

# HANDBOOKS

## Section 9— Religious Education

1. Parent Handbook
2. Home School Policy

## Section 12 — Finance Council

1. Financial Council Constitution

## Section 13 — Pastoral Council

1. Pastoral Council Constitution

## Section 14 — Tuition Assistance

1. Tuition Assistance Policy

## Section 17 —St Paul School

1. SPCS Student-Parent Handbook –3 Units

## Section 18 — Faculty Handbook

1. SPCS Faculty Handbook

## Section 19 — School Advisory Council

1. Constitution

St. Paul Catholic Church  
*Religious Education*  
**Parent Policy Handbook**

Revised– May 2022



1755 West Harrison Blvd.  
Valparaiso, IN 46385  
Phone: 219-464-8502  
Website: [www.stpaulre.org](http://www.stpaulre.org)  
Email: [stpaulre1755@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulre1755@gmail.com)

## The Precepts of the Church

(from CCC, 2041-2043)

1. *You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.*
2. *You shall confess your sins at least once per year.*
3. *You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.*
4. *You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence establishing by the Church.*
5. *You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.*

## Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

1. **Life and dignity of the Human Person-** *As the root of justice is the belief of dignity and the worth of all people. Every person, every life, is precious.*
2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation-** *The family is sacred and must be supported and strengthened. Much of this strength comes from being an active part of one's community where we can work together for the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.*
3. **Rights and Responsibilities-** *Each person has a responsibility to help protect for all people the basic rights required for human decency, including the right to life.*
4. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable-** *The Gospel call of Jesus Christ challenges us to place the needs of the poor and vulnerable first, even before our own comforts and wants.*
5. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers-** *Every person has the right to work and earn a living. By honoring fair wages, we assist people in being active participants in God's ongoing work of creation through honest and meaningful employment.*
6. **Solidarity-** *As members of a global family, we are all connected by an intricate web of life, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. This interconnectedness requires us to live together, united as brothers and sisters, in relationships that are marked by peace, love, and reconciliation instead of war, hatred, and mistrust.*
7. **Care for God's Creation-** *Care for God's Creation is a requirement of our faith. We are called to live our faith in relationship with all of God's creation, protecting both people and planet.*

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## Security Procedure

For security purposes St. Paul Education Center doors are locked during class hours. If you arrive at door #1 (by the flagpole) please press the buzzer and someone will assist you. The arrival and dismissal will only take place through this same door. The doors will be locked at all times. Only children who are enrolled in the Religious Education program will be admitted during class time. Parents who would like to meet with the director may call 219-464-8502 to make an appointment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM STAFF

**Pastor** ..... Rev. Douglas Mayer

**Associate Pastor** ..... Rev. Roque Meraz

**Director** ..... Diane Matthys

**Administrative Assistant** ..... Jennifer Cortesi

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

*(Located in St. Paul Education Center)*

1755 Harrison Blvd.

Valparaiso, IN 46385

Phone: 219-464-8502

Fax: 219-531-6854

Email: [stpaulre1755@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulre1755@gmail.com)

Website: [www.stpaulre.org](http://www.stpaulre.org)

OFFICE HOURS

12:00 noon -8:00 pm **Monday- Wednesday**

8:30 am- 4:30 pm **Thursday**

8:00 am– 12:00 pm: **Saturday**

**How to Pray the Rosary** (con't)

**The Five Joyful Mysteries**

*To be prayed on Monday & Saturday*

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Birth of Jesus
4. The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple
5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

**The Five Glorious Mysteries**

*To be prayed on Wednesday and Sunday*

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Decent of the Holy Spirit
4. The Assumption of Mary into Heaven
5. The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth

**The Five Sorrowful Mysteries**

*To be prayed on Tuesday & Friday*

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion

**The Five Luminous Mysteries**

*To be prayed on Thursday*

1. Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan
2. The Wedding Feast at Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

*\*during Ordinary Time the Mysteries of the Rosary are prayed as described above*

*\*\*during Advent the Joyful Mysteries are prayed on Sunday instead of the Glorious Mysteries*

*\*\*\*during Lent the Sorrowful Mysteries are prayed on Sunday instead of the Glorious Mysteries*

**The Pascal Mystery**

The Pascal Mystery is the foundation on which our Catholic faith rests. It consists of Jesus Christ's-

- ◆ **Passion (Suffering)**
- ◆ **Death**
- ◆ **Resurrection**
- ◆ **Ascension**

*\*some theologians would argue that the Life of Christ should be including due to the fact that Jesus' life of teaching gives a us the foundation for living.*

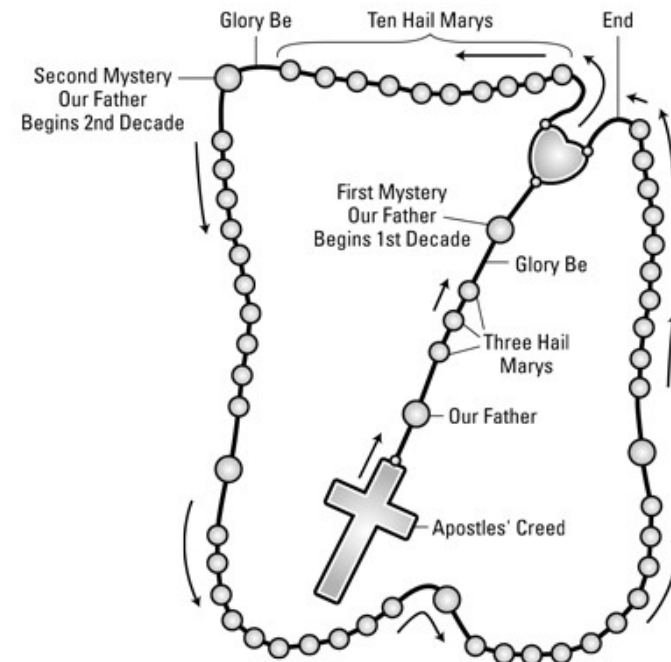
## How to Pray the Rosary

A rosary is made up of groups of beads arranged in a circle. It begins with a cross followed by one large bead and three small ones. The next large bead, (just before the medal,) begins the first “decade.” Each decade consists of one large bead followed by ten smaller beads.

