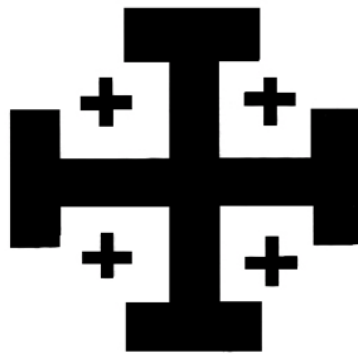


2011-2012  
Religious Education  
Family Handbook



Catholic Church  
Of  
Saint James

Conway, South Carolina

## **Mission Statement**

The ultimate goal of our Religious Education Program is to lead children, young adults and adults of our parish to love the Person of Jesus Christ and understand and appreciate the salvation and the new life of grace that He won for us. Through the power, grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit we strive to lead everyone to a life of prayer and communion with God and be of service to others who are in need. We seek to foster community and unity in our parish through worship and faith.

In cooperation with parents of the parish, the St. James Religious Education Program offers Sacramental preparation, religious education instruction, opportunity for the learning of prayer, Catholic catechism and an understanding of the faith. We seek to align our program and policies with those of the Diocese of Charleston.

## **Personnel**

Father Tim Lijewski – Pastor

Mrs. Paulette Flench – Pastoral Associate/ Religious Education Coordinator

Mrs. Paula Loehr – Administrative Assistant

Mrs. Kathy Caughey – Parish Secretary

## **Operating Information**

### **Religious Education Office Hours:**

Wednesday: 6:30 – 7:45PM (during religious education for grades K-5)  
Sunday: 6:30 – 7:45PM (during religious education for grades 6-8)  
By appointment

**Phone: (843)347-5168, ext. 34**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Weekly Bulletin  
Parent notices and letters sent home with children  
Parent meetings  
Mailings  
Email announcements (if your email address is on file)

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSINGS**

Every family will receive a personal call from catechist or coordinator announcing an unexpected closing so please be sure we have a current and correct phone number on file.

## **RECORDS**

PERMANENT RECORD CARDS are kept on file in the Religious Education office. They contain a child's Religious Education and sacramental history. This information is used to facilitate a quicker re-registration process for the next year or in the event a child transfers to another Religious Education program.

STUDENT REGISTRATION FORMS are kept on file in the Religious Education office. They contain the following information:

- Parent telephone numbers
- Emergency telephone numbers
- Confidential information indicating a child's learning or physical problems.
- Parental written commitment to Religious Education policies and Mass attendance

Please note that St. James respects the privacy of all its members and strives to insure that all confidential information is kept private and inaccessible to any persons without the proper authorization.

### **VISITORS**

Parents are encouraged to participate in classroom instruction and volunteer throughout the year. We ask that you speak with your child's catechist before the class commences. The Diocese of Charleston requires that anyone who volunteers on a regular basis must attend a VIRTUS Safe Environment Session and submit to a background screening check to protect the safety of our children.

Catechists who wish to have a guest speaker or other person "visit" their classroom must consult first with the Religious Education Coordinator.

### **Collaboration with Catechists**

For Catholic parents, the mission to catechize is rooted in the Sacrament of Marriage which consecrates them for the Christian education of their children. "This Sacrament enriches them with wisdom, counsel, fortitude, and all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to help the children in their growth as human beings and as Christians." (On the Family, Pope John Paul II, 1981,38) By virtue of this sacrament, parents are the primary educators of their children. By enrolling your children in our Religious Education Program, you are asking us to assist you in that process by providing a foundation in Church teachings and morals.

Therefore, parents are encouraged to communicate with their child's catechist throughout the year so that a collaborative effort may be made, each supporting the other in providing a foundation in Roman Catholic doctrine and morals. Together, you are to fulfill the mandate Christ gave His followers to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

### **REGISTRATION**

Registration for the following year's classes begins during the month of August. Registration forms are distributed by mail to each family during that time. Parents are urged to return registration forms immediately with appropriate book and supply fees.

All students should be registered prior to the first class. Families moving into the parish after the first week of Religious Education are welcome to register any time during the year. The Coordinator of Religious Education has discretion to make the decision for enrollment in any unusual case. The Religious Education Program is open to children of registered parishioners only. In the event that your child is new to the parish, a copy of your child's Baptismal Certificate should be made available to us to include in your child's file.

