

FAMILY HANDBOOK 2016-2017



SAINT LEO THE GREAT CATHOLIC CHURCH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Welcome Letter

Welcome to a new school year of Religious Education at Saint Leo the Great Parish. A school is a wonderful place for children of all ages. Each school year provides an opportunity to begin anew. No matter what study habits were developed, no matter what was learned, no matter how a child performed in the previous school year, the new school year provides an opportunity to start anew. Every child can develop new study habits, learn new subject matter, and perform better than the previous year.

Pope John Paul II proclaimed that the Church needed a “New Evangelization” to encourage its members to more fully live the Catholic way of life. This “New Evangelization” is a way for all Catholics to be refreshed and start anew the way they live their Catholic Faith, just like school children starting a new school year.

In agreement with his predecessor, Pope Benedict continued the emphasis on the “New Evangelization” by stating, “This sacramental journey is where we encounter the Lord’s call to holiness, addressed to all Christians.”

Pope Francis reinforced this last statement with one of his own, “The sacraments are indispensable in passing on the faith of the Church, as they draw people to Christ’s ongoing real presence in the world.” He added, “The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.”

Through our catechists, each child enrolled in our religious education program will be encouraged to develop an on-going relationship with our loving God through the person of Jesus, to participate in the Sacraments, and to learn the teachings of our Catholic Faith. These are the elements of the “New Evangelization,” the way to live our Catholicism more fully.

Just as the children of our parish have the opportunity to start the school year anew, I invite every parent, every family member, to consider what the “New Evangelization” means to them. Just as each school year provides the opportunity to develop new study habits, to learn something new, and to perform better than last year, I invite each of us to consider how we can live our Catholicism more fully. Consider how you would answer these questions:

- 1) How can I deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ?
- 2) How can I better utilize the sacraments as a meeting place with Jesus?
- 3) What should I study to understand the Gospel teachings of Jesus more fully?

As I look at these questions I feel challenged, I hope you do, too. Let us all work to live our Catholicism just a little more fully this year, taking advantage of the opportunity to start anew.



Brother Tim Smyth,
Director of Religious Education

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Mission Statement

The Religious Education Program of St. Leo Catholic Church is dedicated to evangelizing young parishioners in the Catholic Faith so that through their communion with Jesus Christ, they may participate more fully in the life of the Church.

Goals of the Religious Education Program

- To proclaim the message of the Gospel by providing a program of formal religious instruction based on Scripture and Tradition.
- To support and encourage parents in their role as primary religious educators of their children.
- To allow children to experience the Church as a community.
- To promote positive Christian character by emphasizing one's responsibility toward God, others, and self.
- To build a strong Catholic identity.
- To initiate participants into the rich liturgical and sacramental tradition of the Church.
- To deepen the prayer life of our children.
- To enable children to live lives in accordance with the moral teachings of the church.
- To inspire a missionary spirit in participants and prepare them to witness to their faith in word and deed through acts of service.

Role of Religious Education Office

- To provide a course of study and employ texts that are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- To offer sacramental preparation to children and youth.
- To communicate with parents on a regular basis through the monthly newsletter.
- To provide a calendar of classes for the school year.
- To provide online access to registration forms, grade-appropriate prayers, and lists of saints.
- To maintain accurate student records, allowing access only to appropriate parents or legal guardians.
- To insure that any classroom visitor have been approved by the DRE and conforms to the Diocesan Safe Environment Guidelines.
- To provide the *Diocesan Notification of Field Trip and Event Form* in the event of an off-campus activity.
- To implement all applicable Parish and Diocesan Guidelines in the classroom area when students are present.

Role of Catechists

- To provide a classroom experience that enables each child to learn the Gospel message of Jesus and apply the teachings of the Catholic Church in their lives.
- To encourage students to learn the common prayers used by Catholics.
- To assign homework appropriate to the age level of the students.
- To provide a safe environment for each child by personally complying with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policy.
- To provide Safe Environment Training to the students, appropriate to their need and level of understanding.