Begin the rosary with the Sign of the Cross. Recite the Apostles’ Creed. Then pray one Our Father, three Hail Marys, and one Glory Be.

To pray each decade, say an Our Father on the large bead and a Hail Mary on each of the ten smaller beads. Close each decade by praying the Glory Be. Pray the Hail Holy Queen as the last prayer of the rosary.

The mysteries of the rosary are special events in the lives of Jesus and Mary. As you pray each decade, think of one of the mysteries for that day. The Mysteries of the rosary can be found on the next page.



## Common Catholic Prayers

### **Our Father**

*Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day,  
Our daily bread  
And forgive us our trespasses  
As we forgive those  
Who trespass against us,  
And lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil.*

Amen.

### **Hail Mary**

*Hail Mary full of Grace,  
the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed are thou  
among women  
and blessed is the fruit  
of thy womb Jesus.  
Holy Mary Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners now and  
at the hour of our death.*

Amen.

### **Glory Be**

*Glory be to the Father,  
And to the Son,  
And to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning,  
Is now, and ever shall be,  
World without end.*

Amen.

### **Act of Contrition**

*O my God, I am sorry for my sins  
with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong  
and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you whom  
I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help,  
to do penance,  
to sin no more,  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior Jesus Christ  
suffered and died for us.  
In his name, my God,  
have mercy.*

### **Apostle's Creed**

*I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the  
dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God  
the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the liv-  
ing and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.*

Amen.

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## **St. Paul Parish Religious Education Mission Statement**

The Religious Education program is available to assist parents in presenting the Catholic-Christian faith to their children. The Religious Education program helps students to grow, not only in knowledge of what their faith involves, but also in the practice and celebration of their faith and in relationship with a loving God.

In our teaching, we are cognizant of the developmental nature of faith, and the developmental level of those whom we serve. The Religious Education program is the forum for faith formation of children and adolescents. It provides catechesis for children in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Classes meet in the St. Paul Education Center.

## **Statement of Purpose**

All Religious Education opportunities for children are intended to complement the religious formation done by the parents by recognizing the knowledge of God's love for us, showing how that love can be expressed sacramentally, and modeling service to the community and the church. Supported by a parish community that catechizes by its lifestyle, liturgy, service, and hospitality, children grow spiritually through the formal and informal sharing for God's Word. The goal is to provide the children who are catechized with a real sense of belonging to the community.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

St. Paul Religious Education Program does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, sex, age, national origin, or physical, mental disability.

## **Online Information**

All information for the Religious Education Department can be found on the Religious Education web site at [www.stpaulre.org](http://www.stpaulre.org). The parent handbook, the Religious Education calendar, and sacrament preparation dates are all posted on this site.

All class cancellations will be immediately posted on this site for your convenience.

- The Consultative Education Advisory Board will hear from the director and involved parties as needed. The parents are invited to be present when the director and catechist(s) make their presentation. The student may be brought into the meeting after the presentation by the director and catechist(s). The student will be allowed to give his/her version of the events at this time. The parents will be able to address the Consultative Education Advisory Board after the student.
  - i. The Consultative Education Advisory Board will then have a closed meeting to discuss the matter and make a written recommendation within seven (7) to ten (10) days to all parties involved, including the pastor.
  - ii. The Consultative Education Advisory Board may choose to uphold the director's decision, propose a lessening of its severity, or recommend that the behavior warrants a greater punishment or even expulsion.
  - iii. Should the Consultative Education Advisory Board recommend an alternative way to handle the suspension or expulsion, the new proposal would require the mutual consent of the director and parents. THIS IS SUBJECT TO THE PASTOR'S APPROVAL.
  - iv. Should the Consultative Education Advisory Board uphold the decision of the director, the pastor is asked to notify the parents and director that he accepts the Consultative Education Advisory Board's recommendation.
  - v. The decision will be made by a majority vote.

The Consultative Advisory Board members will be chosen and submitted by the Director of Religious Education for the Pastor's approval.

Members will be appointed to serve on the Consultative Education Advisory Board for three (3) years and they may serve consecutive terms.

The Consultative Education Advisory Board is used for **three primary functions:**

1. Consults with the director and/or pastor on Religious Education program behavior/discipline procedure policy, attendance/absences policy, or retention policy.
2. Addresses grievances or appeals due to behavior/discipline procedure policy, attendance/absences policy, and retention policy decisions regarding children, students, catechist, and/or aides.
3. Periodic review of Parent Policy Handbook, textbooks, and other procedures used by the Religious Education program. Changes will be implemented based on the discussions and findings of the Board.

## **Appellate Process**

The Consultative Advisory Board serves in collaboration with the pastor and director to consider any request for an appeal concerning a decision made relating to the behavior/discipline, attendance/absence, or retention of a student. A description of this function is outlined as follows:

- Parents of a student(s) that is suspended or expelled may appeal the decision of the director through a written request to the Religious Education Department Consultative Education Advisory Board.
- The Consultative Education Advisory Board will then give the notice to the director and the parents of the student advising them when, where, and at what time a meeting will be held to hear the parents' appeal.

