

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Religious Education Program at St. Therese of the Little Flower is designed for students not attending a Catholic school, who desire to grow in their Catholic faith. Families must be registered in the parish. Exceptions may be made if a student is unable to attend regular class time at their designated parish. Fees for non-parishioners will be slightly higher.

The Religious Education Program is directed by Mrs. Vicki Schwab. All catechists and the program Director are under the guidance of the Pastor. It is our expectation that all parish children are schooled in the faith either in a Catholic grade school or the Parish Religious Education program.

Traditional classes are available for children who are 5 years old by July 1st, (December 1st for Michigan residents) through eighth grade, and are staffed by trained volunteer catechists, many of whom are classroom teachers. Each grade explores the four pillars of the Catholic faith: Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer, on an age appropriate level. The program used for K-8th grade is diocesan approved, based on the curriculum designated for each grade level and are centered on the Sunday readings. The 2nd and 8th grades will also use Sacramental materials which have been approved by the Bishop's Ad Hoc Committee. Diocesan Curriculum guidelines are available in the Director's Office by request. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is also offered for 3-6 year-olds. This curriculum explores the pillars of the Catholic faith through hands-on exploration and modeling following the Montessori principles.

Parental Involvement

The family is the 'domestic Church,' and parents are the primary catechists in the faith development and education of their children*. A parish religious education program can only reinforce and support the faith formation that a child receives in the home. Therefore, parental involvement in the Religious Education Program at Little Flower is necessary to expand upon those lessons which are taught in the formal parish setting and to allow each student to integrate the teachings of the Catholic Church into their everyday lives.

Celebrating the Lord's Day not only complies with the commandment, "Keep the Sabbath holy," but it is also the central expression of our Catholic faith. We strongly encourage families to celebrate Mass together with our parish community. We strongly discourage the practice of dropping off children at Religious Education classes, while parents attend the 11:30 Mass. While this might be convenient, it deprives that child and that family of the very communion that we seek to achieve as a Church.

Occasionally, there will be classroom materials sent home for review and discussion with the parents. We strongly encourage parents to take this responsibility seriously and follow through with this essential element of your children's formation.

Parents are always welcome in the building on Sunday mornings. We ask that you stop in at the office and let the Director know that you are visiting and to please respect the catechist's need to carry out their lesson plans in each classroom without interruption.

Parents are sometimes needed to provide an extra set of hands on larger projects, provide snacks, etc. We invite parents to serve as a "room parent" for a specific classroom, and we ask that you contact the Director, who will then contact the appropriate catechist. Safe Environment check will need to be completed for room parents.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION -

The **Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Eucharist** (First Communion) are usually celebrated in the second grade year. At least one year of religious education immediately prior to the year of sacramental preparation is required. If this has not been fulfilled we recommend the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIC) process. This means that the preparation for First Communion is both 1st and 2nd grade.

The **Sacrament of Confirmation** is usually celebrated in the eighth grade year. Due to many patterns of formation, the following policies and recommendations were developed in June 2003 and revised in 2009.

1. Those students who have been enrolled in a Catholic Parish Religious Education Program or a Catholic School consistently through the seventh grade will be placed in the 8th grade class, where Confirmation will be part of the year-long curriculum.
2. Those interested in receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation who are entering the 8th grade who have **not** been previously enrolled in a Catholic school or formal parish religious education program will attend RCIC (private study sessions) in addition to 8th grade Sunday classes OR enroll in 7th grade.

3. Those who have not received Confirmation who are in the 8th grade or higher can be enrolled in the High School Confirmation Preparation or RCIA program.
4. **Discretion of the Pastor and DRE will be used for each child who has not been consistently enrolled in a parish religious education program or Catholic school in order to best foster his or her spiritual and catechetical needs.**

Keep in mind that Confirmation is a 2 year process which includes Theology of the Body in 7th grade and Confirmation Preparation – 8th grade.

