

St. Theresa Catholic Church
Office of Religious Education



Handbook for Parents and Students
2011-2012

Dear Parents,

Thank you for enrolling your child or children in St. Theresa's Religious Education Program. Our goal is to help your child or children to grow in their faith and to understand what they believe. This is a joint effort between you as parents, the Religious Education Office, and the parish as a whole. In order to provide the best possible environment for all of our children to learn, this handbook is provided in order to ensure communication is as clear as possible.

St. Theresa Religious Education looks forward to the opportunity to work with your child(ren). All of us are engaged in this ministry out of love for the Lord, the Catholic Church, and for the children who are part of the program. The goal is to help teach the riches of the Catholic Faith for the students to grow in their knowledge and faith life for many years to come.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Religious Education Office.

In Christ,

Elizabeth Vogt
Director of Religious Education
St. Theresa Parish
847-359-2846
elizabethv@sttheresachurch.org

Statement of Catechetical Purpose

“The aim of catechesis is to lead believers to a deeper knowledge and love of Christ and the Church and a firm commitment to follow him” (National Directory for Catechesis). Focusing on Jesus as the very center of catechesis, the goal of the St. Theresa Religious Education Office is to promote the knowledge of faith, meaningful participation in liturgical worship and the sacramental life of the Church, offer moral formation, teach prayer and lead believers to become Disciples of Christ.

Table of Contents

Statement of Catechetical Purpose	3
Personnel and Non-Discrimination Policy	3
Registration of Students	4
Financial Assistance	4
Tuition Non-Payment Exclusion Policy	5
Arrival/Dismissal of Students	5
Absence/Tardiness/Early Pick Up of Students	6
Behavioral Expectations	6
Electronics Policy	6
Health and Safety	7
Communication with Parents	7
Curriculum	8
Learning Expectations	8
Examinations	8

St. Theresa Religious Education Personnel 2011-2012

Director of Religious Education: Mrs. Elizabeth Vogt 847-359-2846 Ext 111 elizabethv@sttheresachurch.org
Administrative Assistant: Ms. Susan Smolak 847-359-2846 Ext 112 susans@sttheresachurch.org

Non-Discrimination Policy

St. Theresa Religious Education is operated under the auspices of the Catholic Bishop of Chicago, a corporation sole, in the Archdiocese of Chicago, admits students of any race, color, sex national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privilege, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students in this program.

St. Theresa Religious Education does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, or national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, loan or financial assistance programs or other programs.

Registration of Students

Admission to the Religious Education Program is given to children of active registered parishioners. An active parishioner is one who has registered and routinely contributes to the parish. If your child is registering for the first time, the following is needed:

- If your child was not Baptized at St. Theresa, A copy of the child's Baptismal Certificate. If the child was not Baptized, please inform the Religious Education Office.
- The name and address of any parish where your child has previously attended Religious Education, if applicable.

Saint Theresa Religious Education will not accept new family registrations for Junior High students coming from a parish that offers Confirmation in High School. This is out of respect to the requirements for Confirmation at other parishes and their pastors.

The Archdiocese of Chicago requires that every student attend Religious Education for a minimum of one year prior to the year in which he or she receives a Sacrament. Therefore, 2nd grade children who were not in any Religious Education Program the prior year will be placed in 1st grade. 8th grade children who were not in any Religious Education Program the prior year will be placed in 7th grade. A child who is in 3rd grade or older and has not received any Religious Education will be placed in a children's catechumenate/RCIC class. In this class, the students will be prepared for First Reconciliation and First Communion. Children age 7 or older who have not received Baptism are also placed in the children's catechumenate/RCIC class.

Home School Religious Education is an option for those parents desiring this approach. Home School Religious Education is not an option for students receiving a Sacrament that year i.e. no 2nd or 8th grade student shall be home schooled. Home School students are required to meet with the Director of Religious Education at a minimum of twice per school year to review their progress. Ordinarily the first meeting will take place in January and the second at the end of the school year - April/May.

