

Parish School of Religion Handbook



stmarylancaster.org

740.653.0997

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Saint Mary of the Assumption Parish recognizes the supreme importance of entreating Our Lord that our endeavors may be successful. Therefore, we seek the continued prayerful support of our parents. In particular, we pray that the combined efforts of the parents, clergy, and classroom teachers may bear spiritual fruit in the lives of our young people. For your children's sake, please set aside some time every day to pray together as a family and for their growth in the faith and closeness to Jesus Christ.

Saint Mary of the Assumption, Pray for Us.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, Pray for Us.

PARENT HANDBOOK

The following information is pertinent to the Saint Mary of the Assumption Parish School of Religion. This handbook should provide a guide that the staff, volunteers, parents, and students can use to facilitate an organized and fruitful catechetical program. Please keep this handbook accessible as it contains answers to many frequently asked questions. Comments and suggestions on how this handbook could be improved are welcome; please send them in writing (email or note) to the Director of Religious Education.

OUR MISSION

Saint Mary of the Assumption Parish School of Religion sees its primary role as actively participating in the universal mission of the Church by taking seriously the holy Gospel directive mandated by the Risen Lord to His disciples: "Go, therefore and teach all nations." The active role of our Parish School of Religion in this apostolate of the Church does not supplant the unique and paramount role of the parents in the education of their children, but rather seeks to complement what is being done at home in the domestic church.

As parents, you are the primary teachers of your child. Your active participation in your child's religious education and formation in the faith is stressed greatly by the Church because, by your vocation as parents, you are the first ones officially charged with the spiritual care of your child. As a family, you are the first witnesses of God's love to your child. If you provide a model of Catholic living at home, participate actively as a family in the sacramental life of the Church, and if you pray and attend holy Mass together, your child is more likely to take to heart the content of the faith he/she will encounter and allow it to guide and shape their lives.

Our Parish School of Religion seeks to build on the prayer, faith, and moral foundations the parents have taught and modeled in the home. We hope to build upon and deepen the relationship parents have fostered in their children with Christ and of His teachings. Together, we endeavor to aid the children in coming to know, love, and serve the triune God in this life and to be happy with Him forever in the next.

ADMISSION

Our Parish School of Religion exists to assist the parents of children who attend non-Catholic schools, or are homeschooled without a Catholic theology curriculum, with the catechetical education and formation of their children. You must be a registered family in Saint Mary to attend the Parish School of Religion. In rare and special circumstances, there may be situations for children in other parishes to attend classes here, but only with the support and permission of their pastor.

REGISTRATION

Our Parish School of Religion conducts registration in late July and early August and strongly encourages parents to register children by the deadline given so teachers and administration can make necessary preparations for classrooms and materials. We want your child to feel welcome and well prepared from the first day forward.

TUITION

There is a required tuition fee due at the time of registration to help cover the cost of books, classroom resources, and programs. If there are extenuating financial situations, please contact the Director of Religious Education in writing with a brief explanation of the situation. No child will be denied catechesis due to finances.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

Diocese of Columbus Policy 4110.0

Every volunteer in a program or ministry for children and youth, and every volunteer for other parish programs or ministries who have been delegated care, custody, or control of children and youth, regardless of their level of contact with children and youth, are required to complete a civilian criminal background check and participate in a Protecting God's Children training session. Duration of service does not mitigate compliance with this policy.

Saint Mary of the Assumption is committed to the safety and well-being of all children. Every adult volunteer in our Parish School of Religion involving children must comply with the following procedures before beginning volunteer service: 1) Complete a Protecting God's Children Workshop; and 2) Be fingerprinted for a background check

HARASSMENT POLICY (Summarized from Diocesan Policy 4116.15)

Parents or students should report any form of harassment to the classroom teacher or Director of Religion Education immediately. Harassment can take many forms and could take place at any parish-sponsored event. It does not include compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age or disability or other protected characteristics.