Separate registration and fees are required for sacramental preparation classes.

POLICY FOR THOSE HOME-SCHOOLING THEIR CHILDREN (Effective 7/00, Amended 8/09)

It is our hope as a faith community that we can acknowledge and respect parents as the “primary educators” of their children, while at the same time acknowledging the parish’s proper role in the formation of children.

Although we prefer home-schooled students to meet the same requirements listed in the sacramental preparation section above, an exception can be made for the student’s reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, provided the following criteria have been met:

1. Parents use the texts adopted by the parish both for
 - a) Regular instruction throughout the year prior to and throughout the year of sacramental preparation, and
 - b) The texts adopted by the parish for sacramental preparation.
 - c) A syllabus of your home-schooling curriculum is submitted to the Pastor.
 - d) Students preparing to receive the sacrament attend all special formation events sponsored by the Parish.
 - e) Parents attend special formation events sponsored by the Parish.
2. The child is interviewed by the Sacramental Preparation Coordinator, the pastor, or some other representative of the pastor, to determine
 - a) The child’s proper instruction during the year prior to sacramental preparation (usually the First Grade) and
 - b) The child’s readiness to receive the sacrament.

The Sacramental Preparation Coordinator may determine that it is more feasible to meet with parents and children, who are not attending a parish school of religion, in a group setting.

3. The parent and child participate in any parish-sponsored retreats and parent/child sessions for sacramental preparation.

Little Flower Church desires and encourages the collaboration of parents at all levels of religious education to engage in their children’s faith development at home. To inquire about the home-schooling policy, or to receive a full copy of the policy, please contact the Sacramental Preparation Coordinator, 243-3439.

Religious Education Program Features

REGISTRATION - Registration forms are available in the Parish Office at any time. Students enrolled during a school year will have Registration forms distributed to them at the end of the current year’s program. Separate registration and fees are required for sacramental preparation classes and forms will be included with the Registration Form.

To be considered as having completed a year in religious education, **a student must register, pay their fees and begin attending classes before the 3rd class.** Exceptions may be

made in case of prolonged illness or if the child is new to the parish and has been enrolled in another Religious Education program or a Catholic school, which can be documented.

FEES - One child \$70, two children \$130, three or more children \$165. Non-parishioners \$100 per student. **Fees are due at Registration – August 20 and no later than the day before classes begin – September 9th, but may be paid in advance in the Parish Office.** Please contact the Dir. **No registration will take place on the 1st day of classes on September 10.** Everything needs to be completed before or after that date. Please contact the director if you are unable to make payment at this time. Payment options are available.

A late fee of \$5 per child will be incurred for anyone paying fees from September 11 through September 25, which is the last day a child may be admitted into the program to satisfy the “Completed Year” requirement.

CLASS TIME - Sundays from after the 9:30 Mass until 12:00 noon. Please note that classes **begin** at 10:25am. **Your child should be in their room and ready to begin classes by 10:25.** Your child's catechist makes every effort to have his/her room ready to begin teaching at that time. Your cooperation in eliminating unnecessary tardiness is greatly appreciated!

Special events and liturgies will take place throughout the year. These events will be announced ahead of time.

ARRIVAL TIME – Children should go to their classroom right after Mass. No child may be dropped off before 10:20 AM. NOTE: We are not responsible for your child until they are in their classroom with their teacher present. For this reason we encourage students to go directly to their classroom after Mass or after being dropped off/. Young children should be taken to their classroom by a parent or older sibling.

ATTENDANCE - Attendance is taken each week. We appreciate your efforts to promote regular weekly attendance by your child. Catechists are instructed to call the parents if a student misses more than two consecutive classes, or it appears that regular attendance has become a problem. In the same manner, if you know that your child will be missing class in any week, **please call and inform the catechist ahead of time.** The catechist will appreciate the notice as the number of children attending may affect a lesson plan.

