



St. Margaret Mary Parish

Kindergarten - 8th Grade Religious Education Programs

Parent Handbook 2023-2024

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2023-24 Religious Education school year at St. Margaret Mary! We are so happy that you are part of our parish community and have made the important decision to continue to educate your children in our Catholic faith.

As I announced this past January, *SMMP exists to help people experience new life in Christ*, and that includes you and your children! In spite of all of the things happening in the world and the things that your children may be exposed to, the fact is we have a heavenly Father who created each one of us in His image, to love and be loved. And what better gift to give to your children than the gift of faith to guide them through the ups & downs of life, knowing that no matter what they may experience, they know the love of the Father, the healing mercy of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in each of them!

This is the *life in Christ* that we pray you and all the children of our parish experience! We hope that through the religious education they receive, they will truly experience an *encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ and grow in their relationship with Him through the beauty, truth, and goodness of our Catholic Faith*. And whether they become a doctor, teacher, police officer, or full-time parent, they can one day be *Christ* in the world!

I want to thank our Religious Education staff and all of the catechists & volunteers who are being Christ to the children as we prepare to start the new school year. If there's anything the staff or I can do to help you in your faith journey, do not hesitate to reach out. Please keep me in your prayers and know that you are always in mine

Sincerely in Christ,



Fr. Max Behna
Pastor

Dear Parents,

God has gifted parents with the responsibility of raising and educating their children as Christians in the Catholic Tradition. Our St. Margaret Mary Parish Program exists to assist you in this important responsibility. Our program can impart knowledge of our faith through classes and other opportunities throughout the year, but it is the parents who really teach what it means to be a Christian by their everyday living example.

Besides weekly classes, we strongly encourage you to participate in weekly Mass, Reconciliation Services during Advent and Lent, Children's Masses, and as many of the service projects as your family can attend. We also invite you to volunteer when opportunities arise which fit your family and work lives. By being involved in Church programs and worshipping together at Mass, you show your children that growth in Faith has a priority in your family.

Please read this handbook which contains information regarding our K thru 8 Religious Education Programs. We are here to support you in whatever ways you may need to fulfill your responsibility to your children and the Church. Please feel free to call or contact me if you have questions or need any help in any aspect of the program. May God bless you and your precious children each day.

Sincerely,



Jacqui Snyder,
Director

2023-2024 Religious Education Programs Kindergarten - 8th grade

Children are eligible to participate in St. Margaret Mary Parish Religious Education Programs if the following requirements are fulfilled:

- Their family is registered with St. Margaret Mary Parish
- They have been baptized
- They are 5 years old by September 1st
- There is available space.

Session Times:

Monday 3:30-4:30 P.M.K-5th Grade
Monday 7:00-8:00 P.M.6-8th Grade
Tuesday 4:30-5:30 P.M. K-8th Grade
Wednesday 4:30-5:30 P.M.K-8th Grade

Supplementary Programs:

Other programs which enhance the faith development of the children include:

Mini Retreats: Grade 2 prior to First Communion
Grades 2 & 3 prior to First Reconciliation
Grades 6, 7 & 8 (April 2024)

Ongoing information regarding our Religious Education programs will be found on our Web Page: www.SMMP.com, in the Sunday Bulletin, **and in e-mail notices throughout the year.** (It is imperative that parents provide our office with a valid e-mail address as e-mail is our primary means of communication.) Parents will be notified by email of class cancellations due to severe weather conditions.

Rainbows, a support group for children who have suffered a significant loss in their lives either by death or divorce, is provided by St. Raphael parish for Kindergarten through Grade 12. Call their office at 630-355-4545 for information and registration.

REACH, faith sharing for children with special needs, is offered at St. Raphael and SS. Peter and Paul, 630-355-1081. Call their offices for more information.

St. Margaret Mary Religious Education Program Curriculum

Kindergarten - 8th Grade

Our program is designed to assist parents in their efforts to nourish the gift of faith in their children. As part of the Catholic Christian Community, we have the responsibility to share our faith with our children.

The **Kindergarten** program focuses on getting to know Jesus through Scripture stories, which follow the Church's Liturgical calendar.

Grades 1-5: Your children will be taught their faith through seven themes: Creation, God, Jesus Christ, the Church, Christian Morality, Sacraments and Salvation History. Each year these themes will be expanded according to your child's ability and maturity. In addition, Grade 2 will focus on the Eucharist, Grade 2 and 3 on Reconciliation and the Church, Grade 4 on moral development and Grade 5 on the Sacraments.

Grade 6: Three themes will be covered; *Revelation, The Trinity and Sacraments.*

Grade 7: Three additional themes will be covered; *Jesus Christ, The Mass and The Church.*

Grade 8: Three final themes will be covered; *Morality, Theology of the Body for Teens, and the Kingdom of God.*

Sacrament Preparation:

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is usually received for the first time in the 2nd Grade after completion of two years of Religious Education. Children who have had no formal religious education prior to 2nd grade must have at least 2 years of formal religious education classes before the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Contact our office if you have further questions.