In order to cover the expenses that are incurred in the course of Religious Education, we have established tuition, book and supply fees, and Sacrament fees. The fees for the 2011-2012 school year are as follows:

Tuition:	1 student = \$230	2 students = \$300	3 or more = \$330
Book and Supply Fee:	\$40 per student		
Sacrament Fee:	2nd grade and RCIC = \$55	Confirmation = \$75	
Bible Fee:	6 th grade and RCIC = \$25	(Bibles will be used for 6 th – 8 th grade)	

*** There is an early bird discount for all registrations received in the Pauline Center by July 15, 2011*

One-half of the tuition, the entire book fee and the entire sacrament fee are due at registration. The second half of the tuition is due by October 1. If you are unable to pay on this schedule, you may contact Elizabeth Vogt in the Religious Education office to set up a payment plan. If you set up a payment plan *you are still responsible for the entire amount of tuition and fees.* You will be required to sign a payment plan form if you are pursuing this option.

Financial Assistance

Some financial assistance is available for families who otherwise cannot afford Religious Education. In case of extreme financial hardship, a family may apply for Financial Aid. To apply for Financial Aid, the following must be fulfilled:

- The student or family must have been involved in the program one year prior to apply for financial assistance.
- You must contact the Religious Education Office to request a PSAS financial assistance packet.
- You must file your PSAS financial aid application *before September 1.*
- You will be informed whether or not you qualify for financial aid and, if so, in what amount. If you do not qualify, you will be responsible to pay the full amount.
- You must re-apply for financial assistance every year in which it is needed.

No financial assistance will be provided without filling out the PSAS financial aid application.

In order to ensure fairness to all persons requesting financial aid, a private financial assistance company determines the amount of financial assistance to be granted to every family. **All tuition assistance information will be kept strictly confidential.** If a family should encounter an unexpected emergency situation after September 1, they should immediately contact the Religious Education Office.

Tuition Non-Payment Exclusion Policy

In selecting St. Theresa for the Religious Education of your child(ren), there is a financial and moral obligation for the family to pay all tuition and fees incurred through the course of any program year. (Provisions are made for legitimate unexpected hardship and financial assistance in extraordinary cases as determined by actual need).

It is the policy of St. Theresa Religious Education that all tuition and fees are to be paid in-full by October 1, unless alternate payment arrangements have been approved.

In the case of returning student(s), the student(s) will not be permitted to register for the next year unless all current and past tuition and fees for all students in the family have been paid in full.

In the case of a student(s) completing the program, the student(s) will not receive the final documentation unless all tuition and fees have been paid in-full for all students in the family.

In the case of transferring student(s), records will not be processed or provided unless all tuition and fees for all students in the family are paid in-full.

This policy is consistent with the tuition Non-Payment Exclusion Policy as outlined by the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Arrival/Dismissal of Students

It is important for the educational process that students are always present at class. Since students attend Religious Education only once a week, absences are very hard to overcome. Therefore we strongly encourage weekly attendance. If a student is unable to attend his/her normally scheduled class, he/she may attend another class at a different time during the same week. Students missing five or more classes in a year may be required to complete additional assignments or may need to repeat a year if it is a Sacramental year.

There are only two doors from which students and parents may enter the building: the Main Entrance (Door 1) on the East side of the school and the Benton Parking Lot Entrance (Door 4) on the North side of the school.

- Doors will open for catechists 30 minutes prior to the start of classes. Doors will open for students 15 minutes prior to the start of class.
- Students in grades K-3 must be dropped off and picked up in their classrooms by their parents. An older sibling may drop off or pick up a younger sibling only if the catechist is notified by the parents.
- Students in grades 4-8 may be dropped off at the entrances of the school or may be dropped off and picked up by their parents at the classrooms.
- Please respect the traffic flow of the parking lot, in order that you and everyone else may drop off and pick up their children as efficiently and safely as possible. Please enter the parking lot in the driveway closest to the school and exit via the driveways near the church and rectory. Please park only in designated parking spaces, not the driveway, as this disrupts others.
- The Benton Lot door (Door 4) will be locked five minutes after the beginning of class and will be opened 5 minutes prior to dismissal. Any student being dropped off late or picked up early will need to go to the main entrance.
- Students **may not enter** their classrooms unless a catechist is present in the classrooms. It is easier for the students to be supervised by the Religious Education staff when they are in the halls rather than in the classrooms.