Because it is our obligation to evaluate the readiness of the **candidate for reception of sacraments, no more than three unexcused absences will be permitted during the course of the year.** To do so may result in a review with the Pastor, Sacramental Preparation Coordinator, the Religious Education Director, and the parent/guardian.

Sacramental prep years are: 1st and 2nd – 1st Reconciliation and 1st Eucharist and, 7th and 8th for Confirmation.

The possible consequences could be postponement of sacrament reception at this time, or in the case of non-sacramental prep years (grades 3, 4, 5 & 6) the possibility of not moving to the next grade during the following year. (Adopted 9/98)

ASSIGNMENTS - Your child's catechists take great care to prepare weekly lessons for their class. While most of the lesson is covered within the given class time, it occasionally is necessary or deemed worthy to assign some "homework". Please help your child to see that this **is** something he/she is expected to complete. While we do not issue grades, we do hold them accountable for doing what is asked of them. Your interest shown in what is being taught each week is vital to the success of this program and the growth of their interest in the faith.

CALENDAR – Enclosed is a copy of next year's calendar. Flyers or emails announcing individual special events or changes to the calendar will be sent home throughout the year, as deemed necessary.

MATERIALS - Each student will be provided with the week's lesson and a pen or pencil. These materials are to be brought to class each week unless otherwise stated by their teacher.

Families will be charged the cost of replacing lost books. Materials used by sacramental preparation classes require separate fees.

REPORTING ILLNESS AND INJURY –

- Any and every illness or injury of a student in REP should be reported immediately to the Director.
- Universal Precautions will be used, including gloves, bleach/disinfectant for spills and leak-proof bags for collecting fluid-soaked items. No person should come into contact with blood or any other bodily fluids without taking necessary precautions.
- Only the Director or Catechist will administer first aid, unless they designate someone who is more qualified, such as a parent, who is a medical professional.
- If a student's life or limb is threatened, no one should move the injured person, except trained medical personnel.
- No student will be allowed to leave the premises ill or injured, unless he/she is accompanied by his/her parent/guardian or secondary emergency contact.
- If a student's parent/guardian or emergency contact cannot be reached, the Director should immediately call emergency medical services and have the injured student transported to the local emergency room.
- The Director or Catechist will accompany the student until a parent/guardian arrives.
- Medical information forms, including emergency contact information, must be kept on all students and readily accessible in case of emergency.

Emergency Medical Forms need to be filled out for each student in our program. They are found on the backside of the Registration Forms. Although we anticipate no real need to use these, diocesan policy requires us to have them on file. We appreciate your cooperation.

- The Religious Education Program will defer to diocesan policy and procedure on all matters concerning the health and safety of students and REP personnel.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES-The Religious Education Program will comply with all applicable state laws regarding communicable diseases.

SAFETY ISSUES - Please use **only** the front door near the Office entrance for entering and leaving the building. The parking lot at 12:00 noon is a very busy and dangerous place.

Children in Grade 3 or younger will only be dismissed when an adult or older sibling comes to the classroom for them. **Thank you for your help in these important matters.**

Practice drills for vacating the building in case of fire, and taking shelter in case of severe weather, will be conducted regularly.

WEAPONS FREE ENVIRONMENT-Everyone, except law enforcement personnel, is prohibited from bringing a firearm, knife or other weapon to a parish or parish functions. Further, students are prohibited from possessing firearms on route to or from Religious Education classes or parish property. A student's violation of this policy carries an automatic expulsion from the regular Religious Education program of not less than one calendar year. In such a case, an alternative Religious Education program may be offered to the expelled student. This penalty supersedes any penalty which may be attributed by a local discipline policy.

