



St. Teresa of Avila Parish
Religious Education Program
Family Handbook
2017-2018

Revised June 2017

Love God. Love Your Neighbor. Make Disciples of Jesus.

The mission of St. Teresa of Avila Parish is to be a vibrant Catholic community that acknowledges the Lordship of Jesus, celebrates that truth sacramentally, and commits itself to furthering the Gospel message.

NEW FOR 2017-18

As part of our Strong Catholic Families initiative St. Teresa's will hold a Family Mass on the 2nd Sunday of every month at 11AM in lieu of Monday evening class. All PREP students are asked to attend with their families. Families from each grade level (PREP and MTC School) will be represented in various ministries at this liturgy each month beginning October 8, 2017.

Enrollment and Attendance

The faith formation provided in our programs involves incremental learning; each year builds upon the learning of the previous year. It is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program consistently from year to year. If a student enrolls with delayed or no previous religious instruction, they may or may not be placed in the same grade level that they are in school. This matter must be discussed with the Coordinator (CRE) prior to the start of classes.

Assignments and Textbooks

Catechists at St. Teresa's assign take-home assignments in the form of written work, activities or study. Parents are expected to supervise the completion of these assignments. Although faith formation includes an academic component, faith must also be experienced, witnessed and lived.

With regard to textbooks, each child receives a textbook at the first class and is required to bring this book to every class. Please make a plan for a place to keep the textbook so it is easy to retrieve for class on Monday evening. Please cover the book with clear contact or brown paper.

Regarding homework, students will receive weekly home assignments corresponding with the lessons

covered in class. These brief assignments provide parents with the opportunity to follow up on material learned in class, foster discussion, and review previously taught material to assist their child in preparing for a new lesson.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued twice a year on four areas of catechist observation:

1. Attendance
2. Knowledge of content demonstrated through participation, tests and completed homework.
3. Knowledge of prayers.
4. Behavior in class.

Weekly Attendance

Please email or phone in absences prior to 6:30 p.m. on Mondays: (610) 666-0167 or staprep@verizon.net.

Please also contact your child's catechist about make-up work. Make-up work is to be handed in when the child returns to class.

When a student has 3 unexcused absences, a letter will be sent home notifying the parents/guardians. Make-up work will be required in order for the student to remain on track in their current class. Any special circumstances that may necessitate more than 3 absences during the PREP year must be discussed with the CRE as soon as possible.

Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to the program. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child's formation up-to-date when possible. Extended absences may delay the reception of sacraments.

Lateness

Our session begins promptly at **6:30 p.m.** Any child arriving after this time will be considered late. Lateness will be noted in progress reports.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Please do not arrive any earlier than 6:20 p.m. Please park and walk young children into the building using the side gym entrance. Older children may be dropped off by car at the front doors. Please obey all safety signs and directional cones. Dismissal is at 7:45 p.m. Please park in marked spaces and enter through the side gym door and wait in the gym for the children to be brought in by the classroom catechist or aide. Please do not enter the school hallway unless you need to talk to the CRE or office staff. Children will not be permitted to go out into the parking lot unless accompanied by an adult.

Sacramental Preparation

This takes place in the context of the entire parish community and therefore, the classroom is only one element of this preparation. There are extra lessons and out of class gatherings for children as well as gatherings for parents.

For children baptized as infants (*birth to age 6*), the sacrament of Penance is celebrated in Spring of level 2. First Eucharist is celebrated in Spring of level 3. It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia that each child has two full years of religious instruction before receipt of sacraments.

For children baptized as infants, the sacrament of Confirmation is prepared for and celebrated in 6th grade. It is required that the child has four consecutive years of religious instruction and has celebrated First Penance and Eucharist before the year (6th grade) in which they are prepared for Confirmation.

For children ages 7 to 18 who are not baptized, sacramental preparation is through RCIA.

Children baptized in the Byzantine Rite or the Orthodox Church received all of their initiation sacraments when they were baptized. These children will be prepared to celebrate First Penance and Eucharist (if desired) at St. Teresa's.

Students exhibiting chronic absences (*3 or more unexcused absences*), lateness, and/or who have

persistent discipline problems may have their reception of sacraments deferred. A conference between the CRE, parents, child and possibly Pastor will be arranged to discuss this matter.

Home Based Catechesis

Home-based catechesis is a cooperative and collaborative effort between the parents and parish leadership. This relationship helps parents who choose home-based catechesis to be a part of the total catechetical effort of the parish; they "should not feel alone in this task." (National Dir. for Catechesis, no. 61) Home based catechesis is an option for children with special needs and for families with extenuating circumstances. This will be evaluated by the CRE in consultation with the Pastor.

Please refer to the Home-school Guidelines in *Attachment B* (also available on the parish website).

Religious Observance

The objective of our program is to deepen our children's knowledge about the Catholic faith and to inspire them to live their lives in imitation of Jesus. Our ultimate aim is to encourage our students to PRACTICE their faith. Jesus tells his disciples very clearly in the Gospel, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). The third commandment obliges us to keep the Christian Sabbath day holy. This means that we are to attend Sunday Mass EVERY WEEK; only serious illness or an inability to be physically present where Mass is being celebrated serve as adequate excuses. God gives us 168 hours every week; certainly we can give Him one hour in return. Regular reception of the Holy Eucharist serves as an important example and encourages our children to practice their faith and become disciples of Jesus.