All parents of First Reconciliation and First Communion candidates are required to attend an informational meeting on Sunday, **September 17th at 7:00 p.m.** in the Upper Room. There you will receive more specific information and be given tools to help your child(ren) prepare for these important milestones.

Preparation for First Holy Communion includes:

- Child's attendance at regular weekly classes and Sunday Mass
- Parents and children are expected to attend a Sacrament Retreat in November and March.

First Holy Communion is scheduled to be celebrated for 2nd graders who have completed 2 years of formation on the First Saturday in May.

The Sacrament of **Reconciliation** is introduced to second and third graders. This sacrament is received in a group celebration. It is vital that parents help their child prepare for 1st Reconciliation by becoming familiar with the theology we are teaching your child regarding sin and forgiveness.

Preparation for First Reconciliation includes:

- Child's attendance at regular weekly classes
- Parent/child retreat scheduled in November

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is scheduled to be celebrated on November 16th and 28th, 2023.

The curriculum for all 2nd and 3rd graders includes a strong emphasis on sin, forgiveness and reconciliation during the first Semester using the *Blessed* curriculum.

Prayer and Liturgical Celebrations throughout the year:

Prayer Services for special feasts and occasions will be celebrated.

On November 1st, all families are asked to attend the 4:30 p.m. Mass for **All Saints Day**, which is a Holy Day of Obligation.

The **Ash Wednesday Mass** occurs at 4:30 p.m. on February 14th and takes the place of Wednesday classes that week. All families are invited to attend. (Monday and Tuesday classes will meet as usual.)

Special Children's Masses will be celebrated on October 1st at 9:00 a.m. and February 4th at 9:00 a.m. Children will participate in reading, greeting and bringing up the gifts at those liturgies. These are special celebrations, but all families are asked to attend Mass every week.

2023-2024 Fees:

All tuition fees are due before classes begin in September. Sacramental preparation fees of \$40 are due before the sacrament is celebrated.

No child will be denied entrance to any program because of lack of payment. For a tuition waiver, please contact the Religious Education Office.

Parish policy provides for total tuition waiver for families of catechists/youth ministry facilitators. Sacrament fees must still be paid.

Homework:

Generally, homework is not assigned. Children in grades K - 8 will take home their textbook and a folder each week which may contain parent communications from your child's catechist or our office, or papers/crafts the children have worked on during class. Occasionally, your child's catechist may request that they complete something at home that wasn't finished in class. Textbooks are on loan and should be treated with extreme care. Should the textbook be destroyed or written in, you will be billed \$25 for a book replacement fee. **FOLDERS SHOULD BE EMPTIED EACH WEEK.** Textbooks and folders should be brought to every class meeting.

Parents are also requested to teach and practice traditional prayers at home. A copy of the prayers the children are expected to know is included in this document.

The student books that we use contain supplemental content that sometimes cannot be covered within our time constraints. Thus, the catechist will cover the main themes.

Emergencies:

In case of an emergency (tornado, etc.), no child will be allowed to leave the building **without a parent or a designated adult picking him/her up.**

**Parents are required to sign the following medical waiver on the registration form at the time of registration:

I grant permission for the administration of First Aid to my child by the staff and volunteers of St. Margaret Mary as their judgement deems advisable and to make the necessary referrals to qualified physicians for the treatment of illness or accidents of a more serious nature. I understand I will be promptly notified in the event of any serious illness or accident and prior to any major surgery, except when delay of such communication would endanger life. In the case of a medical emergency, I understand that every effort will be made to contact the parent/guardian of the participant. In the event that I cannot be reached I hereby give permission to the physicians selected by the adult staff to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for and to order injections, anesthesia or surgery if deemed necessary for my child.

In case of an emergency closing, please check your email for an email announcement from our office.

Videotaping, Still Photography & Social Media Policy:

Videos and still photographs may be taken and used for future promotional efforts, but **NO CHILD WILL BE IDENTIFIED BY NAME**. You have the option to opt out of the policy by informing our office.

Cell Phone Policy:

All students are expected to turn their phones off before class and place them in the designated “cell phone parking lot” area. Compliance is necessary and appreciated as to minimize classroom distractions and disruptions. If a student chooses not to comply, their catechist will send them to see Jacqui Snyder.

Food/Drink Policy:

No food or beverages will be permitted in the classrooms. Compliance is appreciated due to safety concerns with allergens and to minimize distractions.

Attendance & Absences:

Your child is expected to attend all sessions and to arrive on time. **Please call the office** (331-701-4398) if your child will be absent from class or email: religioused@smmp.com. If your child is seriously ill or there is a family crisis, please call the office to let us know.

If a student in grades 1-8 has more than three absences, you will receive a phone call from the religious education office. Starting with the fourth absence, you are expected to cover the material with your child and turn in the work at our welcome desk. Please use the make-up form on our website to complete this work.