## **Philosophy, Policies, and Procedures**

### **Admissions**

Admission to the St. Paul Religious Education Program is open to all families registered in the parish. Exceptions to this policy may be made for those who, with good reason beyond their control, cannot attend the Religious Education Program within their own parish. All requests to attend St. Paul Religious Education by a family not registered at the parish should be submitted in writing to the Director of Religious Education. The Director of Religious Education will review the request and meet with the Pastor or his designee with recommendation. **The Pastor will contact the family within a week of the request.**

Entry into the St. Paul Religious Education Program is accomplished by filling out and returning the necessary forms. Any child(ren) transferring to the St. Paul Religious Education Program is required to obtain and submit ***Certificate of Transfer*** from the last Religious Education program attend by the child(ren.) This process may, under many circumstances, be completed by contacting the St. Paul Religious Education office at (219) 464-8502. Any child(ren) transferring into the St. Paul Religious Education Program will be required to submit a valid Baptismal Certificate. Students who were baptized at St. Paul Parish in Valparaiso, Indiana are exempt from this due to the fact that this can be obtained from our Parish office by the Religious Education staff.

**Any candidate eligible to receive a sacrament that is not a registered member of St. Paul parish but would like to receive it at St. Paul must obtain a letter of permission from their Pastor stating his approval. This letter must be submitted to the Pastor of St. Paul to obtain his approval as well. After this process is complete the candidate will be allowed to receive the sacrament at St. Paul.**

A Parent Policy Handbook will be made available to at least one parent, (guardian,) at the time of registration. This handbook provides specific information relating to admission, class offerings, fees, loss of textbooks, arrival /dismissal procedure, attendance/absence/tardiness procedure, sacramental policy, behavioral/discipline policy, weather cancellations, custody policy, reporting of abuse, search and seizure policy, health and safety procedures, communicable diseases, accident/illness procedure, the use of inappropriate language, and food/treat policy.



## Parents as Catechists

The Religious Education sessions for children (students) are to complement **not** substitute for the religious formation of our children by parents in their homes. The Religious Education Program offers additional sessions for the preparation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of First Eucharist throughout the year. These sessions are for both the child (student) and the parent to attend.

## Religious Education Opportunities for Children

**Traditional classroom** catechesis is offered for children in Kindergarten through grade eight that meet during scheduled sessions on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, in the St. Paul School. Classroom sessions will be selected at registration according to availability.

**Junior High Students** (Grades 7 & 8) classroom scheduled sessions are offered on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings in the St. Paul School.

**All regularly scheduled classes for grades 1-8 begin the week after Labor Day.**

## Regular Religious Education Session Times-

St. Paul Religious Education hopes to be responsive to the needs of the families that it serves. Religious Education classes are generally held on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays during the regular school year in the afternoon and early evening for children in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Families should choose the time that is best for them. Please check the current registration letter for class sessions being offered this year.

## Sacrament Preparation Program

The Bishops have this to say about the requirements for sacramental reception:

“Parents have the right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Catechesis aims to help parents grow in understanding and appreciation of the sacraments and participate readily in catechizing their children.” (NDC

bulletin and on the Religious Education website. Call the Religious Education office to register for any session.

## Sacraments

The General Directory for Catechesis has this to say about Sacramental preparation:

*“Sacramental catechesis ‘is an essentially ecclesial act’ [78] and therefore ‘not an action which can be realized in the community on a private basis or by purely personal initiative’ [219.b]. Sacramental catechesis, therefore, takes place in a parish-based program.”*

The proper context for the celebration of the sacraments is the parish community. “Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebration belonging to the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity.’” [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #26]

Parents/guardians who are enrolled in the Home Study program together with their children are required to participate in all dimensions of the parish program for sacramental catechesis: catechetical, ritual, service, spiritual (retreats, etc.), and any other requirements for sacramental preparation as determined by the parish.

In addition, children/youth who participate in the Home Study program are to celebrate the sacraments and the immediate preparation for the sacrament in the parish at the time that has been determined for those in the classroom-based program to prepare for the sacrament. **Those who choose to catechize their children at home are required to fully participate in all aspects of the parish-based program for sacramental preparation.**

## Consultative Education Advisory Board

St. Paul Religious Education has adopted the use of a Consultative Education Advisory Board. This board, (or commission,) is to be comprised of two (2) parents of students enrolled in the St. Paul Religious Education program; one (1) mature adolescent (16- 19 years of age); one (1) elementary catechist; one (1) intermediate catechist; and two (2) parishioners not related to a student enrolled in the program.

## Program

Those who wish to catechize their children at home are required to contact the Pastor or Director of Religious Education program for approval. Upon the family's request, the process for admission described in the "Admission" section of this guide will be initiated.

Families that enter the St. Paul Home Study program are to register their children through the Religious Education office according to the regulations and policy procedures established by the parish.

Parents/guardians who enter the St. Paul Home Study program will utilize the approved catechetical text and supplementary catechetical resources to catechize their children in at home. Parents/guardians and their children will meet with the Director of Education to review each child's progress of their catechetical efforts periodically. Currently, the St. Paul Religious Education Program uses "We Believe" published by Sadlier as its texts for grades K- 8.

Students are required to complete an assessment when they finish each unit of the text. This should coincide with the schedule of those who attend traditional classes on-site at St. Paul Education Center. Parents must contact the Religious Education office at 219-464-8502 to schedule a time for this assessment to be completed. To help the student be successful in achieving a respectable score on an assessment, parents/guardians will be given the same lesson plan that classroom catechists receive. "We Believe" is composed of four (4) units which contain six (6) or seven (7) chapter within them. Students must complete all four (4) unit assessments in order to be promoted to the next grade level. Only one grade level may be completed during a school year. Failure to complete this process will result in the student needing to repeat the grade level.

## Fees

The Family and book Fees for St. Paul Home Study program is the same as regular Religious Education classes in a classroom setting. A deposit for the rental of each Catechist manual that parents/guardians need for home study will be assessed. The current fee rates are available in the Religious Education office. Deposits will be refunded when Catechist's manuals are returned to the St. Paul Religious Education office.

