

***ST. DOROTHY  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
PROGRAM***



***FAMILY HANDBOOK***

All religious education is formation in Christ, given to make “faith become living, conscious and active through the light of instruction.” As a believing, worshipping, and caring community, we at St. Dorothy recognize the importance of the educational ministry of the church, and regard it as essentially a continuation in our times of the mission of Jesus Christ. Realizing that “the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping,” we commit ourselves in particular to the task of the religious education of our youth.

In and through our religious education ministry, we hope to form people of God who put the Gospel to work in their daily lives, and whose joy, simplicity, and concern for others are so real that they can be recognized as Christ’s disciples by the love they have for one another.

We, therefore, strive to develop a Religious Education Program which:

- Teaches the basic truths and traditions of our faith that strengthens, supplements, and reinforces the knowledge of the faith and the love of God introduced to the child in the home by the parents/guardians as primary educators.
- Build a community of faith among faculty, students, and parents.
- Develops a sense of prayer and worship which leads to Christian service.
- Provides parents with necessary helps to fulfill their role as the primary religious educators of their children.
- Encourages full participation in the spiritual, liturgical and social life of the Saint Dorothy Community.
- To equip parents/guardians and their children so that they might grow in faith, hope, and love, and live lives of full and active participation within the life of the Church
- To foster the growth and development of each individual, child and adult, in light of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

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### **PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT**

Regarding their children’s religious education, parents/guardians should be prepared to:

- be examples of faith in action lived out within family life in the home
- ensure that the family attends Mass together on a weekly basis and participates in other parish/private devotional practices
- assist in homework assignments and test preparation
- discuss lessons with the child
- ensure that the child is prepared for PREP class each week
- communicate with the child’s catechist whenever necessary
- attend PREP meetings and any activities related to Sacrament preparation
- participate in PREP liturgies

### **VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS FOR CATECHIST AND ASSISTANTS**

Every volunteer over 18 years of age is required to have a current PA State Police Criminal Record check, PA Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse Clearance check, and Federal Criminal Background Check (FBI fingerprinting check), if you have lived outside of PA during the past two years, on file with the parish in order to be eligible to serve in the Parish Religious Education Program. Background checks must be on file within 30 days of beginning service in ministry. The parish will pay the fee required for these background checks. Volunteers are required to renew these background checks every five years. (*Certain enumerated offenses on the required background checks would preclude a person from being a volunteer*)

- All adult volunteers over the age of 18 must complete the Archdiocesan mandated training program entitled, Safe Environment Part I: Protecting God's Children (in person), within 90 days of hire.
- All adult volunteers over the age of 18 must complete the Safe Environment Part II: Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse (on line). This must be completed within 90 days of hire.

### **REGISTRATION**

Preparation and planning require that registration for the next year take place in the spring. **Every** student has to register every year. We ask that you **pay the fee when you register**.

To register **new** students, the following items are needed:

- Registration in St. Dorothy Parish
- Baptism certificate, unless baptized at St. Dorothy Church
- Copy of student's permanent record card from previous PREP or Catholic school, including dates of Sacraments already received.
- Non-parishioners must have written permission of home pastor to be registered.

### **REGISTRATION FEE**

**Fees are payable at the time of registration** or a payment plan needs to be worked out with the office. Checks should be made payable to St. Dorothy Parish. The fee will be announced in the spring, prior to registration.

### **HOURS OF INSTRUCTION**

Two different sessions are held on Monday's from September to May. The first session will begin at 4:30pm and end by 5:45pm and the second session will begin at 6:15pm and end by 7:30 pm.

### **SACRAMENT GUIDELINES**

- The Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist will be administered in Level 2.
- The Sacrament of Confirmation is administered to children in Level 7.
- Children are to attend Retreat Days and Practice Days for the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation.

The above requirements are necessary for a child's Catholic formation and if not completed, the Sacrament(s) would be postponed until the following year.

### **ENROLLMENT**

The faith formation provided in our programs involves incremental learning. That is the current year builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program from year-to-year. The program at Saint Dorothy is from level one to level eight.

Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year will be required to make-up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program

Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for two or more consecutive years will meet with the Director of Religious Education to determine what level the child will be placed in and may be required to do additional work.

## ATTENDANCE

**The importance of regular attendance at weekly PREP classes cannot be overstated.**

- All absences **MUST** be reported to Sabina Sauk at [ssauk@stdots.org](mailto:ssauk@stdots.org).
- When a child is absent from class, it is the parents' responsibility to see that the child makes up the lessons missed. We encourage you to work with your child at home. An email with the lesson missed will be sent to you. Your child's teacher will check to make sure that the work was complete.
- If your child is absent for **SIX SESSIONS for the year**, they will be required to complete make up lessons in order to be promoted to the next PREP level. Sessions will occur in May and June after the conclusion of PREP. If sessions are not completed, retention in that PREP level may occur.

## LATENESS

Since the time of our PREP sessions is so limited, it is extremely important that students arrive on time. Repeated incidences of lateness will result in the parent being contacted by the Director of Religious Education to discuss ways to rectify the situation.

## EARLY DISMISSAL

Early dismissal is an exception, not a routine practice. Notice to a teacher that a student will require early dismissal that morning, may be oral or written, but must be given before the start of class. Requests for more than three occasions of early dismissal will be referred to the Director of Religious Education.