"Firearm" means:

- Any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive;
- The firearm or receiver of any such weapon
- Any fire arm muffler or firearm silencer
- Any destructive device
 - "destructive device" means any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas
 - Bomb
 - grenade

- Rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces
- Missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce
- Mine
- Device similar to any of the devices described in the preceding clauses

SMOKE FREE ENVIRONMENT-all facilities are smoke free. No one whether an administrator, an employee, a student, or a visitor, is allowed to smoke in the facility.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM - the students will be instructed by a catechetical leader, or someone designated by the catechetical leader or pastor, on the appropriate *Child Safety Script* or *Boundaries* materials at the beginning part of each year. Information concerning such annual safety training must be documented as necessary on the appropriate diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator Education Report Form each year to comply with diocesan Safe environment Program requirements and submitted to the diocese by the catechetical leader.

FIELD TRIPS - Advanced notice will be given to parents whenever a class will be leaving the church premises. The catechist will send home a permission slip indicating the date, time, and location of the planned trip, as well as details regarding transportation. This permission slip must be signed by the student's parent or guardian and returned to the catechist **before** any child will be permitted to go on the trip.

CANCELLATIONS - If a situation arises where classes need to be canceled, including weather related closing, a room parent or catechist will attempt to call each family. Please see that current phone numbers are on file in the Director's Office. It will also be called into WNDU and WSBT.

COMMUNICATION - Each teacher will send home a syllabus, or list of planned classes, by the second class. Please be watching for it. It will help you to help your child, especially in the event of missed classes. A newsletter will be sent home three additional times throughout the year. Important dates are listed on the enclosed calendar in this booklet. Please keep it in a handy place! Additional notices or flyers may be sent home as needed. Please ask if your child has any notes for you each week.

PASTORAL INVOLVEMENT - Members of the pastoral team are invited to come to individual classrooms for a variety of lesson enrichments. This may include teaching a lesson from the text, expanding the depth of a lesson, or providing a demonstration or hands-on experience. Students benefit from the exposure to the pastoral staff and the special insight they can provide.

BOOKS AND A/V MATERIALS – There are a number of books and videos may be checked out for **two weeks**. They are located in the Director's Office. A complete listing is available on our website.

Policies and Procedures for the Religious Education Program

The Diocese of Ft. Wayne-South Bend has mandated that every parish religious education program in the diocese follow a standardized set of policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are in conformity with Indiana State Law and the laws governing the Catholic Church, and are designed to place the health and safety of our students and catechists as the primary operational goal of our Religious Education Program. **A copy of these policies and procedures is available for the review of any parent or guardian by contacting the Religious Education Director. All catechists will be trained to follow the appropriate procedures for emergencies.**

Code of Conduct

The Religious Education Program at St. Therese of the Little Flower Parish exists to form disciples of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Christian tradition. In keeping with that mission, certain expectations of both catechists and students are necessary to assure that the program runs as smoothly and as faithfully as possible to the model of Christian behavior of Christ Himself. Students and catechists alike are to show the utmost respect to every person, recognizing his/her equality and dignity. Behavior should, at all times, be in keeping with the principles of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Discrimination based on disabilities, race, gender or ethnicity will not be tolerated in any manner. Classes are to be conducted in an orderly fashion, respecting other individuals and other classes taking place in the same facility and in the Religious Education Program at Little Flower Parish. This policy shall apply when a student is:

- On parish grounds
- Off parish grounds at a parish activity, function or event
- Traveling to or from class sessions or a Religious Education program activity, function or event
- At any other time when a student's conduct either causes harm or could potentially cause harm to the other students, parish employees or volunteers, parish property, or the reputation of the parish or the diocese.