## Continuing Education

Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to attend the Catechist Formation sessions and in-services. Catechist training and in-services are listed in the church

#122) Requirements for reception of the sacraments are quite basic and upheld by the Pastor.

1. Regular class attendance in one consecutive Religious Education academic year directly prior to the reception of the sacrament is required.
2. Active participation in the Church community, including regular attendance at Sunday Liturgy is mandatory.
3. Attendance at Sacrament preparation sessions leading to reception of the Sacrament are mandatory. Parent(s) are obliged to attend parent meetings as well.

**First Reconciliation** (confession)- Preparation for the **Sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede First Eucharist** and must be kept **distinct by clear and unhurried separation**. This is to be done so that the specific identity of each sacrament is apparent and so that, before receiving First Eucharist, the child will be familiar with the revised Rite of Reconciliation. Because continuing, life-long conversion is a part of what it means to grow in faith, catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is ongoing.

Children are formally invited to prepare for this sacrament in Grade 2. Participation in regular Religious Education class the year prior to this is required. Children will attend their regular Religious Education classes and six (6) classes especially designed to prepare for the sacrament. Parents are required to attend three (3) preparation meetings. *Attendance in Religious Education classes after reception is **mandatory**.*

**First Eucharist** (Communion)- Preparation for the Sacrament of Eucharist is conducted **separately from preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation**, since each sacrament deserves its own concentrated preparation. Religious Education for children must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of individuals.

Children are formally invited to prepare for this sacrament in Grade 3. This is only after the preparation and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation the year prior. Children will attend their regular Religious Education classes and eight (8)

classes especially designed to prepare for the sacrament. Parents are required to attend three (3) preparation meetings. Both the children and parent(s) are required to attend the First Eucharist Mini-Retreat as part of their Preparation. Children must attend the rehearsal for First Eucharist usually scheduled the day before the Mass to celebrate the sacrament. **Failure to complete these requirements may result in a delay in receiving the sacrament.** *Attendance in Religious Education class after First Eucharist is **expected**.*

### **Sacrament Preparation Class Times-**

Each class to prepare for a sacrament is offered at two separate times— once on a weekday evening and once on the weekend. This is designed to help families with scheduling. Families choose one (1) of these sessions for each class. First Reconciliation requires that candidates attend six (6) preparation classes and First Eucharist requires eight (8) classes. Candidates must attend all required classes in order to be eligible to receive any sacrament. Please refer to current Sacrament Preparation calendars for dates and times.

**Confirmation** candidates are formally prepared to celebrate this sacrament by attending formal catechetical classes especially designed for this purpose. High School students are invited to prepare for Confirmation through participation in the Life Teen Program. Students must attend regular Religious Education class the prior year to preparing for the sacrament. *Participation in the life of the Parish is expected after the celebration of Confirmation.*

***\*\*All fees, including amounts that are past due, must be paid in full in order for your child to receive any sacrament.***

### **Attendance Policy**

Students should attend classes on a regular basis. Attendance at **all** classes is extremely important to ensure the proper development of faith formation. All families will receive the current Religious Education calendar at the time of registration. This calendar is also available on the St. Paul Religious Education website at [www.stpaulre.org](http://www.stpaulre.org) additional copies are available in the RE office.

## **Home Study Program**

The St. Paul Religious Education Department is dedicated to helping those parents that choose to educate their children in the ways of the faith at home. As an alternative to traditional faith formation which involves study in a classroom setting, St. Paul Parish recognizes that some families may have special circumstances that effects their ability to have their child(ren) attend traditional religious education classes in a classroom setting. This may require that this method of catechizing be overridden.

### **Philosophy**

It is the understanding of the St. Paul Religious Education Program that all Religious Education opportunities for children are intended to complement the religious formation done by parents who are the primary educators of their children. St. Paul Religious Education recognizes God's love for us and that we should return that love to God sacramentally and by modeling service to the community and the Church. Supported by the parish community that catechizes by its lifestyle, liturgy, service, and hospitality; children grow spiritually through the formal and informal sharing of God's Word. The goal is to provide the children who are catechized with a real sense of belonging to the community.

### **Admission**

It is the policy of St. Paul Parish that all requests to enter the Home Study program be made in writing to the Director of Religious Education. The Director of Religious Education will review the request and meet with the Pastor or his designee with the recommendation. The Pastor will contact the family usually within a week of his decision. St. Paul Parish Religious Education will provide resources, guidance, and support to make this experience beneficial for everyone. Specific policies relating to Home Study may be found in the Home Study Policy Handbook.

4. Soiled surfaces should be promptly cleaned with a solution containing bleach and rubber gloves should be worn during that process. Disposable materials such as paper towels should be used.
5. All disposable materials, including gloves, should be disposed of in a sealed plastic bag.
6. The use of common water bottles, cups, and towels should be eliminated.
7. When possible, self-treatment of injuries and illness should be encouraged.
8. First Aid materials are available in the Religious Education Program Office.

## Religious Education Instructors

Given the importance of the youth, it is our belief that the youth be provided the best possible faith formation experience. This requires that the St. Paul Director of Religious Education be properly trained and dedicated to providing the best possible faith formation experience. It is the policy of St. Paul that the Director of Religious Education be trained to the standards required by the Diocese of Gary.

St. Paul relies on a volunteer staff and recognizes the instructional talent found within St. Paul Parish. Given the commitment of St. Paul Parish to provide the best possible faith formation training, it is the policy of St. Paul Parish that all Religious Education instructors, instructional aides, volunteers, and any other staff member whose duties may be associated duties that involve significant contact with the youth of the parish be Virtus trained and have a current background check on file in accordance Diocesan policy. Appropriate training must be completed and certification obtained prior to any child related event.