COMMUNICATION

Important communications for the Parish School of Religion and classrooms will be done via parish website, Flocknote, and email/text/telephone. Additionally, families will be entered into our PSR Flocknote service so we can contact everyone quickly and easily via email or text for important reminders or cancellations. Contact information for all teachers is available on the website.

GRADE LEVELS

Saint Mary of the Assumption Parish School of Religion offers Kindergarten, Grades 1-8, and high school religious education classes.

Typically, students should be enrolled in a grade parallel to their secular academic grade. There may, however, be extenuating circumstances in which a student should be placed in a lower level due to lack of previous religious education or for out-of-sequence sacramental preparation. As with any area of study, each level builds on the foundations laid in previous years. Therefore, for the students' best growth in the faith, there may be cases in which a student is not promoted to the next grade level if he or she does not show mastery of grade level content. The students' mastery of content is greatly hindered by absences. Due to the complexity and variance of these individual situations, the Director of Religious Education in close consultation with classroom teachers will determine the most prudent plan for the student.

ATTENDANCE

Consistent class attendance is expected. If your child should miss class, please contact your child's teacher in advance and to learn what will be covered in class and assigned for homework so you can help your child with preparations before next class. Children who are ill should not be sent to class. An absence due to seriously inclement weather is always a valid excuse.

HOMEWORK

Students are expected to complete all homework assignments on time. As in all other subjects, the purpose of homework is to reinforce the material taught and to prepare the student for the upcoming lesson. Helping your child to be well-formed by the faith by assisting him/her to learn the material, and making sure that all assignments are completed, is an important part of fulfilling your spiritual obligation as a parent. When students come to class prepared, the classroom experience can be more engaging, formative, and application-based.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

As Christians, we are charged by God to live a life of virtue, which includes modesty and chastity. These virtues not only challenge us to respect the great dignity of other individuals, but also the sanctity of our own body.

PROHIBITED ITEMS

Students are not allowed to bring any unnecessary items to class that would distract their attention from classroom lessons and activities. Cell phones are allowed to be with the students, but should be in silent mode for the session.

CONDUCT, DISCIPLINE, AND MANNERS

Students are expected to exercise self-control, to conduct themselves with Christian dignity, and to be polite to all adults and students. Students must respect the authority and the efforts of the volunteer teachers, as well as the right of their fellow students to receive the full benefit of the classroom lessons without rude distractions. They are required to respect the property of the school, the classroom, and the materials available for their use. Repeated disregard for these policies will necessitate a parent conference with the teacher and the Director of Religious Education. Any student who conducts himself or herself without discipline may be removed from the Parish School of Religion.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Attend Mass with your children on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation
- Continue to learn about and support the teaching of the Church in your home
- Lead children in an active prayer and sacramental life by your words and example
- Ensure your child's attendance at PSR on Sundays
- Be personally involved in your child's education and practice of the faith
- Oversee your child's completion of class assignments
- If you feel inadequately prepared in your own religious education to be adequate help to your child, please feel free to contact the Director of Religious Education for support

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Our Parish School of Religion seeks to deepen the students' knowledge of the Catholic Faith and by doing so, to bring them to a closer personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Knowing Christ and knowing the content of faith shapes and affects us. Jesus tells his disciples very clearly in the holy Gospel, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The third commandment obliges us to keep the Christian Sabbath day holy. Therefore, not attending Mass is seriously sinful. This means that Catholics are required to attend Sunday Mass each week; only serious illness or an inability to be physically present where Mass is being offered serve as adequate dispensations. "Anyone who is really seeking Jesus' friendship responds as often as possible to Jesus' personal invitation" (CCC 1389, 1417). Visit www.masstimes.org when traveling to find parishes near you.

MEDICAL NEEDS

We recommend that students carry any special medications with them when they come to class. Please note any medical or emotional conditions, or allergies on the registration paperwork.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Please drop your children off at the main school building between 9:50 and 10 am. School doors will not unlock until 9:50 am. If the 8:45 Mass should run a little long, please bring your child over immediately after holy Mass and the recessional hymn.