The following types of student conduct constitute ground for suspension or expulsion subject to the Diocesan Director of Catechesis' review. This listing is not intended to be exhaustive of all types of conduct:

1. Any conduct which, in the opinion of the catechetical leader or designated parish officials or school officials, is contrary to the principles and teaching of the Catholic Church.
2. Using violence, force, noise, coercion, threat, intimidation, fear, passive resistance, or other comparable conduct constituting an interference with the Religious Education Program purposes, or urging other student to engage in such conduct.
3. Causing or attempting to cause damage to property belonging to any other person, student, catechist or volunteer of the Religious Education program or stealing or attempting to steal property belonging to any other person, student, catechist, volunteer or the parish.
4. Intentionally causing or attempting to cause physical injury or intentionally behaving in such a way that, in the opinion of the catechetical leader or other designate officials, could cause physical injury to any person.
5. Threatening or intimidating any individual for whatever purpose
6. Possessing, handling or transmitting a knife or any other object which under the circumstances and in the sole opinion of the catechetical leader or other designated officials could be considered a weapon.
7. Possessing, using, transmitting, or being under the influence to any degree of any controlled substance or intoxicant of any kind.
8. Engaging in the selling of a controlled substance or engaging in a criminal law violation.
9. Failing in a substantial number of instances to comply with directions of catechists or other designated personnel during any period of time when the student is properly under their supervision.
10. Engaging in any activity that interferes with the purposes or educational function of the Religious Education Program.
11. Violating or repeatedly violating any rules that are, in the opinion of the catechetical leader or other designated officials, necessary in carrying out the purposes and/or educational function of the Religious Education Program.
12. Possessing or using on parish grounds during class session hours an electronic paging device or a hand held telephone in a situation not related to a school purpose or educational function.
13. Engaging in any unlawful activity off parish grounds if the unlawful activity is considered by the catechetical leader or other designated officials to be an interference with the purposes and/or educational functions of the Religious Education Program.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

At the beginning of the school year, catechists will communicate their expectations of student behavior and classroom rules to the students and parents, whether the students are on parish grounds or while on field trips. No manner of corporal punishment will be tolerated in disciplining students. However, there may be occasions that a student violates the classroom rules or expectations of the teacher. In the event that this occurs see the Code of Conduct below.

The Religious Education Program at St. Therese of the Little Flower follows the "Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People" and all policies and procedures promulgated by the Diocese of Ft. Wayne-South Bend.

Code of Conduct – Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary Action If, in the opinion of the Director of Religious Education, or an individual catechist, a student does not comply with numbers 9-12 in the Code of Conduct the following procedure will be implemented"

For a first offense that does not result in sending the child to the front office, catechists will notify the Director.

- A child may be sent to the front office. His/her parent(s)/guardian(s) may be called to pick up the child.
- An Incident Report will be filled out by the Catechist and be given to the parent. A copy will be placed in the student's file.
- A catechist or the Director may call a parent-teacher conference, which will be attended by the catechist, a parent/guardian, and possibly the Pastor.
- A parent-teacher conference may serve as a final warning, before recourse is taken to suspension or expulsion from the program.
- Repeated or serious offenses will result in suspension or expulsion from the program.
- The final decision to suspend or expel will be made by the pastor, in consultation with the Director of Religious Education.

If however numbers 1-8, and 13 are violated, immediate expulsion will be considered.

In the event that suspension or expulsion results,

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) can schedule a conference with the pastor to discuss the disciplinary action.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) have the option to contact the Director of Religious Education and discuss an alternative course of study for the child.
- In most cases, the Director of Religious Education will consult and supervise the parent(s) on how to conduct religious education in the home, using parish-approved texts, for the period of suspension or for the remainder of the year.
- In addition to regularly scheduled consultations with the Director of Religious Education, an evaluation meeting will be necessary at the end of the period of suspension or at the end of the school year to ensure that the student has completed either the material covered during the period of suspension or that grade level.
- The Diocesan Office of Religious Education will be notified.

No manner of corporal punishment will be tolerated in disciplining students.

Because of the nature of the Religious Education Program, we cannot spend inordinate amounts of time with discipline. A few students' misbehavior will not be allowed to seriously compromise the religious formation of a whole class. However, as with any worthy Christian enterprise, love, justice, compassion, sensitivity and forgiveness will be guiding principles.