Parents are required to notify the Religious Education office when their child will not be in attendance at any given class session. This can be accomplished by calling 219-464-8502 or by email at [stpaulre1755@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulre1755@gmail.com). In the event that our office is not staffed, a voice mail may be left when calling by telephone. By cooperating in this policy, an absence will be marked as “excused” on the student’s permanent record. Students who have not made this type of communication with the RE office will be called about their absence. If we do not hear from the family of a student not in attendance during any given class session, that student will be marked as an “unexcused” absence on their permanent record.

## Absence Policy

**Because classes are held only once a week, it is most essential that students be present for each and every class.** Each lesson builds upon the previous one and a session missed is an experience lost; it can be difficult to make up. Excessive and unexcused absences will be reviewed. **The Religious Education Consultative Advisory Board reserves the right to review a student’s readiness for advancement to the next grade level.**

**Please refer to the Religious Education Calendar for class schedules.**

## Grades 1 - 8

Grades 1-6 have a total of 27 classroom sessions. Each student must attend at least, **22 classes** to be eligible for promotion\*.

Grades 7 & 8 have a total of 27 classroom sessions. Each student must attend, at least, **22 classes** each year to be eligible to be promoted to the **Life Teen program**\*.

\* Exceptions are made for students who did not attend public school that day and are able to submit a doctor’s excuse to the Religious Education office.

Family emergencies such as funeral/wake of a family member, lack of transportation, (temporary,) and required school functions that would affect the students grade(s) are taken into consideration.

**\*\* If attendance is lacking, sacraments can be delayed until the candidate has completed the required period of faith formation. Sacramental reception may also be delayed if it is deemed that the candidate needs further time to grow in faith and understanding.**

## **Arrival/ Dismissal/ Tardy Policy**

### **Arrival**

Parents may drop their children off via carline **no sooner than 15 minutes before** the start of any class session. Children should be dropped off at Door #1, (which is closest to the east parking lot,) of the Education Center. **Please be sure that there is an attendant at the door and that classes are in session before you leave.** Class dates for attendance can be found on the St. Paul Religious Education Class calendar. Children gather quietly in the foyer inside the front doors and are dismissed to their classrooms when their catechist is ready for class. **No student may enter a classroom before their catechist.**

### **Late Arrivals– (Tardy)**

Children who arrive more than 15 minutes late for class will be considered **“tardy”** and are required to report to the Religious Education Office to obtain a **“Late Arrival Slip”** which is to be given to the child’s catechist. This helps us to know with certainty that a child is not in attendance and that the phone number on file in the RE office should be called to check on the status of the child’s absence. Adherence to this policy helps to ensure that parents are not needlessly alarmed by a phone call if the child is actually in attendance.

### **Early Dismissals**

Parents requesting to pick their child up from classes early should submit a signed note to the staff in the RE office stating the time and reason for the early-dismissal in advance. **This should be done at least 20 minutes before the beginning of class.** An “Early Dismissal” slip will be issued to the student so that the catechist is aware of the parent’s request and so that the child may be sent to the office at the proper time. Keep in mind that the Parent/Child formational session will take place during the last 25 minutes of each class which is not an optimal time for pick-up. Parents should check in at the Religious Education office when they wish to visit their child’s classroom for early dismissal or any other purpose. This helps us to comply with

## **Communicable Disease Policy**

Contagious Illnesses and other conditions such as head lice, pink eye, (conjunctivitis,) require that infected students be excluded from the classroom until symptoms are no longer present. A doctor’s release will be required to re-enter class.

## **Accident or Illness Procedure**

Should a student become ill or injured during class time, a parent will be notified. If it is impossible to reach the parent, guardian, or the person listed on the emergency form, the family doctor or emergency unit will be called. It is essential that the Religious Education Program office have current emergency number to use if the parent or guardian cannot be reached.

Supplies for handling accidents that involve blood and bodily fluids are available in the Catechist and aide bin. Universal health and safety precautions should be used to ensure increased safety when handling blood or bodily fluids. The Office of Religious Education at the Archdiocese of Chicago, lists eight standard procedures of safety involving blood and bodily fluids. The Office of Religious Education at the Archdiocese of Chicago lists eight standard procedures of safety involving blood and bodily fluids. These universal health and safety precautions will be followed in the event of an emergency.

The following are standard Universal Health and Safety precautions for handling accidents which involve blood and bodily fluids:

1. Bodily fluids should not be touched. Disposable rubber gloves are available in all catechist and aide bins. All catechetical staff who clean up blood and bodily fluid spills should wear protective gloves.
2. To prevent the spread of disease, all catechetical staff should routinely wash their hands using soap and water. Disposable paper towels are available.
3. Open lesions on participants and staff should be covered if possible.

## **Custody Policy**

The Religious Education Program Staff presumes that in the case of a divorce or separation that both parents have access to the child(ren), unless one parent can provide a court order stating otherwise.

## **Abuse Procedure**

All Religious Education Program Staff are required to read and become familiar with the Sexual Abuse Policy of the Diocese of Gary. It is a Federal, State, and Local law that educational facilities report to the proper authorities any case of possible child abuse whether it is physical, mental, or emotional. In compliance with this law and the right of the student, the staff at St. Paul Religious Education will carry out this procedure.

## **Search and Seizure Policy**

The Religious Education Staff has the right to search a student's person and/or property if reasonable cause exists in the presence of another adult. Any use of cell phones during class (calling, texting, or picture taking) is strictly prohibited and will result in the seizure of the cell phone. Cell phones are to be left at home or turned off when the student enters the building.

## **Medical Issues**

### **Medication Policy**

The Religious Education Program Staff will not dispense any medication to any student. If a student requires medication during class, the parent must come to class and dispense the medication.