Communication:

From Parents:

Whenever you or your child has a problem or a suggestion, please contact the appropriate person:

1. Concerning child's sessions, other children, difficulty with lessons, etc...**contact your child's catechist.**
2. Concerning catechists or overall program, etc...**contact Jacqui Snyder.**
3. Concerning the Director or the program as a whole...**contact the Pastor.**

Arrival & Dismissal:

The safety of your children is our priority. We ask that you park in the lower Green Trails parking lot for both arrival and dismissal and **use the Parish Center entrance. This is the only entrance/exit that is monitored by an adult.** Please walk your kindergarten thru 5th grade children to the Parish Center. You are welcome to wait in the Parish Center, but not to walk around the building. At dismissal time, Kindergarten thru 5th grade catechists will walk children back to the Parish Center for pick-up. Again, we ask Kindergarten through 5th grade parents to come into the building for pick-up. Best practice is for Jr. High students to use this entrance/exit as well.

Please call 630-369-0833 if you're going to be delayed when picking up children.

Early Release:

If your child(ren) needs to leave class before dismissal time, parents are required to sign them out at the welcome desk in the Parish Center, and we will call your child out of class while you wait in the Parish Center. Please **DO NOT** ask your child's catechist to send them down at a certain time.

Discipline:

In order to accomplish the faith formation of your child, there must be a sense of order and discipline within the class. Being respectful of our volunteer catechists is imperative!! Disruptions shorten the effective teaching time and impede other students' learning. Disruptive or rude behavior will not be tolerated. We understand and sympathize with parents whose children have been diagnosed with ADD or ADHD. We will work with every family to the best of our ability, but in severe cases, parents may be asked to do a home study program with their children for the remainder of the semester. The following are the Catechists' guidelines regarding discipline:

1. No child has the right to disturb the learning process of the other children in the group.

Here is the basic plan of action when a disruption occurs:

- a. The catechist will tell the child that his/her behavior is unacceptable BECAUSE it is preventing the rest of the group from learning.
- b. If the child chooses not to improve his/her behavior, the child will be sent with a classmate to Jacqui Snyder.
- c. Mrs. Snyder will give the student a warning but will contact the parents in the event of serious and consistent misbehaviors.
- d. If multiple behavior modification strategies prove unsuccessful, the child will need complete the year in Home Study.

2. Basic rules for all children:

- a. Respect for each other is essential Christian behavior; therefore, being disruptive and disrespectful to anyone, by fighting, being rude or using bad or offensive language is not tolerated.
- b. Respect for our place of worship and learning requires that we do not damage or misuse the building or the things in it.

Respect for ourselves means we dress appropriately for class and care for our health. Coats and hats should be removed and hung up during class time, and hoodies should be worn off the head.

We ask that all parents review a document provided by the diocese as a resource for parents by clicking the button labeled "[For Parents: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse](#)" on the Religious Education webpage.

Pray:

Please pray for our students during our class time that they grow in knowledge of our faith and deepen their relationship with Jesus. May God bless your family abundantly!

**DIOCESE OF JOLIET
ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

All religious education and other programs for youth in the Diocese of Joliet shall actively seek to provide a supportive, caring environment in which all persons are safe from all forms of intimidation including bullying, which is unacceptable, unchristian, and strictly prohibited.

For the purpose of this policy, bullying is defined in conformity with Illinois Law as follows:

“Any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- 1) Placing the child/youth in reasonable fear of harm to the child/youth’s person or property;
- 2) Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the child/youth’s physical or mental health;
- 3) Substantially interfering with one/more child’s or one/more youth’s academic performance; or
- 4) Substantially interfering with one/more child’s or one/more youth’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a parish.”

105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 (b)

Bullying Conduct

Bullying conduct covered by this policy is conduct that occurs on parish property or at parish sponsored activities or events; while children/youth are being transported or walking to or from the parish or parish sponsored activities or events; while children/youth are waiting in transportation pick-up/dropoff zones; or cyber bullying as defined hereinafter.

Cyber Bullying

This policy prohibits bullying and intimidation of children/youth through the use of internet and social media sites on any electronic device (private, public, or parish owned), whether on or off the parish campus, or during non-attendance hours.

Any child/youth who engages in bullying will be subject to appropriate discipline, up to and including suspension or expulsion and referral to local law enforcement. Behavioral interventions may be included as a component of the disciplinary actions. This may include but is not limited to mandatory counseling. 104

Retaliatory behavior by a child/youth accused of bullying will also incur consequences. False accusations of bullying will result in disciplinary action taken against the accuser. Any reported bullying issue will be promptly brought to the attention of the appropriate party: the Pastor or Director of Religious Education/ Parish Catechetical Leader or designee, and there after investigated. Reference: *The Illinois School Code*, 105 ILCS, 5/27-23.7

PRAYERS

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

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.*

Grace Before Meals (2nd Grade)

Bless us, O Lord, and these Your gifts
which we are about to receive
from Your bounty,
through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

Act of Contrition (2nd & 3rd Grade)

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.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee;
Blessed art 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 to the Father

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.*

Grace After Meals (2nd Grade)

We give You thanks, almighty God,
for these and all Your gifts.
which we have received
through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

Guardian Angel Prayer

Angel of God,
my guardian dear,
to whom God's love
commits me here;
ever this day
be at my side
to light and guard,
rule and guide.