

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
AND
SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION
PARENT HANDBOOK



*Saint Bartholomew Parish
470 Ryders Lane
East Brunswick, NJ 08816
2023*

Religious Education Program Mission Statement

The Office of Religious Education exists to promote a loving and personal relationship with God. It functions to allow the children of the parish to discover, to grow and mature in knowledge of their faith. It encourages children to deepen their relationship with Christ and His Church through acts of worship and service.



Mass and Reconciliation Schedule

Eucharist:

Saturday Vigil	4:00pm
Sunday	8:00am, 10:00am, 12:00noon
Monday-Friday	8:30 am

Reconciliation:

Saturday	10:00 am and by appointment
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Pastoral Team

Pastor:

Reverend Thomas J. Walsh

Associate Pastor:

Reverend Timothy Eck

Deacons:

Anthony Gostkowski

John Kenny

Philip Tartara

School Principal:

Theresa Craig

Director of Religious Education:

Barbara Fitzgerald

Music Ministry:

Nicholas Gatto

Janet DeFreitas (Children's Choir)

Parish Office Staff:

Barbara Bunag

Regina Castrorao

Karen Gibbons

Julie Perotta

Lisa Soga



Office of Religious Education

The office is located on the second floor of the Parish Center.
Religious Education Classes for grades 1-8 are held in Saint Bartholomew School.

Office Hours:

Monday	9:00am-3:00pm	
Tuesday	9:00am-3:00pm	(Classes 4:30-7:45pm)
Wednesday	9:00am-3:00pm	
Thursday	9:00am-3:00pm	(Classes 4:30-5:45pm)

By appointment- Please call 732-390-0354

Religious Education Class times are as follows:

Session I	Tuesday	4:30- 5:45pm
Session II	Tuesday	6:30-7:45pm
Session III	Thursday	4:30-5:45pm

Mailing Address: Saint Bartholomew Church
Office of Religious Education
470 Ryders Lane
East Brunswick, NJ 08816

Parish Website: www.stbartseb.org

Telephone:

Office of Religious Education

For questions concerning Classes, Sacramental Preparation, Catechists, Special Needs programs, progress reports, absences, volunteer opportunities call,

Barbara at 732 390-0354

Parish Office

For questions about registering in the parish, becoming Catholic, parish activities, infant Baptism, Adult Confirmation, Marriage preparation, Anointing of the Sick, Mass Card Intentions, and general questions call, **732 25-7722**

What will my Child learn in Religious Education Classes?

Grade One

God, Father and Creator of the World
Jesus, the Son of God and our Friend
The Holy Spirit, Giver of Strength and Joy

Family Life Concepts:

The students review the meaning of family and identify the family structure.
The students see the uniqueness and value of their own human life.
The students learn ways to show respect for themselves and for others.
The students explore the nature of their feelings and the importance of sharing.
The students understand that they live in a society larger than their family or school.

Grade Two

The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist
Jesus, Model for Christian Living

Grade Three

The traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church
The Apostles Creed and the Seven Sacraments

Family Life Concepts:

The students explore the similarities and differences of families.
The students develop their sense of self worth and learn to take better care of their health.
The students study the ecology of life on earth. They continue to explore the value of all life especially Human Life
The students understand reproduction as the way in which life is handed on by God.
The students understand the purpose and usefulness of feelings as a means of communicating and living with others.

Grade Four

The Beatitudes
Catholic Christian Moral Values
The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Family Life Concepts:

The students learn the value of life in the community, especially the family community.
The students learn about the complexities of their own bodies and how they grow.
The students learn to respect people of all ages. They grow in their understanding of ways to maintain health and safe.
The students evaluate their feelings toward others and learn how best to express those feelings, guided by Christian moral values.

The students reinforce their understanding of community and of the need for awareness of and care for others.

Grade Five

The Sacramental Life of the Church

Family Life Concepts:

The students discern the differences and similarities among families

The students learn about physical, mental and spiritual growth and the importance of good communication as they grow.

The students learn respect for their bodies and others and study God's plan of creation.

The students grow in their understanding of relationships and expressing love.

The students examine the family as an important social unit and look at way in which they can develop attitudes of responsibility toward others.

