

St. John the Baptist Parish Religious Education Program

610-847-5522

Parish website – www.stjohnsottsville.org

MISSION STATEMENT

St. John the Baptist Parish Religious Education Program is a teaching ministry that is committed to fostering the spiritual growth of its' Parish children who attend area public and private schools. Children from kindergarten through seventh grade, receive authentic instruction in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Church.

The St. John the Baptist Parish Community affirms the teachings of the Second Vatican Council which acknowledge that parents are the foremost educators of their children. Faith cannot just be taught, it needs to be experienced and lived. Therefore, our programs' goal is to provide learning and living experiences that will help our children to grow in their faith. Our catechists strive to teach as Jesus taught by providing opportunities for the children to experience prayer, Bible study, and instruction in Church doctrine, traditions and celebrations.

PARENTS and PREP TOGETHER

Teachers in our Parish Religious Education Program are called CATECHISTS. A catechist is "one who echoes the Word of God." All of our catechists and classroom assistants are volunteers who share their time and talents for the benefit of our parish children. Please support them in this work with your prayers and cooperation.

Our Catechists supplement in a more formal way the faith education that occurs informally in your home. Parents of youth in our religious education program need to be supportive of our catechists' efforts and our program in the following ways:

★ Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, receive the sacraments.

- Read the Bible as a family.
- Teach your child to pray in their own words as well as to learn the traditional prayers of our faith.
- Show interest in what your child is doing in PREP class each week. Check PREP folder and communications envelope with your child.
- Help your child to be conscientious about completing any homework assignments that are given to him/her.
- Join your child by participating in any service projects or workshops offered in his/her grade.

The example you set is invaluable to our efforts in the classroom.

ADMISSION POLICIES

St. John the Baptist PREP program does not discriminate on the basis of sex, national origin, physical or mental challenge.

Each student who enters our program is required to be registered in person by their parent or legal guardian. You can go to our web site www.stjohnsottsville.org to download a copy of our **new family** registration form. It will save you some time if you fill this form out prior to coming to the rectory to register.

A **Baptismal Certificate** is required for all children who have not been baptized in this parish.

Children **who have not received the Sacrament of Baptism** will be accepted into the program provided the family intends to take part in the children's catechumenate process.

New families to our program may call the PREP Office at any time (610-847-5522) to inquire about registration procedures and tuition. Re-registration for returning families takes place in April during regularly scheduled session times.

FINANCIAL POLICY

Tuition is set each spring by the parish financial committee for the upcoming session year.

Full payment of tuition and sacrament fees is expected at the time of registration.

No student will be prevented from attending because of his/her family's inability to pay. A confidential inquiry can be made to the pastor or the program director.

Refunds

If a child leaves the program the following refund schedule will be followed:

- 100% prior to the start of the session year.
- 80% if withdrawn September through November of the session year.
- 50% if withdrawn December through January of the session year.
- After January of the session year no refunds will be given.

ATTENDANCE

Thirty hours of religious instruction is required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Office of Catholic Education. It is recommended by the Archdiocese that a child repeat a grade level if frequent absences occur. Regular attendance is expected of each student in PREP. It is recommended that parents schedule all extra curricular activities at times not conflicting with PREP classes. As directed by the Archdiocese, attendance records are kept for each child. If you move to another parish, and wish to enroll your child in their religious education program, we will be asked to verify your child's participation in our program.

- After each absence, the student is required to bring a note from his/her parent or guardian stating why they were absent.
- If a child misses more than 4 classes (**grades K, 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6**) they will not be moved up to the next grade level until the situation is discussed with the program director, and all class work and exams are made up.
- If your child is in a sacrament grade (**2 and 7**) an excessive number of absences (**more than 3**) is justifiable reason to delay a child's reception of the sacrament.

Attendance, (cont.)