### **Food Allergies**

The Religious Education office staff must be notified of any and all food allergies as soon as possible. Catechists and aides will then be notified. Because we share classroom space with St. Paul Catholic School, we must be mindful that children enrolled in the school may also have food allergies. Therefore, **food may not be distributed in any classroom without first notifying and receiving permission from the director.**

***Safe Environment Practices*** put forth by the governing body of the Church. **Children will not be dismissed directly from any classroom.**

***\*\* For the safety the children, the inner door of the double doors are locked at all times. Anyone who needs to enter the building during this time should ring the doorbell located on the wall to the left of the doors. An attendant in the Religious Education office will assist you.***

## **Traffic Procedures**

**Arrival-** children may be dropped off at door #1 of the Education Center no more than 10 minutes before the beginning of class. **The doors are locked at all times, please be sure that there is an attendant at the door. Keep in mind that classes may be cancelled shortly before they begin due to weather, power outages, and other such emergencies.** Please consult the RE Class Calendar frequently! You will be notified of any cancellations at the "weather Cancellation" phone number that you provided at registration and via email at the email address on file in our office. Cancellations will also be posted on our website [www.stpaulre.org](http://www.stpaulre.org) on the homepage.

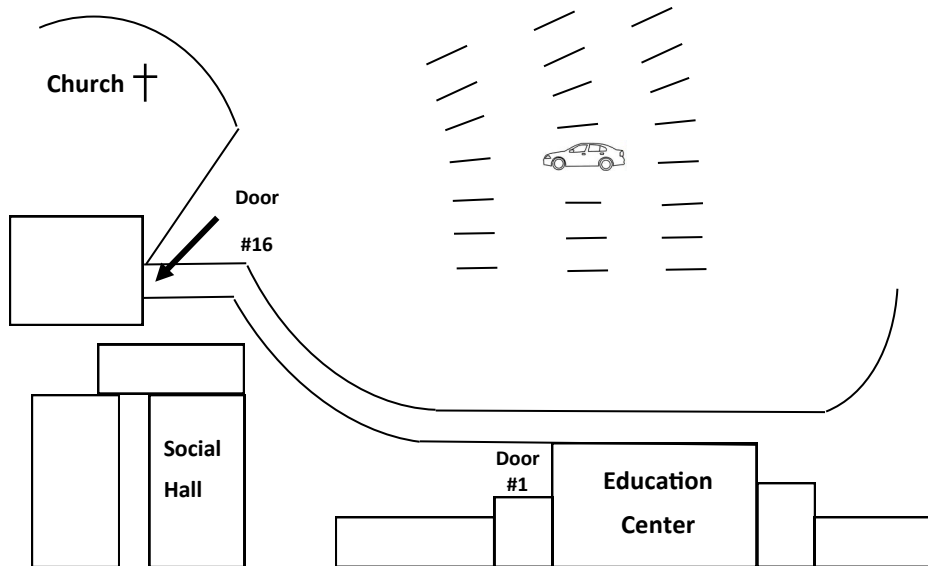
## **Dismissal-**

A Parent/Child formational session will take place at the end of most classes. The exception being days in which Mass or other notable events is being offered. Parents should find a place to park in the east parking lot of the church campus, located directly in front of the St. Paul Education Center, and enter the church through door # 16. Catechists will walk their students to the church narthex 25 minutes before class ends. Parents will meet with their child(ren) and proceed into church to find a seat. The duration of the gathering is approximately 15-20 minutes. At the conclusion of the Parent/Child session, parents should exit the church through door #16. **Students who do not have an adult attending the Parent/Child session with them will not be escorted to the entrance door of the Education Center as they have been in the past for "carline."** **Parents must enter the church to pick up their children from Religious Education.** A diagram illustrating this procedure can be found on the reverse side of this document.

A diagram of this process can be found on the next page.

## St. Paul Education Center

Harrison Blvd.



### Fire

All children and teachers will exit the building in an orderly fashion and go to their designated spot as indicated on your exit map. Wait for the all clear from the director or her representative before reentering the building.

### Tornado

All children and teachers exit the classroom in an orderly fashion and line up as indicated on your exit map. All students sit on the floor, away from glass, put their head down on their knees, covering their heads with their hands. **Students are not permitted to talk.** Wait until you hear the “ALL CLEAR” tone over the speakers before returning to your classrooms.

### Code Red– Lockdown

In the event that an intruder has entered or is looking to enter the building, all catechists and aides must be made aware of the intrusion and proceed accordingly. All inside and outside doors will be locked. The light should be turned off and children should be moved to a location inside the classroom that prevents them from being seen from either outside or inside the building. **The children are to remain silent and wait for the “All Clear” tone.**

### Bomb Threat or Other Non–Fire Situation– Code Blue

An announcement will come over the public address system alerting staff to implement a Blue Code Evacuation in the event of a bomb threat. Catechists are instructed to evacuate their students to a place that is safe.

### Earth Quake

In the event of an earthquake, students are to seek shelter under desks or another sturdy piece of furniture and wait until all tremors have stopped.

## Religious Education Texts

It is the policy of St. Paul Parish to utilize an approved Religious Education text. Texts will be chosen from the list of texts approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Religious Education texts utilized by St. Paul Parish will be reviewed by the Director of Religious Education and the Consultative Education Advisory Board every three (3) years. Recommendations for a change in in text books should be submitted to the Pastor for approval after input is the solicited from the Education Commission.

Replacement textbooks are available upon request. A fee will be assessed for each textbook distributed for any reason. Requests for additional texts should be **made to the Director**.