Grade Six (Sacramental Preparation I)

God's Plan of Salvation as recorded in the Bible

Family Life Concepts:

The students expand their understanding of the family's role in the development of their personalities; examine their own personalities, skills, talents and desires.

The students study the importance of showing respect for themselves and for all others, especially the elderly and evaluate their present position in society as they plan how to take their place in the community.

The students continue to explore the miracle of new life and continue to value life.

Grade Seven (Sacramental Preparation II)

A Synthesis of Catholic Beliefs, Part I: Trinity, Christian Community, Sacraments
Developing knowledge and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Family Life Concepts

The students examine their changing roles in the family unit and recognize the importance of showing love for each family member as they expand their sense of self-identity by understanding themselves.

The students will become aware of the importance of personal health and grooming and will address principals upon which to build healthy relationships as they deepen their awareness of the needs and rights of others in society and learn how to build more loving relationships.

Grade Eight (Confirmation Preparation)

The Synthesis of Catholic Beliefs, Part II

The Church in the Modern World, Catholic Christian Morality, Ecumenism and Social Justice

Family Life concepts are not addressed as a separate subject in grades two and eight as they are included while focusing on sacramental preparation. All concepts of personal growth, respect for life, social living, self understanding are incorporated in the curriculum and should be reinforced at home.

The Curriculum for Religious Education is established by diocesan policy which includes both faith formation through classroom instruction and family faith formation through attendance at weekly mass.

Religion Texts Used

Grade 1-6 uses Be My Disciples, published by RCL-Benzinger

Grade 5/6 are presented with a Bible

Grade 7 use Faith Fusion, Kowing Loving and Serving Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church, by Our Sunday Visitor, also use the Lectionary based weekly magazine, "Visions" by Pflaum Publications, Decision Point, by Dynamic Catholic

To reinforce what has been taught in class or to supplement please visit the website established by the publisher: www.BeMyDisciples.com. The Saint Bartholomew Parish website at www.stbartseb.org also has additional resources for parents and catechists.

The curriculum is cumulative. The concepts taught in lower grades will be revisited and tested in the upper grades. Memorizing the Formal prayers is also the responsibility of each student. Periodic testing of the student's knowledge of prayers is to be expected.

Being Prepared

Each student is expected to come to class prepared. It is necessary for each student to have the necessary materials every time they come to class. It is suggested that each student keep a tote or drawstring bag designated for their material; pens pencils crayons or markers.

In an attempt to keep our good relationship with the Students and Teachers of Saint Bartholomew School, we ask that students do not borrow items from the school desks.

Students will be provided with a book and a folder in the beginning of the year.

The replacement of lost or damaged items is the responsibility of the parent.

Replacement cost of the book or Bible is \$20.00

Folders and other supplies are provided by the parent.

Formal Prayers

Grade 1

The Sign of the Cross- In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

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- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer to Guardian Angel- 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, to rule and guide. Amen.

Jesus Prayer- Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen

Grade 2

Prayer of Sorrow- Dear God, I am sorry for doing wrong. I know you love me very much. Help me to be a caring person. Help me to change and grow in your love. Amen

Act of Faith, Hope and Love- My God, I believe in you, I hope in you, I love you above all things, with all my mind and heart and strength. Amen.

Grade 3

Apostles Creed- I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, *(bow)* who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

Grade 4

Act of Contrition-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.

Grade 5

The Rosary

Hail Holy Queen-Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life our sweetness, our hope. To you we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to you we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus: O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary

Fatima Prayer-(is said after each decade of the rosary) O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of your mercy.

Grade 6

Prayer to the Holy Spirit- Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth. Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us choose what is right and always rejoice in your consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Grade 7-8

Review of all the prayers learned in previous years.

Parents, Please Note:

All children are expected to learn their prayers before their promotion to the next grade level. The easiest and most effective way for children to learn their prayers is for you to pray with them every day. These prayers and additional prayers can be found in the back of their books. Don't miss the opportunity and privilege to help your child with their faith formation.

General Policies

Parking Lot Safety

There are approximately 300 children attending each of the three sessions of Religious Education. Parking Lot Safety is critical to our program. To alleviate some confusion please be advised that all vehicles entering the parking lot must do so via St. Bartholomew Drive. It is a 15 mile/hour speed limit when children are present. Our parking lot is the host of numerous activities due to the use of the Kelly Gym and the ball fields and play ground. Please drive slowly and carefully at all times.