Role of Parents

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states “Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children in the faith, prayer, and all the virtues.” (2252). Parents who enroll their Children in the parish Religious Education Program will be encouraged to attend meetings and will be provided handouts to assist them in teaching Catholic doctrine, prayers, and virtues to their children.

Parents whose children attend the program are asked to fulfill the following expectations in order to promote the spiritual growth of the children and youth in the program:

- Take responsibility for their role as primary educator.
- Attend Mass weekly with their child.
- Teach their children the traditional prayers of the Church at home, especially the Sign of the Cross, Glory Be, Hail Mary, Our Father, Act of Contrition, Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed.
- Bring children to their assigned classroom on time dressed appropriately and ready to participate.
- Communicate with and support the child’s catechist and the DRE, especially in areas of discipline.
- Participate in the program by attending parent meetings, reading the monthly Religious Education Newsletter, and being attentive to notices in the parish bulletin.

Class Schedule

Students in grades one through twelve are strongly encouraged to participate in our Religious Education Program which provides age-appropriate catechesis from experienced catechists.

Students preparing for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation/First Communion and Confirmation are required to participate in two years of religious education classes prior to receiving the sacraments.

First through Eighth Grade Classes

Meet weekly from Sept. 7 – April 26, on Wednesday evenings 6:15 – 7:30.

Ninth through Twelfth Grade Classes

Meet approximately every-other week from Sept 11 - May 7 on Sunday evenings 6:00 – 7:00.

Baptism Class for Children Ages 7-17

Meets for a preparation class on Sunday, October 23, for the child, parents, and godparents.

- The Sacrament of Baptism will be administered on Sunday, November 13, 2016.

First Reconciliation and First Communion Preparation Classes

- Meet weekly from Jan 22 – April 23, on Sunday mornings from 10:45 – noon.
- The Sacrament of First Reconciliation will be on Tuesday, February 28, 2017.
- The Sacrament of First Communion will be on Saturday, April 29, 2017.

Confirmation Preparation Classes

- Meet weekly from January 22 – March 19 on Sunday evenings 6:00 – 7:00.
- The date of Confirmation will be determined by the Bishop’s Office.

For further information regarding the Sacraments, please consult the *Sacramental Preparation Family Handbook*.

Registration

The Religious Education Program of Saint Leo the Great Parish is supported by the parishioners of the parish, therefore children of registered families receive priority in registering for classes. Students must be re-enrolled for each year of Religious Education they attend and are typically enrolled in the grade in which they are currently attending in school. Saint Leo Parish makes no discrimination on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, and tuition assistance.

In order for their children to be admitted, the parents must:

- Accurately complete and return all appropriate registration forms which are available online and in the parish office.
- Provide a copy of a legal birth certificate for school-aged children requiring Baptism.
- Provide the parish with a copy of the child’s Baptism Certificate and other Sacraments they may have received, if not on record at Saint Leo.
- Notify the Religious Education Office of any custody issues that may impact on the child while enrolled in classes at Saint Leo and provide documentation as necessary.
- Notify the Religious Education Office of any Special Education needs that the child has so that appropriate accommodation may be provided.
- If applicable, provide proof of attendance of Religious Education at another parish.
- Pay the established fees (see below).
- Participate in occasional parent gatherings hosted by the Religious Education Office.

Class Fees

Grades One through Eight:

- One child in the family enrolling in Religious Education class\$ 50
- Two children in the family enrolling in Religious Education classes\$ 75
- Three or more children in the family enrolling in Religious Education classes . \$ 100

Sacramental Preparation:

- Baptism \$ 25
- First Reconciliation/First Communion \$ 35

Grade Nine through Twelve (Includes Confirmation Preparation)

- Each student\$ 50

No student will be prevented from attending because of a parents’ inability to pay. A payment agreement may be drawn up, or if necessary, a parent may submit a “*Letter of Hardship*” to the DRE explaining why it is impossible to pay for the children’s classes.

