

**St. Christopher Church, Grandview
Parish School of Religion (PSR), PreK-8
Parent Handbook
2017-2018**

Mission Statement:

To assist parents in catechizing and forming their children to *know, love and serve God* through religious education classes, and to encourage active participation in the faith by attending Mass and receiving the sacraments.

Faith must be...known, celebrated, lived, expressed in prayer.

Parents as first teacher of the faith

As parents, we realize the responsibility of being the first teacher of the faith by word and example.

Regular attendance at Mass and Holy Days:

The Eucharist is the CENTER of our Catholic faith. As parents you ARE the primary catechist of your child(ren). PSR is incomplete without your regular attendance at Mass. Attending Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of obligation is the most important part of your family's worship.

Importance of attendance at mass

What does a child learn by going to church with his family?

First, they learn that mass is important to their family, and a necessary part of their week. They get to see and experience their faith through the liturgy and music. They find an extended family by participating with and being seen by the church community. Children who attend mass regularly are more likely to be active Catholic adults.

Diocese Parish School of Religion, 6 Tasks of Catechesis:

1. Knowledge of Faith
2. Knowledge of Liturgy and Sacraments
3. Moral Formation in Jesus
4. Teaching to Pray
5. Teaching to live in Community of church
6. Missionary Spirit (be present as Christians in society)

Textbooks:

Sadlier, We Believe, Catholic Identity series

<http://www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve/>

You may use this textbook website as a resource. Please use the visitor type: Catechist/Teacher.

Prayers:

Your child is encouraged to learn the prayers of the Church, which are appropriate to their grade level. Praying daily with your family is an excellent way to help them learn. Use your family time in the car to practice as well. God loves to hear from us!

Class Time, Arrival and Dismissal:

PSR begins in the Trinity cafeteria after the 9am mass, at 10:00am. All families and students attend the opening assembly and announcements. Teachers will be called forth, and children will be dismissed with their teachers to class. Teachers will bring children back to the cafeteria at 11:20am. Parents pick up all children from the cafeteria.

Students participate in religion classes, rosary recitations, Stations of the Cross, and an assembly presentation. Classes are available for students in grades PreK to 8th grade who are not currently enrolled in a Catholic school.

Note: Students who will be picked up by someone other than a parent need to have a note given to the DRE, with the person's name and phone number, and your statement allowing permission. Be aware that ID may be requested.

Class Attendance:

In order for your child to receive the most benefit from the program, regular attendance is vital. An attendance report is kept on each child and those missing class will be asked to make up work. If the child has excessive absences, you will be called for a meeting with the DRE. If you are in a shared custody situation, and your child will miss classes, please see the DRE for learning options.

Special Needs:

At St. Christopher, we strive to offer religious education for all children regardless of their abilities or needs. We are currently developing a Special Needs program using adaptive learning curriculum from Loyola Press, as well as providing training for our teachers. If your child has special needs, please indicate this on your registration form. A meeting will be arranged with the parents, DRE and the Special Needs volunteer to offer appropriate catechesis for your child.

Communication:

You are encouraged to speak with your child's teacher before or after class, should you have any problem arise or should you have any questions or suggestions. The teachers, likewise, are encouraged to call upon you for assistance. You are encouraged and welcomed to visit your child's class at any time.

The PSR Calendar, Sacramental Schedules, weekly newsletters, will be distributed to parents/guardians through paper copy and email. Email subject line will begin with "St. Christopher PSR". PSR and Sacramental calendars, Parent Handbook, and Diocesan Policies will also be posted to the website: <http://saintchristophercc.com/children>.

Encourage Respect and Appreciation:

PSR teachers and staff are volunteers; let them know how much they are appreciated. No cell phones, iPods, or other electronic devices are to be used in the classrooms. Any items in the classroom, not provided by the teacher or the church, are not to be used or touched without permission.

Discipline

The PSR classroom setting should be treated as any other place of learning. Respect for property, each other and adults in charge is expected at all times. Disrespect, bad language, and physical violence will not be tolerated.