## Emergency Situation Procedures

### Weather Cancellations

Religious Education classes will be cancelled any day that the Valparaiso Community Schools cancels or dismisses class early. Information about class cancellations will be available on the RE website [www.stpaulre.org](http://www.stpaulre.org). Families will also be notified by phone and at the email that you provided at the time of registration. Families are responsible for making sure that all contact information on file in the Religious Education office is up to date.

In the event that a Severe Weather alert has been issued for our area during class time, the director will advise catechists and aides of the alert. All occupants of the building will be required to remain indoors and the proper evacuation procedure will be implemented. All classes should prepare for a rare but possible early dismissal for inclement weather.

### Evacuation Drills

Evacuation drills are conducted in the fall of each Religious Education session. The prescribed routes and procedures for evacuations is posted in a conspicuous place in each classroom. These procedures are reviewed periodically.

## Discipline/Expectations- A Call to Discipleship

*"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

*John 13: 34-35*

St. Paul Religious Education sets high expectations for appropriate behavior of its students. Emphasis is placed on discipline through discipleship, helping students to recognize the voice of God, understanding the message, and acting freely without external motivation. Growing in discipleship encourages students to make life-long choices to demonstrate respect and dignity for all, to build community, and to accept responsibility for words and actions fostering self-discipline and self-esteem. The Ten Commandments are the foundation from which Christian living is derived. Our discipline policy guides students to be **respectful, responsible, and to live as a disciple of Christ in accordance with God's Commandments**.

**Consequences or correction** is used when students have difficulty maintaining appropriate behavior. They hold students responsible for actions and allow them to learn from experiences. Knowing that the goal of discipleship is to turn our focus toward Christ, we recognize that misbehavior is an opportunity to turn a poor choice into an experience of growth through the use of reflection, response, restitution, and reconciliation. Ultimately, the outcome of any disciplinary action should be a resolution of the problem and reconciliation between the parties involved.

**Infractions** are violations of the expectations that St. Paul Religious Education has for its students. They are not consequences for inappropriate behavior. Infractions are categorized according to their severity. They are used to identify and name inappropriate behavior so that the process of resolution and reconciliation may begin.



### Level 1 Infractions- handled by classroom catechist

- Irreverence
- Gum/candy in classroom
- Inappropriate hallway behavior
- Talking out of place
- Writing/passing notes
- Interfering with the learning of others
- Lack of self-control
- Not following directions
- Defiance
- Inappropriate behavior at dismissal
- Unkind or non-Christian language or action
- Any other inappropriate behavior (verbal or non-verbal) considered to be inappropriate by the Religious Education program

### Level 2 Infractions- handled by the classroom catechist and the director

- Disruption to the classroom environment
- Inappropriate or disrespectful behavior (verbal or non-verbal) towards peers and adults
- Abusive or profane language
- Conspiracy: encouraging, assisting, or covering up another student's inappropriate behavior
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Use of cell phones during class time to send or receive calls or text messages, access to the internet, take photographs or access any other application of which the phone is capable, and use of cell phones in the restroom anytime while on campus, (unless approved by a catechist)
- Use or possession of any electronic devices including but not limited to: eReaders, iPods, gaming devices, etc.
- Thoughtless acts that could endanger one's self or others (poking, using projectiles, walking on furniture, pushing, shoving, etc.)
- Vandalism that does not have a permanent damaging effect or does not create an excessive mess (which may include but is not limited to throwing objects or unauthorized writing in a textbook)
- Being in an area of the campus without permission
- Lying
- Any other conduct (verbal or non-verbal) considered to be unacceptable by the Religious Education program

### Fees-

Families are asked to support the St. Paul Religious Education Program financially through the assessment of fees as follows:

**Family Fee-** paid by each family participating in the program.

**Book Fee-** for each book issued to each student.

**Sacrament Preparation Fee-** for each book issued each student.

**Additional Textbook-** for each textbook requested.

*\*\*current fee rates are available in the Religious Education office.*

The Family Fee which is paid each year by families includes catechist materials such as manuals, professional publications, and formational in-services; as well as, supplies for use in the classroom. The Book Fee covers student textbooks for regular Religious Education classes.

**There will be an additional fee for the second and any subsequent class change after the second week of classes.**

Fees are configured at the time of registration and may be subject to change. Payments are made at the time of registration. Families who may need additional time to pay should contact the Religious Education office to make arrangements pay through regular payments submitted throughout the school year. All payments must be received by May 1<sup>st</sup> of the current Religious Education School year. Families should contact the Director for financial assistance. *No student or family is denied enrollment into the St. Paul Religious Education Program based on their ability to pay fees. All children and families are welcome! Our goal is to offer a continuing experience of Church and Jesus to all children.*

## Use of the Property

Classrooms used for Religious Education classes are used by students in St. Paul Catholic School during daytime hours. **Religious Education students must respect property of St. Paul Catholic School and the personal property of the educators and students of the School.** *Parents will be responsible for any problems in this regard.*

## Progress Reports

Progress Reports are mailed to the homes of all Religious Education students two (2) times per school year. The first will be mailed in February and the second in May. This report will contain not only faith-formation progress made by students but also behavior observed by the catechist, both positive and otherwise, while the student attends Religious Education class. Parents with questions or concerns should contact the Director of Religious Education at 219-464-8502 to schedule a meeting to discuss any matters of concern.

## Grading Policy

Students will be required to achieve a passing average in order to be promoted to the next grade level. Students will have the opportunity to retake the quiz or test before class without penalty as a means of raising their grade point average. If students do not achieve a passing average of at least 60% they will be retained.