St. Theresa Religious Education presumes both parents of every student have equal access even if the parents are divorced or separated *unless there is a form on file stating otherwise*. If a form is on file that a student may not be released to one parent, the custodial must provide a written letter stating the names of the individuals who may pick up the student and must pick up the student in the classroom. *It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to file this letter with the Religious Education Office.*

Absence/Tardiness/Early Pick Up of Students

- If an absence is unavoidable, parents should contact the Religious Education Office. If the absence is known ahead of time, please contact the Religious Education Office at least two hours before the student's class is to begin on Tuesday or the day before classes if class is on Saturday at 847-359-2846. Please give us your child(ren)'s name, grade and teacher. If at all possible, it is encouraged for the student to attend class at a different time in the same week (Tuesday student attending the Saturday class or vice versa). Please indicate if this is an option with each absence.
- In the event of an emergency absence such as illness, please call the religious Education Office as soon as possible. In such an event, you may have to leave a message and may receive a call indicating that your child is absent if we have not been able to check the messages.
- If a child is marked absent by his/her teacher and we have not been informed of his/her absence, we will place a call to the parents to inform of the absence.
- If a child is more than five minutes late, he or she is considered tardy. Parents will need to take their child to the front office, sign the child in, and bring the child to class. The child will receive a slip which she/he will give to their catechist.
- If a parent needs to pick up a child early, the parent will need to sign their child out at the front office. The parent must present the slip she/he receives at the front office to the catechist at time of early pick-up in order for the student to be released.
- There is no substitute for a child being present in the classroom. While absences are occasionally a necessary part of life, please try to avoid having your child miss an excessive number of classes.

Behavioral Expectations

Students are expected to treat everyone with respect and to act appropriately. Repeated disrespectful behavior will result in disciplinary action. Ordinarily the following disciplinary steps will be taken in the event of misbehavior.

1st Instance: Verbal warning by catechist.

2nd Instance: Director of Religious Education is notified and speaks with the student.

3rd Instance: Parent is notified.

4th Instance: Student is withdrawn from class.

Disrespectful behavior includes, but is not limited to: obscene language, theft, damage to personal or school property, disruptive behavior, use of cell phones, iPods®, etc. during class time. Students are required to leave materials in the desks alone. Students will replace anything damaged, destroyed or missing along with a letter of apology.

St. Theresa reserves the right to immediately remove a student from the classroom for any serious behavioral infraction. Serious behavioral infractions include, but are not limited to: fighting or assault, leaving the school or classroom without permission, possession, use, sale and/or distribution of any dangerous or unlawful object (e.g. cigarettes, liquor, drugs, matches, knives or other blades, fireworks, weapons, etc.), student-to-student or student-to-catechist harassment, lying, cheating and stealing. St. Theresa may, at its sole discretion, remove a student for the remainder of the year without refund of any tuition or fees for such infractions.

St. Theresa reserves the right to inspect all desks and other parish supplied enclosures and the right to inspect personal property when there is reasonable belief that a participant is violating the rules and regulations of the program. All contraband will be seized and the appropriate authorities will be contacted.

Electronics Policy

Students should not bring any electronic entertainment devices with them to class. Such devices include, but are not limited to, iPods® and other MP3 players, PSP®, Game Boy® or other video game devices, e-readers and so forth. Such devices are not needed and are often a distraction. Students are permitted, though not encouraged, to bring cell phones for emergency use. Phones must, however, be turned **off** during class. Phones may not be set merely to vibrate. Emergency communication from parents to students must go through the front office during class time. Any electronic device used in violation of this policy will be confiscated and returned at the end of class.

Health and Safety

Supervision begins 15 minutes prior to the start of class time and ends 10 minutes after the end of class time. Parents will be contacted if a student has not been picked up in the allotted time. If a parent cannot be reached, the Emergency Contact will be contacted. If neither parent nor emergency contacts can be contacted, St. Theresa will contact the authorities. It is required that every student have an Emergency Release Form in file each year.