Safety upon Arrival

Enter from Ryders Lane on St. Bartholomew Drive.

Drive Slowly.

Be prepared to stop at all times.

Children are present.

****Park your car. Get out of your car. Walk all children into the coned area.****

Cars are not to park inside the coned area for the safety of the children at arrival and dismissal.

Drop off for class is 4:20 for sessions I and III and 6:20 for session II. Parents may walk children to the door and the hall monitors will direct them to their classrooms.

No child is permitted in the building without adult supervision. Hall Monitors are in place at 4:20. Children cannot be left unattended in the school.

Children are not to enter the classroom until appropriate adult supervision is present. They will wait outside the classroom until directed to enter the classroom.

Safety at Dismissal

Park your car. Get out of your car and wait at the rear of the coned area. Please do not gather at the path or attempt to pull your child off the dismissal line. Blocking the path does not allow the teachers the ability to walk their students to their dismissal spot.

Each class is dismissed with their class, teacher and aid. They are assigned a spot within the coned area. The teachers want to be sure that each student is dismissed to the authorized adult. Once the class is in their spot, please meet your child at the designated dismissal spot.

****First Grade Parents-** dismissal for first grade only is at 5:30 for sessions I and III and 7:30 for session II. Parents are asked to walk in the brown doors opposite the Kelly Gym. Your child will be dismissed directly from the classroom. This gives you the opportunity to return to the coned area to wait for your other children to be dismissed.

****Grades 2-8**-dismissal is from the coned area only. Children are being supervised by their catechist and aides until your arrival. No child is permitted to leave the coned area unaccompanied by an adult. **If you are late** picking up your child, park your car and come into the school door to get your child. If your child is a walker, the diocesan Permission Slip must be filled out and on file with the Office of Religious Education.

For the safety of the children, the DRE reserves the right to contact the emergency number if a driver appears to have severely impaired judgment

Late Arrival to Class

Please make every effort to arrive to class on time. Class begins at 4:30 and 6:30. Arriving late is disruptive to the class and unfair to the students. If you will be late please walk you child to the silver double door at the end of the path to ensure your child's entry into the building. For safety concerns the doors will be locked once classes have begun.

Early Dismissal from Class

If for some urgent reason, a child needs to be excused early from class, the parent is asked to write a note to the teacher indicating the reason, the time the child will be picked up and by whom. When picking up the child, Park the car. Get out of the car. Come into the school building to sign out your child. You may be asked to show identification. The teacher will dismiss your child with the note at the appropriate time or a staff member will go to the classroom to get the child. Children will only be released to an authorized adult.

REMINDER: Three late arrivals or early dismissals count as an absence.

Attendance

Attendance is taken in class weekly. The limit on absences set by the Diocese of Metuchen is **three** for the entire year. Phone calls and/or notes are not necessary but are welcome. Parents are expected to assist their child in making up work that had been missed due to absence and turning it in to the Catechist. When your child is not in class it will be considered an unexcused absence. Attendance at weekly Mass is considered part of the curriculum of the Religious Education Program.

Excessive absences will be addressed by the DRE. Catechist cannot determine progress for those students who have excessive absences. It is unfair for a child to advance if they have not participated or completed the attendance requirements.

Please take the time to discuss individual circumstances with Mrs. Fitzgerald. Any family who has a child who is classified by the public school district as “chronically ill” needs to speak to the DRE of discuss the special circumstances and alternatives.

Walking to and from Religious Education

Although it is our preference that all students be driven to and from our program, there may be a need for a child to walk to get to or return home form classes. Parents should keep in mind their child’s age, experience and skills in deciding whether to allow them to walk to and/or from Religious Education unaccompanied. Parents must sign the diocesan form, a Walking Permission Slip if they think that their child will be waking on a particular day or for the year. (See Addendum 1)

Field Trips

In the event that a Catechist plans an off-site activity, permission of the parent or guardian is necessary. No student will be allowed to participate in any activity off the premises of Saint Bartholomew Church grounds unless the Field Trip Registration is completed and returned to the Catechist prior to departure. (See Addendum 2)

Emergency Closings

During times of inclement weather, there may be the need to cancel class. If Saint Bartholomew School is closed or has an early dismissal, there will be no Religious Education Classes. If East Brunswick Public Schools are closed or if they have an early dismissal or cancelation of after school activities there will be no classes. If snow or bad weather occurs late in the day, and we need to cancel notice will be posted on the parish website, www.stbartseb.org. An email distribution list will be created based on the emails provided on the registration form. An email will be sent to indicate emergency cancellations. Please avoid calling the parish office or the school. If it is necessary to call the Office of Religious Education attempts will be made to post a message on the answering machine.

