in session. Please note we follow Mahopac School District for weather related closings only. For example, should Mahopac schools close due to a power outage, but we have power, then we will still hold session.

In case of an emergency closing, we will use WHUD to notify our families. Please sign up for St. John Religious Education text alerts through WHUD by going to the website: <http://www.whud.com/storm-center/>. Be sure to choose St. John's Religious Ed Classes in Mahopac, as there are other St. John's parishes that use this system and you want to be sure to receive our alerts.

Please remember to check your phones before heading out to session in case of an emergency closure.

### **Faith Formation Contact Information**

Lori DiBiase  
Director/Coordinator of Religious Education  
[FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org](mailto:FaithFormation@sjtemahopac.org)  
845-628-6464 (during sessions)  
845-628-2006 ext. 113 Parish House

For any emergencies where you need to reach our Faith Formation staff member during your child's session time, please call our Program office at 845-628-6464. For any non-emergency communication or questions, please email the Director for assistance.

We are here to assist your family with any needs you may have throughout the year. Feel free to contact our office at any time should you have a concern or need, so we can see how we may be able to assist you and your family.

We look forward to a faith-filled year with your children and family. May God bless each of our families, our Catechists, and staff throughout the year, as we all work together to bring your children closer to God as they learn about our beautiful Catholic faith.

In Christ,

Lori DiBiase  
Director/Coordinator of Religious Education