## TRANSFERS & WITHDRAWS

If you wish to attend another Parish Program you need to get permission from our Pastor and the Pastor of the Parish you wish to attend. Please notify the Religious Education Office if you wish to transfer your child. This will enable us to send his/her permanent record cards to your new program and also help us to keep our records updated.

## PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

If there is a family situation which has resulted in separation or divorce, it is important that the Religious Education Office has on file the most up-to-date Custody Order or Custody Agreement. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of the parents to provide that document to the Religious Education Office immediately.

If someone other than the parent is given Guardianship of a child, we need to have formal paperwork on file in the office. This paperwork can be an official document from the Courts or a signed statement by the parents.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a Court Order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a Court Order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official and latest copy of the Court Order. If a Court Order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the Court Order or custody section of the Divorce Decree.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

We expect students to comply with the catechist's directives in the classroom and to follow all PREP policies. Students must be respectful, courteous and attentive to catechists and faculty. They are expected to show a Christian attitude toward one another. Fighting, abusive language, roughness, harassing, all forms of bullying, or any similar conduct will not be accepted. All students are to respect the property of others. Books and other materials are not to be taken from the desks in the classroom. Chewing gum in the building is not permitted at any time. Cell phones may not be used during class time.

Serious or consistent violations of PREP policies such as disrespect, disrupting the class, damaging school or parish property will result in disciplinary action. Cell phones used for texting or calls during class will be taken by the catechist and returned at the end of class. The catechist will work with students who are uncooperative as much as possible. The catechist may contact the parents by note, phone, or e-mail. If a problem continues the student will be sent to the Director of the Program. Continued violations will necessitate a meeting with the catechist, parents and the Director.

## **DRESS CODE**

There is no specific dress code for class. Students are expected to come to class neat and clean. Appearance is conducive to learning. If children are attending church for a sacramental celebration or a prayer service, they should dress appropriately.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSING**

In the event of snow, ice, or any other unforeseen emergencies, we will send an e-mail. If there is a question about the weather, check your e-mail and if you have not received a message from the Religious Education office, we will have class. If you change your e-mail please let us know so we have up-to-date information.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

In some classes assignments are given out to be completed at home. These assignments serve to reinforce a lesson taught, or prepare for a lesson to be taught. Please check with your child each week to be sure such assignments are done.

Although faith formation includes an academic nature, faith must also be experienced, witnessed and lived. The participants are expected to learn certain prayers each year. It is expected that parents will help the students to memorize these prayers. Consideration is given to those with special needs.

When a participant is absent it is the **parent's responsibility** to help the child complete the work missed. This assignment is sent home via email following an absence.

In the Levels where the participants are preparing for Sacraments additional assignments are necessary. (e.g. Study of Confirmation questions – Act of Contrition – Form for Confession)

## **MASS ATTENDANCE**

Parents are reminded that attendance at regular classes is not intended as a substitute for the weekly obligation of participation in the Mass. Attendance at Mass on Saturday night or Sunday morning and Holy Days is required, in addition to classes.

### **DROP OFF**

Your child's safety is of the utmost importance to us. That being said, we have made changes in the drop off and pick up for this coming PREP year. First, cars are not permitted in the front of the school building (Burmout Road) for drop-off or pick-up. We are asking families to drop off their child/children using the lane which will be designated for that purpose. The first couple of weeks there will be someone directing you. We ask that you drive your car between the cones that will be set up close to the school. We ask that all students exit the vehicle on the driver's side and walk directly into the school. No student may walk in front of a vehicle. **Drivers, please be critically alert entering and exiting the schoolyard.** If your child is not of independent ability yet to exit the car without your help please park the car and walk your child to the school building.

### **DISMISSAL**

At the end of PREP class, the students will be dismissed by grade starting with the upper grades. We ask that parents park their cars and come to the cone designated for your child's grade and meet your child and walk them to the car. If you have more than one child attending PREP we ask that the older child goes to the youngest child's designated area and wait for their sibling/siblings. We also ask that people please use the township line exit near the rectory. Please watch your children once we release them to your care. If your child is old enough to walk home please send an email to [spheylan@stdots.org](mailto:spheylan@stdots.org) so we can have it on file.

### **PRAYER SERVICES**

Throughout the year we gather all the students together to pray as a faith community. Parents are invited and welcome to come and pray with us. The monthly letter will let you know the dates and times.

### **SERVICE**

To be a Christian is to be one who serves. In order to make the students aware of the poor and disadvantaged in the Body of Christ we offer several opportunities for service throughout the year. These service opportunities will be listed on the news letters that will be sent home on a regular basis.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

A yearly calendar, plus a weekly letter.. Each student is given a bag at the beginning of the year. This bag will be used as the means of communication. Please check it weekly.

Parents should feel free to contact the program director regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. The program director may be contacted using any of the means listed below:

Phone: 610-853-1499

e-mail: [spheylan@stdots.org](mailto:spheylan@stdots.org)

stop at the Religious Education Office in the Church Annex

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is important that matters of a confidential nature, that come to light after registration, (such as an Individual Education Program, I.E.P, separation or divorce, health issues), be communicated to the Director of Religious Education who will notify the catechist so they can best support the child in the classroom. This information will not be disclosed beyond the purpose of his/her work in the Parish Religious Education Program.

### **USE OF BATHROOMS**

The children are encouraged to use the bathroom before they come to class. Bathrooms in the school should only be used when necessary. Use of the facilities during class takes important time away from instruction.