Fees collected for the Religious Education Program do not cover the cost of educating your child and are therefore considered donations to Saint Leo Parish. As a result, they are not refundable.

Classes for Students Attending Catholic Schools

While children of all parishioners are welcome to attend Religious Education at St. Leo, those students attending Catholic schools are only required to attend the sacramental preparation classes of the desired sacrament. Baptized Catholic school students who have reached the Second Grade must enroll in First Reconciliation/First Communion Preparation Classes. Catholic school students in Tenth Grade must enroll in Confirmation Preparation Class. Students are required to be enrolled for two years in a Catholic School or Religious Education Program previous to enrollment in the sacramental preparation class.

Parents & Catechists

The parish makes every effort to select Catechists who are capable of handling the responsibility involved in this ministry. Saint Leo Parish offers training courses to increase the skills needed for the catechists to be successful. While the DRE supervises the catechists in order to help them fulfill their responsibilities, parents are asked to recognize the challenges involved in being a volunteer catechist and support them whenever possible. If any problems regarding a class arise, parents are asked to first contact the catechist to discuss the situation. If that does not lead to a satisfactory resolution, parents are encouraged to contact the DRE. All parishioners have the right to final recourse to the pastor of the parish.

Attendance

Children who are enrolled in the parish catechetical program are expected to be in attendance for each scheduled class session. It is the responsibility of parents to insure their child’s presence on a regular basis. If a student enrolled in a religious education class is absent for three consecutive classes without notification to the Religious Education Office, it will be assumed that the student has withdrawn for the remainder of the school year.

- For Wednesday evening classes, if a student is absent for a total of five classes in the school year, he/she will not receive credit for the work completed. A written warning will be provided to the parent after the third absence.
- For Sunday evening religious education classes in preparation for Confirmation, if a student is absent for three classes, he/she will have to repeat the year.
- For the sacramental preparation classes of First Reconciliation or First Communion, no more than one absence will be acceptable.
- For Confirmation preparation classes, no more than two absences will be acceptable.

Arrival and Dismissal for Grades One through Eight

Classes are held in the Education Building and children must be delivered to their classroom by their parent or guardian into the care of their teacher. Parents are asked to arrive with their children no earlier than ten minutes before the start of classes. The gate will be opened five minutes before classes start and closed ten minutes after. Your child will not be admitted to class once the gate is closed.

When the Catechist dismisses the class, parents or legal guardians must present their **Red Guardian Pass** and pick their children up promptly at the end of the session. Children will only be released to older siblings who are fourteen years of age or older. Please note that only the issued **Red Guardian Pass** is acceptable (not a cell phone image) – this is emphasized in the interest of the child’s safety.

If a child is not promptly picked up, the parent will be called and the child will remain with a catechist or the DRE until the parent or an approved adult arrives. If we cannot reach a parent, or the designated emergency contact, within thirty minutes following the end of class, our only recourse is to call the police, parish personnel are not permitted to drive students home.

Arrival for Grades Nine through Twelve

Students sign themselves in when they arrive in the classroom. If a student is not present, the student will be marked absent and the parent notified by phone.

Dress Code

All students should respect our parish property as the sacred space it represents and dress in a way that is consistent with that respect. Minimally students’ dress should be consistent with local school dress codes, including, but not limited to:

- No bare skin exposed at the waist, back, cleavage, or shoulders.
- The length of shorts, skirts, or dresses should pass the “fingertip test.” (If your fingertips touch your skin when your arms are held straight down at your sides).
- No hats, bandanas, hoods, or other head covering, are allowed.
- No imprinting on clothing that would be considered offensive, especially in a Catholic environment.

- No visible piercing on any body part, other than the ears.
- Safe footwear is to be worn at all times, no bare feet, rubber flip-flops or bedroom slippers.