Teachers will follow this sequence of events, if disciplinary action is needed:

1. When a student misbehaves, the teacher informs him/her that such behavior is not acceptable.
2. If the student continues to misbehave, the teacher informs the student that the director will be notified at the end of class.
3. The student who has misbehaved and the director will discuss the unacceptable behavior and reach a conclusion about appropriate behavior during religious education classes, a notice of this incident will be placed in the student's file. The student will return to the next class the following week accompanied by the director, apologize to the teacher, and ask permission to return to class.
4. The third time a student misbehaves following the same procedure described above, the director will call the parents and inform them of the situation and set up a meeting with them to discuss the student's behavior. Both the event and the parent meeting will also be noted in the student's file. The student will then return to class.
5. The fourth time a student misbehaves in class, step four will be repeated **except that** the student will not be re-admitted to class without parent accompaniment until the teacher, the parents and the director deem that the situation has been resolved.

Safety Issues:

It is the responsibility of St. Christopher's PSR program to provide a safe environment for your children.

All Staff members are compliant with the Diocesan policies on fingerprinting, background checks and child protection training. Parents are encouraged to attend child protection training as well (check bulletin for information of date/time.) Our goal is to keep all children safe!

All staff, parents and children are to read and sign a harassment policy at the time of registration, and behavior policies will be discussed with all students on the first day of class.

HARASSMENT POLICY

1. Harassment can take many forms. Harassment can occur at any parish activity, and/or can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at programs sponsored by the parish at other locations. It does not include compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability or other protected characteristics.

2. It is the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a spiritually enriching environment in all programs and activities, free of all forms of harassment and intimidation. No participant, volunteer adult leader, or parish staff member - male or female - should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unsolicited and/or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical.

3. Conduct which constitutes sexual harassment is prohibited. Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Offensive sexual flirtations, advances, propositions;
- Continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual or gender-based nature;
- Explicit or degrading sexual or gender-based comments about another individual or his or her appearance;
- The display or circulation of sexually explicit or suggestive writing, pictures or objects;
- Any offensive or physical conduct which shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of gender or sex;
- Graffiti of a sexual nature;
- Fondling oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others;
- Spreading rumors about or categorizing others as to sexual activity.

Sex harassment is not limited to conduct that is sexual in nature - it also includes harassment that is based on gender. Gender-based harassment, which is also prohibited, is conduct that would not occur except for the sex of the person involved. An example would be referring to a woman by or as a female body part, or a demeaning sex-based term, or treating people differently because of their gender. The same prohibitions apply with regard to inflammatory or offensive comments or behaviors which are based upon race, color, age, religion, disability, or national origin. In short, working relationships between employees and volunteers must be based on mutual respect.

Sexual harassment also includes the taking of, or refusal to take, any personnel or other action on the basis of a person's submission to or refusal of sexual overtures. No person should so much as imply that an individual's "cooperation" or submission to unwelcome sexual activity will have any effect on the individual's employment, assignment, compensation, advancement,

development, program evaluation, participation in parish programs or activities, or any other condition of employment or achievement.

Not all physical conduct is necessarily considered sexual in nature. (For example, a coach hugging a student after an accomplishment, a youth minister consoling an adolescent with an injury or physical conduct during athletic events would not be considered sexual conduct.) However, peer-based sexual harassment is a form of prohibited conduct where the harassing conduct creates a hostile environment.

4. A sexually hostile environment can be created by a parish employee, volunteer, youth participant, or visitor to the parish activity.
5. Any person who believes that he/she is subject to unlawful harassment or intimidation must contact the (a) program administrator, (b) pastor, or (c) diocesan director of religious education. A complaint must be filed in writing. In the event that an individual alleges harassment by a program administrator or a pastor, the individual may file the complaint with the diocesan director of religious education. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and the person initiating the complaint will be advised of the outcome of the investigation.
6. Where it is determined that harassment has occurred, the appropriate authority will take immediate disciplinary action against any program administrator, volunteer, or staff engaging in harassment. The response shall take into account the individuals and circumstances. Such action may include, depending on the circumstances, disciplinary measures up to and including termination of services.
7. No retaliation against anyone who reports harassment will be tolerated. The Diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.