Fire Drills, Evacuation

There is a plan in place should the need to evacuate arise. Each classroom is posted with an evacuation route. The Catechists and aides are asked to maintain order and safety of all our students. As per diocesan policy fire drill procedures are reviewed with the catechists and students. We will conduct fire drills to ensure the safety of all.

Lockdown

During a crisis in or around the school building it may be necessary to secure or “lockdown” the building. The purpose of a lockdown is to ensure the safety of the students and staff by avoiding direct contact and or confrontation with an individual or situation that might present danger. Lockdown procedures are discussed with the staff in the beginning of each year. Students are made aware of lockdown procedures.

Visiting the Classroom

Parents who would like to take a more active role in their child’s religious instruction are encouraged to do so by calling Mrs. Barbara Fitzgerald at 390-0354 to volunteer to help on a weekly basis.

In the interest of safety of all the children’s safety, unauthorized persons are not to be in the building during the class session. The school doors will be locked during class time. In the event of an emergency, access to the school can be obtained through the silver doors at the end of the path, where a staff member is stationed. You may be asked to show identification.

For your children’s safety and compliance with diocesan policy our volunteers have had a background check and have participated in the “Protecting God’s Children” program.

Catechists and Aides are Volunteers! They are here to serve your child and help them grow in their faith. Please treat them kindly. Encourage them, so gratitude and cooperate with them in their ministry.

Communication

Attending the Religious Education program also affirms that you and your family is part of the catholic community of Saint Bartholomew Church. It is important that you are informed. It is our attempt to help you feel connected to your parish.

Class Folders: Each child is given a folder at the beginning of the year. It is the parent’s responsibility to check the folder for information and communication from your child’s teacher and the Office of Religious education. Family Newsletters, notices, flyers and progress reports/ class newsletters will be distributed to the children through their classroom folders. Please ask your child for this information.

Church Bulletin: Announcements concerning Religious Education and Sacramental Preparation are posted in the church’s weekly bulletin.

Parish Website: The parish website is www.stbartseb.org. Announcements and information concerning parish life is posted on the website. Links for Religious Education and Catholic resources are found on the website. The parish bulletin is also posted weekly.

Email Distribution Lists: each family is asked to provide us with an email address on your child's registration form. Sending mass emails and communication is helpful in keeping our families informed.

Parish Office: Any questions or concerns can also be directed to the parish office. Our parish office staff can be reached by calling 732-257-7722.

Progress Reports

Our catechists are asked to prepare a newsletter informing the families with details of what has been discussed midyear and again at the conclusion of the year. The teacher may comment on student's individual progress. Testing and grading is left to the discretion of the individual teacher. We are aware that our students have a variety of learning styles and needs and we hope all our students deepen their faith as they learn more about their faith.

Student Code of Behavior

All students are expected to show proper respect for themselves, others and the parish property. Oppositional behavior is not tolerated. Parents will be contacted to determine an appropriate solution.

Appropriate attire is required. Students **must dress modestly** to show respect for themselves and others. It is especially important to be dressed respectfully and reverently since students often visit the Church or have a priest or deacon visit the classroom.

Students are expected to listen, cooperate with others and use appropriate choices to solve their problems.

The Following Behaviors Are Absolutely Not Permitted:

- Fighting
- Leaving the premises without the appropriate adult
- Stealing
- Defacing or destroying property
- Disruptive behavior in the class
- Threatening violent acts toward self or others
- Abusive language
- Disrespectful behavior
- Setting off false alarms, calling 911 without cause
- Possession of controlled substances
- Use of cell phones or personal entertainment devices

Reminders

We share our parish grounds and school. It is our hope to maintain a good relationship with the school students and the faculty by respecting their personal items in the classroom and displays in the hallways.