Discipline

The Discipline Policy is based on the premise that order contributes to a safe program and that good stewardship respects all parish property. Behavior which is destructive or disruptive will not be tolerated. Students are expected to carry out the following responsibilities:

- Show respect to catechists, other students, and program personnel.
- Obey teachers promptly and willingly.
- Arrive on time so as not to interrupt the class.
- Turn off, and remove from view, cell phones before entering the classroom.
- Use your voice and act in an appropriate and safe manner.
- Raise your hand and wait to be called upon before answering.
- Do not use foul or disrespectful language.
- Be present only in the areas of the building permitted at a specific time.

Consequences

If a child fails to fulfill these responsibilities:

- On the first occurrence the child will be reminded of and warned that their conduct is not in accordance with proper Christian behavior.
- On the second occurrence the parent of the child will be notified in writing by the catechist.
- Upon the third warning, the child and parent will be required to meet with the DRE for an appropriate solution.
- If the unacceptable behavior continues, the child will be dismissed from the class.
- If a child's one-time behavior endangers themselves or others, he/she will be immediately removed from class, the parent will be contacted, and the child will remain with the DRE until the parent picks up the child. The parent and DRE will discuss the situation and possible solutions before the child returns to class.

Attendance at Sunday Mass

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." (1324) The Eucharist (Mass) is central to us as Catholics and attendance at Mass is our greatest privilege. When we participate in the Mass, we sacramentally enter into the Paschal mystery of Christ and thus engage in the highest form of prayer, which not only is the highest worship to God, but also the source of the most abundant blessings. Since God has given us this great privilege as a gift, it is our greatest responsibility as Catholics to accept and celebrate this gift regularly. For this reason, weekly attendance at Sunday Mass is the expectation for participation in the Religious Education

Program. As mentioned earlier, parents should provide an example to their children in attending Mass regularly.

Prayers

As the primary educators of their children, parents are entrusted with the special privilege and responsibility for teaching their children to pray. Familiarity with traditional prayers is a significant element of the catechesis offered in the parish Religious Education classes. While the staff and catechists of Saint Leo are sensitive to the cultural variations amongst those participating in our program, all children are expected to learn their prayers in English.

- Children in the First Grade are expected to learn the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.
- Children in the Second Grade are expected to learn the Act of Contrition.
- Children in the Fourth Grade are expected to learn the Apostles Creed.
- Children in Confirmation Classes are expected to learn the Nicene Creed.

Sickness, Injury, Medications, Allergies, and Emergencies

If a child is sick, for their own safety and as a sign of respect for their classmates and catechist, they should not attend class. If the child has already missed a significant number of classes, the parent should discuss the situation with the DRE.

If a child becomes ill while in class, the parents will be contacted according to the information provided on the *Medical Authorization for Minor* form. If the parents are unavailable, an attempt will be made to reach the designated Emergency Contact. The DRE will make every effort to keep the child comfortable until picked up. Medications will not be administered to the child.

If an injury occurs, first aid will be administered and the parents will be contacted. If the injury requires immediate medical attention, the DRE will call the appropriate emergency services, followed by a call to the parents.

No medication of any kind (including prescription and over-the-counter) will be administered to, or taken by, the student during the parish religious education program unless the parent has provided a written request with directives to the DRE.

Update of Information

It is the responsibility of parents to notify the DRE immediately of any changes in family information (address, phone number, email), emergency contacts, or medical conditions (allergies, dietary restrictions).

**Saint Leo the Great Catholic Church
Religious Education Program
Parent/Guardian Agreement Form**

I have received and read the *Family Handbook for the Saint Leo the Great Religious Education Program* for 2016-17. I understand that I am responsible for, and will abide by, the information contained therein.

A question that I have is

A concern that I have is

Children's Names

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Please return this form no later than September 28, 2016