### **FEES**

Families pay a regular enrollment fee of \$15.00 per child. A family fee of \$25.00 is charged when enrolling more than one child. This fee helps to underwrite the Religious Education Program expenses, including materials, textbooks and supplies. Sacramental fees may be assessed, at the discretion of the pastor.

## **CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENTS, PROCEDURES AND POLICIES**

During the first and second weeks of Religious Education classes, Pictures of the catechists, grades, and room numbers can be found on the bulletin board on the wall across from the Religious Education Office. This will insure that both you and your child are familiar with the assigned room and can locate it easily.

Our Religious Education catechists are **volunteers** from the parish who make a personal commitment to being a catechist for your children. As such, we keep them informed about the Diocese of Charleston training and workshops available to them.

Our catechists are an integral part of the St. James Religious Education Program. Since our program enrolls a great many students each year, we are indebted to these catechists for taking on the responsibilities of helping parents with their faith formation responsibilities. Because of this we ask:

- Parents who are not serving as catechists be prepared to volunteer time as needed in other areas of our program.
- Instruct children to treat these volunteers **respectfully**.
- To assist catechists as needed with class responsibilities.

## **BEHAVIOR**

Students are expected to behave in a manner appropriate for their age. Appropriate behavior will be discussed and articulated at the start of Religious Education classes.

1. Students are not allowed to chew gum in class.
2. Students are not allowed to use cell phones in class.
3. Students are not allowed to wear baseball hats in class or at Mass.
4. Respect and calm should pervade during prayer time. Students entering class during prayer time should remain at the classroom door until prayers are finished.
5. Respect for catechists and fellow students must prevail in every classroom.
6. Catechists (teachers) and the Coordinator of Religious Education will inform parents if disruptive or disrespectful behavior persists.
7. Students may be sent to the Religious Education office for disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Parents will be contacted.
8. If, after consultation with parents, disruptive behavior continues, a meeting will be held with the coordinator and pastor to remedy the situation.

## **ATTENDANCE**

**Class and Mass attendance go hand in hand in St. James' Religious Formation.** In other words, faithful Mass attendance is an extension of the catechetical process. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The Church is most clearly itself in the Eucharist, as it gathers a people to listen to the Word of God and to share the one bread and the one cup until Jesus, our Lord, comes again.

**THE FIRST PRECEPT OF THE CHURCH ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.) REQUIRES THE FAITHFUL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION WHEN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY GATHERS TOGETHER ON THE DAY COMMEMORATING THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD. (Catechism of the Catholic Church)**

## **MASS ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

1. Parents of children in our Religious Education Program are expected to understand that this teaching of the Catholic Church, stated above, makes them responsible for taking their children to Mass on a regular weekly basis. Regular weekly Mass attendance is essential to a student's growth in faith.
2. Sports or extracurricular activities should not be excuses for missing Mass.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

1. No more than five unexcused absences a year should occur for class attendance. **Students in Sacramental classes who miss more than four classes may have the reception of their sacrament delayed.**
2. Sports or other extracurricular activities should not be excuses for absence from class.
3. Exceptions to the absence limit based on illness or adverse family circumstances will be made by the Pastor and Coordinator after consultation with the parents.
4. Class attendance will be taken by the catechist each week at the start of class.
5. Students are expected to make up any work missed when absent. Catechists will provide make up work to students and/or parents. It is the student's responsibility to ask for make-up work when a class has been missed.
6. If you anticipate that your child will be absent, please call the Religious Education office in advance and your child's catechist will be informed.

A student who becomes ill during class should be brought to the Religious Education Office. Parents or Emergency Contacts will be called.

## **CONSECUTIVE YEARLY ATTENDANCE**

It is expected that students attend Religious Education classes in consecutive years. If a student misses a year, they will be required to make up that year before they can be placed on grade level. However, exceptions can be made and the Coordinator will determine exceptions based on the circumstances of the student.

## **HOME STUDY**

Children learn to be Catholics in relationship with other faithful Catholics in both the Church and the family. Our Religious Education Program provides a Catholic community where the tenets and practices of our Church are learned and appreciated while providing an enriching, ongoing faith experience for the entire family. Parents are encouraged to promote Catholic teachings in the home in addition to our classes here at the parish. However, we do not allow for home tutoring to take the place of attendance in weekly sessions. In certain extreme circumstances, it may be allowed, but only under a careful review of the student's situation and with the permission of the Religious Education Coordinator.

