

*St. John the Baptist Parish Community
Parish Religious Education Program*



TEACH THE CHILDREN



FAMILY HANDBOOK

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St. John the Baptist Parish Religious Education Program

MISSION STATEMENT

GOD IS LOVE. GOD CREATED US OUT OF LOVE, TO LOVE.

We are all created in the image and likeness of God, believing this, the mission of St. John's Parish Religious Education Program is to Teach, Proclaim, and Witness to the children, teens and adults of our parish on the new life of Salvation that Jesus won for us on the Cross.

We teach about the need to build a personal relationship with the True Person of Jesus Christ, and strive to instill within their hearts and minds a deep love for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the healing power of forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

We Proclaim the Good News and nurture a deep seeded thirst for Truth known by the study of our Catholic Faith revealed through Scripture and Tradition.

We Witness to the power of prayer, the grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit given freely to us through the Sacrament of Confirmation, and the joy in service to those in need.

Every Day...in Every Class...with Every Student...bring an Encounter with Christ.

Go make disciples!

Vision Statement

"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity." (St. John Paul II)

We are committed to making our Catholic faith come alive in the minds, hearts and actions of all our PREP students.

Recognizing that we live in an ever-changing society, we will strive to help our students and families:

- Respond to the challenge of the Gospel by being aware of our Christian responsibility to participate in acts of service, mercy, charity, justice and peace in our local and global communities;
- Know the foundations of the Catholic faith;
- Recognize the dignity of each person and appreciate the diversity among people;
- Make effective life choices guided by our virtues of faith.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS:

(Excerpt from the Rite of Baptism of a child):

Priest: “You have asked to have your child baptized.

In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God’s neighbor.

Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

Parents: “We do.”

Our Catechetical Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their child in the faith. It never replaces the parents’ obligation to carry out this responsibility.

It is essential to the child’s growth and development in the Catholic Faith, that the parents live a life of faith in the home.

The effectiveness of the catechetical process depends upon this.

For example, the children learn in their religious education classes that celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday with their faith community (our parish) is essential to being a Catholic.

When parents “*sleep in or choose to do something else*” instead of attending Mass, they are saying to their children by their actions:

“I know you were taught that it is important to attend Mass each week, and to receive the Eucharist weekly, but it is okay to miss Mass if you don’t feel like going or have something else to do. Yes, it is important, just not that important to us.”

When the children see this they are then receiving a “mixed message.” Pew statistics have proven that it is the parents’ beliefs that the majority of children will absorb and model.

Parents have the responsibility to be active members of the parish. This includes regularly attending Mass, supporting the parish and participating in the spiritual life of the parish.

Parents are encouraged to join us for our monthly PREP Mass held on the first Monday & Tuesday of each month (see our PREP calendar for specific dates).

Attendance at Sacrament and PREP Parent meetings and are mandatory. Each child must be represented by at least one parent or guardian.

ADMISSION POLICIES

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

Each new student who enters our program is required to be registered in person by their parent or legal guardian. You may download our our “**New Student Registration**” form from our web site www.stjohnsottsville.org or pick-up a copy from our parish office. An appointment is necessary to meet with our Program Director, please call 610-847-5521 or email prep@stjohnsottsville.org to arrange a time to meet. You are encouraged to bring the child(ren) whom you are registering to this meeting.

A copy of your child’s Baptismal Certificate is required at the time of registration for any child who has not been baptized at St. John’s.

Transfer students must also bring a letter from their former parish stating:

- the last grade year completed.
- a copy of their most recent Report Card
- a copy of all Sacrament certificates received to date.

Please note, children are to attend Religious Education Classes each year. If for any reason your child takes time off from their formal Religious Education formation, when they return will be placed in the next grade level from where they left off.

Parents/guardians whose children have left the program are required to meet with the Director of Religious Education before a child will be re-admitted to our faith formation program.

Children who have not received the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church or who have not been baptized, should call the program director to discuss next steps for acceptance into the program.