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Liturgy of the Word for children takes place at the 9:00 a.m. Sunday Mass at St. Teresa of Avila Church. There is a team of 6 presenters who work together to prepare talks and conversation about the scripture readings with the children. Children from the age of 4 to grade 2 are invited to participate.

Works of Mercy

The families of St. Teresa of Avila have long been generous in supporting programs that help others in need. Each month the program as a whole will focus on a chosen work of mercy to continue this tradition of service (e.g., Feed the Hungry-Operation Rice Bowl). Students are encouraged to participate in donating to our various causes.

From time to time, the catechists may invite their students to engage in service activities as a way to deepen the formation process. When this happens the catechist will provide the students and their parents with a detailed list of suggested activities as well as appropriated permission and release forms.

Christian Behavior

The Religious Education Program offered by St. Teresa of Avila Parish is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children as well as to foster values and behavior that are in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church. Our behavior code is based upon the two great commandments: **LOVE GOD and LOVE ONE ANOTHER**. Therefore, students, adult volunteers, and parents are expected to treat one another with respect at all times. Conduct by children or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of St. Teresa of Avila parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to suspension, or immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the legal authorities where appropriate.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence, harassment, or bullying in any form, including oral, written or electronic, by a child against any member of the PREP community, the child, if suspended but not dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance before returning to class.

In the event a student engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, the following actions may be taken at the discretion of the pastor or the program CRE.

1. *First incident:* the student will be removed from the session and parents/guardian immediately notified by phone by the CRE. A conference will be scheduled with the parents, student and catechist to address the matter.

2. *Second incident:* the student will be removed from the session and be suspended from the program for a period of 1 session. Parents/guardians will be immediately notified by the CRE and required to pick up their child. Prior to returning to the program, the CRE will schedule a conference with parents, student and catechist to address the matter.

3. *Third incident:* the student will be removed from the session and may be dismissed from the program. The parents or guardians will be immediately notified by the CRE and required to pick up their child. Following a conference with the CRE, parents, student and catechist, the parents will be given the option of their child repeating his/her current grade level in the following school year or opting to complete the current year's material by home-schooling their child. In either case no refund of fees will be made.

Contraband

Bringing contraband to program sessions is strictly prohibited. Contraband will be confiscated and returned to parents only. Depending on the nature of the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.

1. Items considered contraband include but are not limited to: weapons, drugs, alcohol and tobacco products, food, beverages, toys, electronic games and devices.

2. It is unlawful for minors to be in possession of weapons, drugs, alcohol or tobacco products. Students found to be in possession of such items may be suspended or dismissed from the program. Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.

Search and Seizure

It is the policy of St. Teresa of Avila parish to respect the privacy of its PREP students. In the event that a student is suspected of having weapons or drugs in

his/her possession, the CRE is to be notified immediately. The CRE will call the parents/guardians if a search is deemed necessary. No search will be conducted without a parent/guardian present. Parental refusal to cooperate could result in the student's immediate dismissal from the program.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

Devices such as cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communications open with children especially for working parents. It is however a policy of this program that such devices must be turned off during class sessions. Therefore, if a student uses a cell phone or other electronic device, the catechist may confiscate it until the end of class.

Non-Custodial Parents

It is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the parish with the latest, most up-to-date custodial order or custody agreement. **If either of these changes during the year, it remains the responsibility of the parents to provide that documented update immediately.**

Our program abides by the provision 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 CRE with the 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 CRE with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

Tuition

The tuition for St. Teresa's Religious Education Program is \$175 for one child, \$275 for two children, and \$350 for three or more children. Payment in full is due at the time of registration. Please make all checks payable to St. Teresa of Avila Parish.

Beginning on June 1 a \$25 late fee per family will be assessed on all outstanding payments. Please contact the CRE if you wish to pay via ACH or be on a payment plan; a minimum non-refundable deposit is required by June 1. Please send all forms and tuition directly to the attention of the CRE, Mrs. Erin Gauntner at St. Teresa of Avila Rectory, 1260 S. Trooper Road, Norristown, PA 19403. If you voluntarily withdraw your child from the program within the first two weeks of class, a partial refund of the tuition will be given. In the event that your child is dismissed from the program for any reason, no refund of fees will be made. If the fees present a hardship for your family, please contact the CRE at (610) 666-0167 or staprep@verizon.net.

Snow Emergency and Cancellation

The CRE cancels after consultation with the Pastor. The cancellation is advertised on NBC10. Also, a message will be left on the PREP office phone: (610) 666-0167, blast email sent and an announcement prominently placed on the parish website.

Parish Leadership

Rev. J. Jerome Wild, Pastor
Deacon Francis C. Lally, Permanent Deacon
Mrs. Erin Gauntner, CRE/YM

Parish Contact Information

Parish phone: (610) 666-5820
Parish fax: (610) 666-7511

CRE phone: (610) 666-0167
CRE email: staprep@verizon.net

Parish Website

<http://www.stteresaofavilaparish.com>

PREP/YM Website

http://stteresaofavilaparish.com/REP___YM.php

Office of Rel. Ed. on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/STA-Parish-Religious-Education-Youth-Ministry-115288271837061/>