In the event that a student becomes ill or injured during class time, a parent/guardian will be contacted. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be contacted. If no one can be contacted and time is of the essence, the program administrator will act in a manner that is both responsible and reasonable. Should the injury or illness be of such severity that immediate care is warranted, the program administrator will immediately call the authorities i.e. the Palatine Fire Department.

The Religious Education Office cannot administer, maintain or supervise the taking of medication except in extraordinary circumstances. If a student requires medication, a parent must come to class to administer it.

Please inform the Religious Education Office about any health concerns that your child may have, including allergies. We will treat such information as confidential and release it only as necessary.

Communication with Parents

Religious education is a joint effort between the parish and the parents. Without both parent and parish working towards the same goals, religious education is impossible. In order to ensure the best possible religious education for your child, it is essential that communication between our office and you be as clear and efficient as possible. St. Theresa will use the following methods to send you routine communications:

- Religious Education Handbook contains the general information relevant to all parents.
- Newsletters and letters to parents are often distributed to the students in class. Please ask your child if he/she received anything for you.
- **Emergency closing notifications** for Religious Education will first be listed at www.emergencyschoolclosings.com under "St. Theresa School Religious Classes." Then, catechists will be contacted on the cancellation, followed by an email to the address you supplied at registration. If you do not have email or did not supply an address, you will receive a telephone call in the event that we must close due to weather or other circumstances. Please check the email address you provided before class in case of emergency closings.
- Catechists or Religious Education personnel may contact you if there is a particular concern about your child. They will call or email you.

Communication from parents is also welcome and valued. Please provide as specific information as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about the Religious Education Program or about your child's catechist, please feel free to call or email Elizabeth Vogt in the Religious Education Office at 847-359-2846 or ElizabethV@sttheresachurch.org.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Curriculum

St. Theresa Religious Education uses the *Faith and Life* series of books published by Ignatius Press for grades K-7. Confirmation classes use *Confirmed in the Spirit* by Loyola Press and *Journey of Faith* handouts from Liguori Press. All of these materials are approved for use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Archdiocesan Office of Catechesis and Youth Ministry and are in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. They bear the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur certifying they are free of doctrinal or moral error. Parents are invited and encouraged to review the material in their child's books and discuss it with them.

Learning Expectations

- Parents are *the first and most influential* educators of their children. You are encouraged as parents to discuss the material learned in class. Discussing the material, praying as a family and frequently attending Mass will help your child to grow in his or her faith.
- Mass attendance on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is a serious obligation. Religious Education assists the student in growing in his/her faith; it does not take the place of Mass attendance. Students are expected to be familiar with the Mass and the particularities of the previous week's Mass. Mass attendance every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation is expected of every student.
- Parents are asked to assist their children in learning the formal prayers of the Church. These include The Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Act of Contrition. By helping your child memorize his/her prayers, you can also help build a habit of prayer and strengthen your child's relationship with God. Additional prayers are introduced at various grade levels.
- Homework is sometimes assigned by the catechists. The goal in assigning homework is to reinforce lessons learned in class. Please discuss your child's homework with him or her and assist him or her to ensure that he/she is learning the material as well as possible.
- Some children have learning disabilities or other health or mental health concerns. If your child has any disabilities or concerns, please inform the Religious Education Office so that we may do all we can to meet his/her needs. Without this knowledge, we cannot help your child. We will distribute this information only to those who must know in order to teach your child.

Examinations

There is an exam at the end of the 8th grade year to ensure your child has a basic knowledge of the Catholic Faith and has taken preparation for the Sacrament seriously.

Parents, please sign and return this form by October 1.

I, _____ have read the preceding handbook, *Handbook for Parents and Students*, and agree to abide by it. I understand that I am responsible for the information contained therein and will abide by the policies and procedures in the handbook. I have explained any relevant policies and procedures to my child(ren) and he/she/they understand(s) what is expected of him/her/them.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

Thank you for your cooperation.

Elizabeth Vogt
Director of Religious Education
St. Theresa Parish