- When a child is absent they may, on occasion, have the option to make up the class at the other session time **in the same week**. A parent or guardian must call the PREP office ahead of time to arrange for this make up.
- When a child misses a class the parent is responsible to see that the missed chapter in the textbook is covered at home and all written chapter work is completed before returning to PREP.
- Since material is presented in developmental sequence, children may not arbitrarily skip grade levels. If a child, who is baptized, enters the program with little, if any, formal religious training, or returns to the program after skipping several grade levels, they might not be placed in the same grade they are in at school. This matter needs to be discussed with the program director before the child can be placed into a class.

TARDINESS

Each student is expected to arrive in the Parish Hall 5 minutes before the start of the PREP session. The catechist or their assistants will bring the children to their respective classes. Students should not report directly to the classroom unless they are instructed to do so upon arrival. This occurs several times during the year due to the use of the Parish Hall by other Parish groups.

CONDUCT

The children who are enrolled in St. John's PREP classes are responsible to:

- Cooperate with the Catechist in order to maintain a Christian atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Come to class prepared to participate in the lesson activities.
- Follow classroom rules that are explained by the catechist at the start of each year.

The following are considered unacceptable behaviors:

- Disrespect for any adult or child by word or action.
- Excessive talking or calling out in class.
- Repeated failure to complete class or homework assignments
- Fighting
- Defacing or damaging in any way; books, desks, wall surfaces or bathrooms
- Using or removing any item from a day student's desk.
- Leaving the premises without adult supervision or knowledge.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Occasionally there may be situations where disciplinary action may need to be taken. In these cases the following procedure will be followed:

- The catechist will bring the situation to the attention of the program director. Possible corrective actions will be discussed, including a meeting of the student with the program director.
- If the problem persists, the program director will contact the parents.
- If the problem still continues, a meeting will be held by the program director with the parents and the child to discuss ways to resolve the situation.
- Should the inappropriate behavior not be corrected, Home Study will be initiated.

PROTECTION OF YOUTH

Protecting God's Children - All priests and deacons, as well as parish staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children must obtain criminal record and child abuse clearances from the State of Pennsylvania, and attend a Safe Environment training seminar that is provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. This training will provide a greater understanding to the adults in our Church on how they can be protectors of children and models of appropriate behavior and relationships. It will teach them to be advocates for those who are most vulnerable. The training seminar consists of a video followed by a group discussion. It addresses the problem of child sexual abuse in today's society and offers suggestions on how to prevent it.

In its effort to support parents in their responsibility to educate their children concerning personal safety, the Archdiocese provides grade appropriate personal safety lesson plans to all parish directors of religious education. St. John's PREP program will incorporate these lessons into the curriculum each year. Parents can check the general PREP calendar to see when these personal safety lessons will be taught to their child/children. Copies of these lesson plans are available in the rectory for parents to review.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

When we have snow and/or ice this coming winter season we will use the following procedures for the cancellation of PREP classes.

Sunday Classes: We will post our closing information on:

1. **Parish website:** www.stjohnsottsville.org
2. TV - 6ABC
3. You can also go to www.6abc.com for closing information.

Tuesday Classes: When Palisades School District is closed or they have an early dismissal because of bad weather our PREP classes will be cancelled. You can call the Palisades SD at 610-847-5131, press 5 then 1 to listen to their closing update. We will also post our closing information on:

1. **Parish website:** www.stjohnsottsville.org
2. TV 6ABC
3. You can also go to www.6abc.com for closing information.

CURRICULUM

St. John's religious education program follows the grade level guidelines for religious education that are published by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. All teaching materials are selected from the list of textbooks that have been approved by the United States Bishops.

EXAMS Students will take exams as appropriate for each grade level. Sufficient notice will be sent home by the catechist to allow ample time for the student to prepare for the exam.

PROGRESS REPORTS Twice a year each student will receive a progress report that has been prepared by their catechist and reviewed by the program director.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

Parents are expected to follow St. John the Baptist's Parish policy with regard to the sacramental preparation and celebration with their children.

- Registration in the parish is required.
- Since sacramental catechesis requires more than classroom participation, it is important that families participate at Sunday Mass.

FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST

Two years of preparation in a formal religious education program are required for the reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. Guidelines put forth by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia concerning baptized children receiving sacraments for the first time specifies that the Sacrament of Reconciliation be received prior to First Eucharist.

At St. John the Baptist Parish the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist occurs in the second grade.

The expectations for **children** preparing for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist are that the child:

- Be baptized
- Be participating **weekly** at Mass with their families.
- Have completed two consecutive years of formal religious instruction.
- Have a satisfactory PREP attendance record.
- Have an age appropriate appreciation and understanding of the sacraments they are to receive.

The expectations for **parents or guardians** who choose to have their children celebrate these sacraments are:

- Be registered in the parish.
- Participate **weekly** at Mass.
- Support the teachings of the Church.
- Be involved in the child's preparation through attendance at meetings and other activities that surround the preparation of these sacraments.
- Actively supervise the child's preparation through homework assignments, retreat day, and practices for the actual ceremony.

CONFIRMATION

The sacrament of Confirmation requires two years of preparation. At St. John the Baptist Parish, candidates will begin their preparation in the 6th grade and will generally be confirmed in the spring of 7th grade.

It is the expectation that a **Confirmation Candidate** will:

- Be Baptized
- Participate **weekly** at Sunday Mass with their family
- Have a satisfactory PREP attendance record.
- Complete the Confirmation formation program, attend the Confirmation retreat, complete 6 service projects in the parish and the community, come to class prepared, complete assignments on time and work closely with their sponsor to prepare to receive the sacrament.

It is expected that the **parents or guardians** of the Confirmation Candidate will:

- Be registered with the parish
- Participate weekly at Sunday Mass.
- Support the teachings of the Catholic Church
- Be involved in the preparation of their child for the sacrament by attending scheduled meetings, encouraging their child to come to class prepared, foster a sense of the importance of this sacrament in their home during this preparation period, and guide the candidate in the selection of a saint's name and a sponsor.

The Confirmation **Sponsor** is to help the candidate throughout his/her life to fulfill the baptismal promises. They are to support the confirmed person in their daily witness to Christ. The selection of a Sponsor for the Sacrament of Confirmation should be done with careful thought and consideration. The Church's law for this Sacrament requires that a sponsor be:

- A Baptized Catholic
- A Confirmed Catholic
- A Practicing Catholic
- Has reached the age of 16. This person needs to be sufficiently mature for the responsibility being assumed. An older brother or sister may be a sponsor, provided he/she is mature in his/her personal spiritual development.
- If married, must be married in the Catholic Church.
- Cannot be the father or mother of the child to be confirmed.

A "practicing" Catholic means they are registered as a member of a parish and attends Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and receives the Sacraments on a regular basis. The priest of the parish where the sponsor is registered is bound in conscience and in Canon Law to refuse to give a sponsor certificate to anyone lacking these requirements. Please consider the above requirements before asking someone to serve in this capacity. If any clarification is needed, please speak to the priest. Please do not put the priest in an awkward position by choosing individuals who are not faithful church-goers.

Sponsors at Confirmation represent the believing Christian Community. Thus it is required that they be practicing Catholics in good standing with the Church, who have themselves received the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation and have reached the age of 16. If they are married, they must have been validly married in the Church. The Code of Canon Law states they must lead, "a life in harmony with faith and the role to be undertaken, and will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with Baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it." **Sponsor certificates** are required of all sponsors who are not members of St. John the Baptist Parish.

If your child's sponsor is a registered, participating member of St. John the Baptist Parish, please have your child indicate this on the sponsor form he/she will fill out, and no certificate will be needed.

SPECIAL SACRAMENTS SITUATIONS

Students in third grade and up who are baptized, but have not received the Sacraments of Reconciliation and/or First Eucharist, will enter a Special Sacraments Program. This program emphasizes family involvement. It helps parents or guardians to prepare their child for these sacraments. Please contact the program director for more details.

Students 7 and older who wish to enter our Parish Religious Education Program but are not baptized will be accepted into the program provided the family intends to take part in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Children (RCIC), the children's catechumen process.