CHILD VISITORS WITH PSR STUDENTS

Our Parish School of Religion program does welcome our student's friends to attend class with them in the event of a sleepover or curiosity. For the safety of all persons involved, we do ask that our parents notify their child's teacher in one of two ways: (1) in advance via phone/email with the name of the child who will be attending as a guest and a parent's name and phone number or (2) accompany your child and his/her friend to the classroom and notify the teacher at that time and provide necessary information. This ensures we know exactly who is in our classrooms and parental contact information should we need to reach them about their child.

LATE ARRIVALS

Lateness interferes greatly with a student's progress and is disruptive to both the catechist and the rest of the class. Certainly, unforeseen things happen. The school doors will lock at 10:10, so please accompany your child after that time to make sure they get inside without any issue.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Students will be dismissed at 11:00 am after announcements and the closing prayer. For safety reasons, we ask that a parent, guardian, or older sibling of students in Kindergarten – Grade 1 come upstairs to get their child in the classroom. If the parent thinks it safest for their child to be held in the room until a parent/old sibling arrives to get them, please communicate this to the teacher. The building will be unlocked at 10:50 am for parent's arrival.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Our Parish School of Religion program is staffed almost entirely by volunteer teachers and aides. On occasion we need substitute teachers or additional classroom help for special projects or lessons. If you are interested in offering your time and skills, please contact via phone or email the Director of Religious Education. Please note that all teachers, aides and substitutes are required to attend Protecting God's Children and be fingerprinted by the Sheriff's Office for a background check before being welcomed to assist in any way.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, please check our parish website at www.stmarylancaster.org. Of course, if the roads are dangerous outside the city, we expect parents will use their own prudent judgment on whether to be out. St. Mary PSR Classes will be cancelled automatically if Fairfield County is under a Level 2 Emergency at 8:30 am.

ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT

If a student becomes ill or needs attention during class time, he/she will be brought to the Office and if the situation calls for it we will phone the child's parents. Every attempt will be made to reach a parent/guardian. Please keep all emergency communication information up to date at all times.

CONTACT INFORMATION CHANGE

In order to have the most accurate information on file to reach parents for emergencies or to disseminate information, please be sure to contact the Director of Religious Education if your home address, phone numbers, or email address change so we can update our records.

Catholic Prayers by Grade Level

As Christians we are called to sanctify our lives through the lifting up of our minds and hearts to almighty God. Just as the spoken word is how we communicate with our family and friends, so prayer is our way of growing in our relationship with God through long and short thoughts to God and time to be still and let Him place things on our hearts. Prayer is essential to our spiritual lives, and the Lord not only taught the importance of it to His disciples, but He also showed the importance of it in His own life by withdrawing to pray.

There are many formal prayers of the Church, which are integral to our worship, sacramental, and devotional lives and should be memorized as we advance in our religious education. Knowing and being formed by the Church's official prayers help to teach us how to pray intimately and with our own words in spontaneous and informal prayer. Of course, during difficult or emotional times, we find comfort and help in recalling formal prayers to aid our prayer life and surrender to God in those moments.

Please help your child to learn the below prayers through repetition and encouragement, as parents, you are the first teachers of prayer to your children.

1st Grade Sign of the Cross, Our Father and Glory Be

2nd Grade Hail Mary, Act of Contrition, Grace Before Meals

3rd Grade Prayer to St. Michael

4th Grade Gloria, Come Holy Spirit

5th Grade Apostles Creed

6th Grade Nicene Creed

7th Grade Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love

8th Grade The Magnificat

SACRAMENT OF MERCY - CONFESSION

The priests of our parish will make the sacrament of Reconciliation available to the PSR children in 3rd – 8th grade twice during the year.

Reconciliation is always offered on Saturday afternoons from 4 – 5 pm or by appointment.