Returning families may call the Parish Office at any time (610-847-5521) to inquire about PREP registration deadlines and associated fees. Re-registration for returning families takes place in the spring during regularly scheduled session times.

UPDATING YOUR INFORMATION: If phone numbers or addresses change at any time during the Religious Education year, please contact the office immediately. It is absolutely necessary in the event of an emergency, that we have the most update contact information for each child.

Fire Drills: Will be performed twice per school year.

FINANCIAL POLICY

The cost of our annual fee is determined by a number of factors that directly impact the annual budget for our program. It is our goal to maintain the fee and minimize any increases that may be necessary to offset a budgetary shortfall.

Full payment of the PREP fee is expected at the time of registration. Sacrament fees are due as noted in Sacrament Parent meetings.

No student will be denied acceptance into the program because of his/her family's inability to pay.

We understand that we all at one time or another encounter financial difficulties, it is for this reason that we offer alternate payment plans to lessen the burden on our parish families. If you find you are facing difficulty, please contact our Director of Religious Education to set up a meeting.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the responsibility of both parents to provide the Parish with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both parents to provide that document to the Parish immediately.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, if requested, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official and latest copy of the court order.

If a court prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

ATTENDANCE

Student attendance records are considered legal documents and can be (and have been) subpoenaed by the Diocese.

In accordance to the directives from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Office of Catechetical Formation, forty (40) hours of religious instruction or as close to it as possible should be attained to receive full credit per PREP grade level. This is not always possible, especially when you factor in snow days and other such unexpected interruptions in the course of the school year. It is for this reason that we follow the Diocese recommended policy below:

- Religious education classes must be given first priority. Athletic and social activities are not an excuse for continuous absence or early dismissal.
- When a child is absent due to illness a written note must be given to the child's teacher explaining the reason for the absence.

- If your child is unable to attend class, a parent must contact us to report the absence. Please call (610) 847-5521 or email prep@stjohnsottsville.org Please be sure to leave your child's name and grade level if leaving a message.
- Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to class. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's teacher to obtain assignments so as to keep their child on track with their class.
- **The Diocese of Philadelphia recommends 40 hours of in classroom formal instruction per calendar year.** This is not possible without extending the length of the PREP classroom time or the school year. This has been made known to the Diocese and they suggest a minimum of 35 hours be attained by each student. Therefore, if a child misses more than 4 classes this may be cause for consideration of them not being moved up to the next grade level. A letter will be sent home requesting that the parent acknowledge that the missed work has been made up when the absences exceed the allowable numbers noted above.
- We recognize that sometimes a conflict will arise with your child's attendance in class, it is for this reason that we permit switching between weekly PREP sessions up to three times per year. Such practice is not encouraged. Not all the classes teach at the same pace. The class pace is driven by the students level of comprehension. Therefore, the Monday class may or may not be further along in the curriculum than that of its counterpart on Tuesday.
- 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 work is completed before returning to PREP.

Arrive Promptly - Class begins at 6:15pm: It is essential for liability reasons, that the parent *not "drop off"* their child at the front door of the school building. Parents are to escort their child into the school gym where the students line up with their class prior to the start of class. Please do not drop your child off before 6pm. Many of our teachers work and or have families of their own to feed before coming to teach your child. If you do arrive before your child's teacher is in the school, please wait with your child in the gym. No child is to be left unsupervised in the school.

Late arrivals may result in an error in the reporting of your child's attendance so please make every effort to be prompt.

Early Dismissal: Parents must inform the DRE and your child's teacher at the start of the class session if their child will be leaving early from class. Parents must pick-up their child directly from the classroom.

Class Dismissal is at 7:30pm: A parent or guardian is required to pick up his/her child (children) at their classroom door. This ensures that the children are only released to those individuals designated by the parent/guardian at the start of the PREP year on the "Release Form." Only the main entrance doors to the school should be used when entering and exiting the school. Use of the side doors is for emergency evacuation only. These procedures are in place for the safety of the children.