## **SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS**

Parents are asked to volunteer to be substitute catechists, especially in the class where their own child is placed. We ask that when St. James offers a VIRTUS session, parents attend so that they may be ready to volunteer to substitute when needed. Catechists are responsible for getting their own substitutes with back up support from the Religious Education Office. Catechists may not cancel class without permission from the Religious Education Office.

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

1. Students should arrive in their classrooms **ON TIME** or a few minutes before their scheduled time. **Students arriving before the catechist must stay in the classroom with their parent until the catechist arrives.**
2. Tardiness is considered arriving 15 minutes late for class.
3. **Five times tardy will be considered an absence.**
4. Parents will be informed after a student has been late 3 times so that a solution to the problem can be found.

5. Students in grades K, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are to be accompanied by their parent to and from their classrooms.
6. Students should be made aware by their parents who is considered “okay” to pick them up from class. Any person that is not recognized by the catechist will be asked to go to the Religious Education Department and show identification while the Coordinator speaks via phone with a parent or guardian. In the event the parent or guardian cannot pick up the child, written advance notice should be given to the catechist who will in turn give that notice to the Coordinator.
7. Parents must park in the parking lot. Parents are not permitted to park in the circle in front of the church where the glass double doors are located.
8. Parents are responsible for picking up their child **ON TIME**. If a parent is late, the student must wait in the Religious Education Office until a parent arrives.

### **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

The St. James Religious Education Program is inclusive of students with special needs. If we are unable to accommodate the needs of students within our program or in special arrangement with parents, the Office of Religious Education of the Diocese of Charleston offers alternative options.

### **DRUG AND WEAPON POSSESSION**

1. In all cases, any controlled dangerous substance (drugs) that is found on parish grounds or in student's possession **MUST** be turned over to the police. The student will be detained until police are notified. Drug possession is grounds for dismissal from the program.
2. If there is reason to believe that a student intended to distribute the drugs to others, then the student **MUST** be turned over to the police. The Pastor and the Coordinator will be notified along with parents.
3. Weapons or objects that can be used as weapons are not permitted. This can include toy guns and knives. Possession of these types of items will result in the parents being notified. Additional consequences will depend on the severity of the incident.

### **PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN (VIRTUS)**

The safety and welfare of your child is one of our greatest concerns. Child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, is reprehensible – especially when the wrongdoer is affiliated with the Church. The VIRTUS programs assist the Church in being a safe haven for children and a messenger for preventing child sexual abuse within the Church and society in general. It is mandatory for any adult working with children to participate in this program. We also offer a form of this program to adults and children of our parish, thus empowering them to protect themselves from abuse and recognizing the warning signs to help protect others. In order to make sure that our parish environment is a safe place for our children, the VIRTUS program enables our parish community to send the following messages to any person that would seek to do harm:

- Child abuse is not tolerated,
- Children are vigilantly protected,
- Victims are listened to, heard, and shielded from further abuse, and
- Offenders are identified and punished

Through knowledge and awareness we can all play an important role in the safety of our children. At the beginning of each year, trained VIRTUS members will offer short lessons to both parents and children to promote awareness. Parents have the choice to allow their children to participate in these training lessons or “opt-out” if they wish to cover the material being taught at home. Copies of the VIRTUS program for both parents and children are available in the Religious Education Office and also online at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org)

## **CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

South Carolina law requires any person who has **reasonable cause** to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse to report the abuse immediately to the authorities. Any Diocesan employee (including a catechist volunteer) who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse must report it. Failure to report suspected child abuse (of any form) is punishable as a disorderly person offense. A copy of the Diocesan policy regarding abuse is on file in the Parish Office.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

1. Textbooks are issued at the start of each class. Textbooks are the property of each student and should be treated with care while they are used during the school year.
2. The charge for lost or abused textbooks will be based on fair market value.
3. Textbooks are not to be taken home unless required for an assignment. Otherwise, textbooks remain in the classroom.
4. Students are expected to bring the textbook back to class if taken home for an assignment or by mistake.