We cannot be responsible for lost or misplaced items left in the classroom.

Please keep all valuables and personal items at home.

Classroom Rules

Each Catechist is encouraged to establish “Class Rules” or guidelines for the management of their classroom. Please discuss with your child the expectations of their catechist to ensure cooperation during class.

Discipline

Any time a child is sent to Mrs. Fitzgerald for discipline,

1. The incident is documented and if necessary the parents will be notified. An apology from the student to the catechist is necessary to gain entry back in the classroom.
2. Second Offence, parents will be notified of the incident additionally a letter will be sent home which must be signed indicating that they have received the notice and return it to the Office of Religious Education.
3. Third Offence will require a conference with the Catechist, Mrs. Fitzgerald and a Pastoral Associate to discuss options such as having a parent accompany the child to class or withdrawal from the program.

Promotion

A sixth, seventh or eighth grader can be retained especially if they are severely delinquent in the attendance, assignments and in their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Students recommended for retention are referred to Mrs. Fitzgerald. A meeting to discuss options for placement will be necessary between the family and Mrs. Fitzgerald. Retention is our absolute last measure, reserved for children who are not cooperating, in spite of parents and teachers working together.

Special Education

In order for every child to function at his or her best, the DRE and the Catechist need to know if a child has a specific disability. This is not done in an effort to label a child but to find creative ways to make the classroom experience rich and meaningful.

In religious education classes, the children are reading, writing, answering questions, and learning concepts as in regular school.

You need to be aware that if you do not disclose specifics about a child's special needs, the child will be expected to perform and behave as any other child in that grade level. Please be sure to communicate with your child's teacher especially any specific strategies to your child's catechist that have been developed either at home or in your child's regular school.

Most of our disabled students are educated right beside their non-disabled peers. Having a disability does not excuse your child from demonstrating competence, it means that the criteria will be adjusted to be realistic to ensure success. Aides are placed in the classroom to assist. Parents are encouraged to attend to assist their child. If for some reason your child cannot adapt to a large classroom setting, please contact Mrs. Fitzgerald to discuss alternatives and type of placement.

Special Health Needs

If your child needs medication for asthma, an epi-pen or insulin, you need to send it with the child every week. In the case of epi-pen or inhalers, arrangements can be made to store these items in case of emergency. Please be sure to contact your child's catechist if such medication is necessary for your child's health needs and where it is to be kept. In addition a medical Release Form must be signed by you and your physician regarding the dispensing of medications. (see Addendum 3)

Child Abuse Policy

If the DRE or a Catechist suspects that a child has been abused, NJ State Statutes require that the Division of Youth and Family Services be notified immediately.

Transfer Policy

The Diocese requires that we retain a permanent record card for each student in our program. In the event that a family moves in or out of the area, the record of their child's religious education can be sent to the new church office. Transfer students are accepted year-round if accompanied with records from another parish.

Registration

Registrations for the new school year are accepted from April 1-June 30. All registration forms must have the appropriate registration fee attached. All forms received after June 30 are subject to a fee increase and may be waitlisted.

Families seeking to register their children for Religious Education must be registered parishioners of St. Bartholomew Church. New student registrations require Baptismal certificates if they were not baptized at St. Bartholomew's.

No child will be denied religious instruction because of a family's financial restraints, however all families are expected to support their parish. If there is a true financial hardship, contact Father Thomas Walsh and he will either speak to you personally about the situation or make arrangements for payment options. Early registration is encouraged to secure your spot in class and allowing ample time to complete the payment process the start of class.

Preference and placement in a session is based on the date of the submitted, completed form and payment. Families who carpool must submit their forms together to ensure preference. We make every effort to place your child in your preferred session but due to the large number of children in the program and the availability of our volunteers it is not always possible.

After you have registered, if you find that your child will not be attending our program in the fall, please notify the Office of Religious Education so that our records can be updated and a refund can be issued to you. Refunds are not be issued one classes have begun.

*It is our privilege to work with your child.
Please remember that we have them for only 30 hours per year.
It in matters of Faith, Parents are the primary Catechist of their child.*