Weather Days:

Log on to the St. Christopher website: <http://saintchristophercc.com/children> for updates and closings, in the event of inclement weather such as heavy snow or ice. Linda Wolfe, Director of Religious Education, will update the website by 9:00am.

Fire Drill:

In case of fire or other emergency reasons for children to leave the building:

- Children in classrooms, upstairs: Teachers will guide children to walk down the stairs on the far east side of the building and exit the east door. (Door #3)
- Children in classrooms on the main floor: Teachers will guide children to walk and exit the west door (Door #1, closest to church). The teachers will direct the children outside to the playground by the church.

Sacraments:

The traditional definition of a sacrament is: A sacrament is a visible sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace. In summary, a sacrament is one of the means God has chosen to influence our life, through Christ, in the direction of his purpose for giving us life.

The seven sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The three sacraments of *initiation* are Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. Reconciliation is a sacrament of *healing*.

First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion:

First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion Preparation is a 2- year faith enrichment program beginning in 1st Grade. It is mandatory that children attend 1st grade to make their First Communion in 2nd grade.

In order to be ready to receive First Holy Communion:

- The child should know who Jesus is and be aware of major events in His life, death and resurrection.
- The child should be able to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary bread.
- The child should have the desire to receive the Eucharist.

This is a very joyous, sacred, and blessed event that will occur in your child's life. They are taught Jesus will always forgive us and will always love us no matter what we do through the sacrament of Reconciliation. We will become closer to Jesus through His own Body and Blood in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Much of the work of preparation is done in Trinity school or the Parish School of Religion, with 2nd grade teachers, but the parish and the home have an important role to play in helping children understand what it means to share in Jesus, the Bread of Life for the first time.

St. Christopher holds two retreats for preparation. These retreats aim to help parents and parish become more actively involved in children's sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

A calendar of meetings, retreats and sacramental celebration dates will be distributed and available on the St. Christopher website: <http://saintchristophercc.com/children>

Confirmation:

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized person is "sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit" and is strengthened for service to the Body of Christ.

Confirmation Catechesis:

- Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul
- Teaches that Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to ☒ incorporate them more firmly in Christ ☒ strengthen their bond with the Church ☒ associate them more closely with the Church's mission ☒ increase in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and ☒ help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds
- Teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits
- Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences
- Includes instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols:
 - the imposition of hands
 - the anointing with the Sacred Chrism, and
 - the words of the sacramental formula
- Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation
- Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation (in the Eastern Catholic Churches, however, the priest is the ordinary minister of Chrismation)

St. Christopher Confirmation Preparation is a 2- year program beginning in 6th/7th Grade. It is mandatory that the child attend 2 years of religious education. 6th and 7th grade students must be enrolled in PSR or a Diocesan Approved Catholic school.

On odd years, the PSR, pre-sacramental 7th grade class- youths will gather for instruction, discussions, activities, and service projects. 6th and 7th will join during Lent for Confirmation centered preparation. On even years, the 7th and 8th grades will continue Confirmation preparation.

This required, 2-year Confirmation prep class helps middle school kids grow "roots" in their faith, and prepares them for Confirmation. It is also a bridge to the High School youth group, Kids will participate in the HS youth community service projects.

St. Christopher celebrates Confirmation every other year, on even numbered years. (2018 will be next Confirmation.) Confirmation is celebrated in the spring.

Confirmed 8th grade and High School students are invited to join the High School Youth group.

Confirmation schedule and retreat:

A Confirmation parent meeting is mandatory for information regarding the schedule, retreat and your child's confirmation preparation.

Special Note: Service hours.

St. Christopher requires students, preparing for Confirmation, to complete 8 hours of service and volunteering within the two years of sacramental formation. These hours may be volunteered in the church and the community. Volunteer hours form is available on the St. Christopher website, under Faith Formation, middle school:

<http://saintchristophercc.com/middle-school-youth>