WEATHER RELATED CANCELLATIONS

Severe Weather - Our parish follows the Palisades School District guidelines for weather related cancellations and or early dismissals.

The DRE will send out an email notification to Parents and will also post on our parish website the cancellation of any PREP session by 1pm on the day of the scheduled class.

OUR TEACHERS

The men and women who volunteer to teach your child in our Parish Religious Education Program are CATECHISTS. A Catechist is a vocation. These are folks who have dedicated themselves to living out their Baptismal call to witness to the Gospel through the passing on of Sacred Scripture, tradition, and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

“A Catechist lives as a Witness of Faith.” In order to live the gospel, our Catechists must remain with Christ. It is in this union with the Lord that they find the strength to step out of themselves so as to share the gospel with others. Our Catechists attend annual faith formation sessions to continually grow in their knowledge and strengthen their own faith walk. They do this because there are many children who don't even know how to make the sign of the Cross! Our Catechists must go there.

Please support them in this work with your prayers and cooperation.

You, the parents can show your support in the following ways:

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

- Teach your child to pray in their own words as well as to learn the traditional prayers of our faith.
- Show an interest in what your child is doing in their religion class each week. Check their PREP folder weekly for communication from their teacher.
- 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.

Thank you for your continued support. The example you set in your home and in the way you live is invaluable to our efforts in the classroom. Children learn more from what they see than what they are told.

A FOCUS ON CURRICULUM

“Catechesis describes the essential ministry of the (Catholic) Church through which the teachings of Christ have been passed on to believers throughout the ages...Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes the teaching of Christian doctrine” of the Roman Catholic Church.” (National Directory for Catechesis, no.1, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) *“Keeping in mind that all baptized have a right to catechesis, every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness.”* (General Directory for Catechesis, no. 189).

It is the goal of the Pastor and the Director of Religious Education to effectively select a curriculum or a mix of such, approved by the USCCB (United States Catholic Congress of Bishops), to develop your child into a Christian disciple. This is accomplished by selecting a curriculum for students of all ages and abilities with an intentional focus on the following:

- The child’s development of a personal relationship with Christ
- Knowledge of Sacred Scripture and Catholic tradition
- The liturgical life of the Church - worship and sacraments
- Knowledge of the moral teachings of the Church methods for discernment and skillful decision making.
- Development of a healthy spirituality made tangible by helpful spiritual practices.
- Experiences within our parish community to nurture love of God, self and neighbor, the spirit of simplicity and mutual forgiveness.
- Develop a missionary spirit in all children and families so that they will be the presence of Christ in society.

Our goal is to help your child to answer Jesus’ call to, *“Follow me.”*

The Learning Process

As the students move ahead in grade levels, content expands, educational theory improves, and social expectations of learning change students invariably. Therefore a common theory is that we must adopt the notion that children **Learn → unlearn → re-learn** at each grade level.

Textbooks, Mass Books, the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the practice of Lectio Divina (Meditative Scripture prayer), Imagine Prayer (placing oneself into the Scripture), and Visio Divina (Holy seeing) using religious art enables students to understand what they are seeing and reflect on it in light of the lesson.

Family Lesson Handouts: Based on the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year, family activities that promote fun while learning about Jesus and his Church may be sent home in your child’s folder.

Teaching Children with Special Needs

Available to our Catechists for each grade level are practical teaching tips on how to include children with special needs who have been mainstreamed in their classes. First and foremost, the DRE and Catechist must understand the nature of your child’s disability. This should be

provided to the DRE by the child's parent/guardian upon registration in the form of an IEP. The DRE will then equip the catechist with the knowledge and resources required to teach this child. Each child must be treated as the individual they are, no two students are alike regardless of their diagnosis.