### **Textbooks used at St. James Catholic Church**

- Call to Faith – Parish Edition, Our Sunday Visitor
- Teen Catechism, Our Sunday Visitor
- Prove It! The Catholic Teen Bible, Our Sunday Visitor

## **CURRICULUM**

Curriculum guides are available for every grade level in the Religious Education Office and parents may obtain a copy if requested. Students will be advised of the expectations in every classroom at the start of Religious Education classes. Parents are advised by parent meetings.

## **PRAYERS**

Some class time will be spent in praying (at least at the beginning and at the end of each class) and class time will be taken to explain the nature of prayer and the necessity of praying individually and together. Memorized prayer (Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be) are especially important in grades K through 5. Parents are encouraged to pray with their children at home. Grace before and after meals and bedtime prayers are encouraged.

## **GOSPEL**

Study of the Sunday Gospels is another way we encourage children to become active participants in the Liturgy. After Sunday (or Saturday evening) Mass, parents should spend some time discussing the Gospel with their children to reinforce class study.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework can be assigned to supplement or reinforce class work. Homework assignments are directly related to class work and reasonable in length. Assignments can be varied and can include long-term projects (i.e. in grades 7 & 8). Homework should be completed and returned in a timely manner. Failure to complete homework in sacramental classes may result in a delay in the reception of the Sacrament.

## **RECONCILIATION**

Every student from grade 3 through 8 is encouraged to participate in Reconciliation at *least* twice a year. Students should participate in our Advent and Lenten Reconciliation services with our church community. Students can also participate in Reconciliation during class retreats as well. It is expected that catechists thoroughly review the Examination of Conscience and Confession Procedure the week before their class goes to Reconciliation. Copies of this material will be put in the catechist's box in the Religious Education Office.

## **FAMILY NIGHTS**

Parents are expected to attend all Family Nights throughout the year that pertain to your child's grade. In this way, you can keep in touch with what is expected of your children as well as with the latest developments in the Program. At these meetings, you also have the opportunity to express your opinions if there are any problems brought forth for discussion.

SACRAMENTAL FAMILY NIGHTS are mandatory. Parents are allowed to miss these meetings for serious reasons only. A make-up meeting with the Coordinator or Pastor will then be necessary.

## **RECONCILIATION, FIRST EUCHARIST AND CONFIRMATION**

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation (grade 2) and Eucharist (grade 3) entails year-long classroom instruction. Catechists follow curriculum guides issued by the Religious Education Office. Students are expected to attend Mass and class on a regular basis in preparation for these sacraments.

Preparation for Confirmation is a two-and-a-half year process (grades 7-9). Catechists follow curriculum guides issued by the Religious Education Office. Students are expected to attend Mass and class on a regular basis in preparation for these sacraments as well as completing the requirements in the Family Guidelines to Confirmation.

## **STUDENT HANDBOOKS**

All Religious Education families receive a copy of this HANDBOOK in September at the parent meeting. The handbook will be revised each year as needed and distributed to every student in grades K – 8. The contents of the handbook will be discussed by catechists in every grade level based on age appropriateness.

## **PARENT PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM**

Parents are needed for the Religious Education Program to function in a parish. Parents serve as catechists and substitutes as well as perform the myriad of duties of making phone calls, serving at Sacramental receptions, donating refreshments, being hallway monitors, etc. **WITHOUT YOU THERE IS NO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM! THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO!!!**

## **2011-2012 FAMILY HANDBOOK**

### **CONTRACT AND COVENANT**

In accordance with the policies and regulations outlined in the preceding pages, please fill out and sign this page to acknowledge that you have read and understand the policies of the Religious Education Program at the Catholic Church of Saint James. Please return this form to your child's catechist and it will be placed in your child's file.

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Recognizing that my involvement as a parent/guardian is of primary importance in helping to prepare my child(ren) for a faith-filled life, I agree to abide by the guidelines set forth in the St. James Religious Education Family Handbook. I agree to discuss the Handbook with my child(ren), and pledge my full support of this policy, which fosters an atmosphere of Christian concern for others.

I have thoroughly read the St. James Family Handbook. I understand my responsibilities as a Catholic parent as presented in the Handbook.

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Parent/Guardian Name

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Date

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Please print student's name

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Grade