The Saint Paul Religious Education Grading Scale is as follows:

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| A | 90-100        |
| B | 80-89         |
| C | 70-79         |
| D | 60-69         |
| F | 59% And Below |

**If a student has not attended a prior Religious Education Program, the student must test out of each grade level he/she did not attend in order to be admitted to their current grade level.**

**Level 3 Infractions**- these are automatic office referrals that may include the pastor

- Stealing, cheating, plagiarism
- Physically or emotionally injuring another person
- Fighting
- Leaving classroom or campus without permission
- Harassment
- Defiance shown to any staff member after reasonable request has been made
- Vandalism that has a permanent effect, creates an excessive mess, or is unacceptable in nature
- Creation or distribution of sexually explicit material and/or pornographic images in any form or media
- Behavior that would endanger one's self or others at program functions or off campus
- Violation of the Technology Acceptable Use Policy to include text/images in any form or media
- Any other conduct (verbal or non-verbal) deemed of a serious nature and/or that dishonors or defames the reputation of the St. Paul Religious Education program

## Harassment

St. Paul Religious Education considers harassment, including bullying, a severe infraction. As a result, any reports or claims of harassment brought to the attention of catechists or administration will be explored. A referral to administration occurs when a student engages in harassment. Consequences up to and including expulsion may be taken against a student who engages in any type of harassment..

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

1. Unwelcome repeated or persistent behavior that makes a person feel threatened, humiliated, uncomfortable, or unsafe including bullying in all forms—physical, verbal, relational, etc.

2. Cyber-bullying is defined as the use of the internet, cell phone, or other electronic devices used to send or post messages or visual images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. Cyber-bullying includes, but is not limited to:
  - Sending cruel instant messages or threatening emails
  - Sending mean, repeated cell phone text messages
  - Creating websites for the purpose of mocking students or program personnel
  - Posting humiliating or digitally modified images of students or program personnel
  - Forwarding private photos or videos to others
  - Pretending to be someone else by using their online profile
3. Verbal conduct such as the use of racial slurs, vulgar or obscene language, derogatory jokes or comments, social ostracization, and/or personally damaging statements about others
3. Behavior that is sexual or lewd in nature, including sexual advances, physical contact, and other verbal, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual nature.
4. Behavior that is intimidating, including but not limited to threatening gestures, assault, unwanted touching, and blocking of normal movement that interferes with another student's work, study, or play.
5. Retaliation or intimidation for having reported harassment or for assisting the program in investigations is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Students experiencing or witnessing any type of harassment need to report it to program personnel directly and immediately. Reporting is the first step in getting help with any type of harassment. When harassment is reported, the program handles the report by working through the guidelines contained in the Conduct/Behavior Policy section of this handbook.

**\*\*Discipline will follow the guidelines outlined in the Discipline Process section of this handbook.**

- **Illegal Copying/Downloading-** Students should never download or install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware onto network drives, external devices or cloud based storage while using program equipment, connectivity, or while on the school campus. Students should not work or intrude into another person's files. The download/upload of any material in violation of US, State, Board, Diocesan, St. Paul Catholic School, or Religious Education program policy is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: copyrighted materials, threatening, violent, or obscene material or material protected by a trade secret. Accessing or downloading games and music from the internet is prohibited unless directed by a catechist.
- **Inappropriate Material or Language-** No profane, abusive, slanderous, bullying, or impolite language or images should be used to communicate nor should materials be accessed which are not in line with the behavior identified as acceptable by the Religious Education program. Use of technological resources for anything other than educational purposes is prohibited. A good rule to follow is never view, send, or access materials or images that you would not want your catechists or parents to see. Should students encounter such material by accident, they should report it to their catechist immediately. Use of any electronic device to transmit unacceptable language and/or images that are harmful to self, other students, and/or other people is prohibited.

**\*\*Discipline will follow the guidelines outlined in the Discipline Process section of this handbook.**

## Technology and Telecommunications- Digital Discipline

Use of electronic devices during Religious Education classes including, but not limited to: cell phones, MP3 players, laptops, tablets, or other personal devices is prohibited unless under the direction of a catechist. If student are given permission to use electronic devices the following rules apply:

- **Electronic Communication and Social Media-** Whether occurring within or outside of school, a student's use of electronic communication that jeopardizes the safe environment of the school or is contrary to Gospel values may be subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences including expulsion. This policy applies to all forms of electronic communications or depictions whether they occur through the program's equipment or connectivity resources or through private communication.
- **Personal Safety and Personal Privacy-** Students will not post personal contact information about themselves or others including full names, addresses, telephone numbers, school addresses, etc. This information may not be provided to an individual, organization, or company. Technology should not be used to harm others or their work. Students should respect the rights of others and not trespass in another person's folders, file, or work.
- **Social Networking-** Accessing social networking websites, blogs, video sites (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, etc. except those used for educational purposes) is off-limits while on school property. The use of circumventors to get around school network security is prohibited.

## Discipline Process

St. Paul has been blessed with a community of caring responsible young people. In addition, our Catechists respond to their baptismal call to serve as an educator of the young people of the parish. Cooperative and courteous behavior is expected of all students at all times. Minor discipline problems will be handled directly by the catechist. Any **consistent disruptive behavior and/or use of inappropriate language will not be tolerated.** In the event that the Religious Education department experiences a consistent and significant problem concerning student behavior the following actions will be taken:

- The **First Time** the student will be brought to the attention of the Program director, who will discuss the situation with the student. If the problem is of a serious nature, the parent(s) will be contacted to arrange a meeting between the parent(s) and the director to resolve the problem.
- The **Second Time** the student is sent to the Religious Education office and the parent(s) of the student will be called.
- The **Third Time** the director parents will contact the parents and the student will not be allowed to return to class for that class session. A meeting between the director, the parent(s), the student will be arranged to resolve the situation before the student will be permitted to return to class. An example of a resolution may be for the parent to sit in on their child's class.
- The **Fourth Time** the student is sent to the Religious Education office and the Pastor will be consulted to determine if the student is should be taught at home through the Home Study program, suspended, or expelled.