A Guide to Our Curriculums

Grades 1 - 7: FAITH & LIFE SERIES, Parish Ed. (Ignatius Press)

Through the narration of salvation history students learn about God's saving actions. This foundational structure serves as the basis for a deeper understanding of the Faith, which elicits a response of faith. Faith and Life models the divine pedagogy—the manner in which God has revealed Himself. The Church has passed on His revelation. The content of the Faith unfolds through the story of salvation history as presented in Sacred Scripture and developed in Sacred Tradition. Doctrinal, liturgical, moral, and spiritual elements of the Faith flow from God's saving work in history.

By using Faith and Life, catechists not only pass down doctrinal truths of the Faith, but moreover they echo down a family story of love. This story is one that begins with creation by a loving God, and one that moves each of us through this earthly life to life eternal in a love that never ends.

Sacrament Supplemental Curriculums

Grade 2 - Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion: In addition to the "Be My Disciples" textbook curriculum, this grade incorporates the use of the "BLESSED" Sacrament Series (Dynamic Catholic). This is a DVD/text curriculum which can be viewed at home online. An online Link to this curriculum will be provided to the parents at the first Parent Sacrament meeting of the new school year.

Grade 7 - Sacrament of Confirmation: "CONFIRMED IN THE SPIRIT" (Loyola Press), the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, the BIBLE, Lessons focus on the Person of Jesus, the Life of Jesus, Jesus' ministry and the Sacraments. The combined use of these texts provide the student with a blend of teachings that are correlated and based on the required Diocese of Philadelphia Doctrinal framework for the reception of this Sacrament.

ONLINE CURRICULUM WEBSITES: Parents may access lessons and additional resources online at the websites below:

Grades 1 - 7: <https://www.ignatius.com/promotions/faithandlife/parish-ccd/>

Grade 2 Supplement: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed/parent-program/>

Grade 7: <https://www.loyolapress.com/faith-formation/sacramental-preparation/confirmed-in-the-spirit>

Grade 7 Supplement: <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/catechism/index.html>

The Catholic Bible, NAB Rev. Ed.

Prayer and Worship experiences are built into every class session.

An emphasis in all grade levels is on how very important divine worship is to your child's faith formation. Understanding the Mass makes worship more meaningful. Families are encouraged to attend weekly Mass and observe all Holy Days.

PROTOCOLS FOR A "VIRTUAL" CLASSROOM

In order to provide continuity of our parish religious education instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, our parish will use a combination of weekly, half-hour lessons via the following methods: **1) emailed lesson plan 2) pre-recorded emailed lesson plan 3) coupled with an interactive in-person virtual classroom to be provided through ZOOM.**

A parent/guardian is expected to supervise their child and should be present in the room during the ZOOM session. Below are our program protocols ("NETIQUETTE) for these sessions:

- Students are expected to be on time, appropriately dressed and seated at a table or in a chair.
- Students should be respectful at all times toward their Catechist and their classmates.
- Students screen must use the child's legal name as registered in our program.
- The background setting in which the child is seated should be of an appropriate nature.
- Students are to remain active, engaged, and visible at all times, face to face.
- Students screens should remain "muted" and only click to unmute when called upon to answer.
- Students with questions, are to click on the "Raise hand icon" on the screen.
- Students should refrain from eating or chewing gum.
- Students and families are not to share the ZOOM link to the "virtual" classroom.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you..." (James 4:8) The Church has long understood that how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we live ***"lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi."***

Loosely translated, ***"Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi"*** means ***"As we pray, so we believe."*** The second part ***"Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi"*** means ***"As we believe, so we live."*** This refers to the relationship between worship and belief. What we learn to practice in worship, drives the way we live.

Service is part of our religious education program.

"Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17) If we are to be known as Christ's disciples we must become servants to all. The plight of the poor must stir us to action on their behalf. Across the catechetical process our students and families are encouraged to put their faith into action.

We do this by teaching the students about Social Catholic Teachings, offering service opportunities as part of our catechetical program, and encouraging our students along with their families to participate in the various parish outreach efforts.

THE RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENTS

Preparation for the reception of a Sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A participant's desire to receive the sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus proper attendance and behavior during PREP, in Mass and at meetings are expected. Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) in the parish in which their family is registered.

Exceptions can only be made with special permission from the Pastor of the child's home parish.

- Registration in the parish is required.
- Since sacrament catechesis requires more than classroom participation, it is important that families attend Mass weekly and on Holy days of Obligation.

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 both occur 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 full 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 practice for the actual ceremony.

CONFIRMATION

The sacrament of Confirmation requires two years of faith formation. At St. John the Baptist Parish, candidates will begin their Sacrament preparation work in the 6th grade and will generally receive the Sacrament 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, including attending the Confirmation retreat, 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 role of a Confirmation Sponsor is intended to lead the candidate throughout his/her life to fulfill their baptismal promises. Sponsors at Confirmation represent the believing Christian Community. 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." 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 Practicing Catholic in good standing with the Catholic Church (see below).
- 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 attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and receive 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 DRE.

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.

General guidelines for Student Classroom

Food or drink is not permitted in classrooms. Please do not send your child in with any treats without first seeking permission through the DRE's office. This is a health safety concern that is shared by both our parish and Diocese. Many children today suffer from food allergies. Even trace amounts of a substance can trigger a severe allergic reaction. This is not only a precaution for the PREP students but also for the Regina Academy students whose desks are being used.

- **Graffiti or destruction of property** - Any student responsible for any unauthorized marking or drawing on school/parish property will be required to make restitution for the restoration of the damaged property.
- **If students bring cell phones, electronic games, etc., into the building,** they are to be turned off and are to be kept out of sight. The parish accepts no responsibility for any of these items brought into the building. If used inappropriately during PREP class, the Catechist has been instructed to confiscate the item and turn it into the DRE along with the name of the student to whom it belongs. The DRE will make arrangements for the item to be returned to their parent/guardian.

SHARED SPACES

Please remind your child that they are using the classroom space of the Regina Academy students. It is important that our children are good stewards of the space they use each week. They should be reminded that they are to respect another's property by not touching nor using without permission anything that does not belong to them. Each year I receive complaints from the school that "so and so's pencil/pen is missing/broken." Another complaint is that "someone went into the student's desks and broke...."

We all understand that accidents happen, however, when they do we must make restitution for any damage done.

By reminding your child of these principals it is reinforcing the moral conduct of being "good stewards."

Behavior and Discipline - It's all about respect!

It is our desire to create and sustain a Catholic parish religious education program which is welcoming, safe, and promotes life-long learning in our faith. It is our goal to reflect our Christian values in all that we do and to support and guide the children to do the same.

Effective classroom management begins with a clear and concise communication of expectations and procedures. Our Catechists have been instructed to communicate classroom rules and subsequent consequences to the students. Communication with parents regarding concerns with a given student's behavior will be promptly communicated to both the DRE and the parents. Full cooperation of the parents in reinforcing proper classroom and parish behavior is expected.

EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOR AT-A-GLANCE

1. Students are not to engage in any behavior that would/will endanger the health or safety of themselves or any other person or persons.
2. Unless permission has been given, no student is allowed to leave the school at any time during classes.
3. If cell phones, or electronic games, etc., are brought into the building, they are to be turned off and are to be kept out of sight. The parish accepts no responsibility for any of these items brought into the building. If used during class without the catechist's permission, these items will be confiscated. Arrangements may be made for their return to a parent.
4. Inappropriate language or gestures will not be tolerated during the class or during any PREP Mass/activity.
5. Fighting - Altercations which result in physical contact - is strictly forbidden.
6. Stealing - Each student has a responsibility to properly safeguard his/her own personal property. The student also has a greater responsibility to safeguard the possessions of other persons. Stealing is a direct infringement upon the rights of others.
7. Graffiti or destruction of property - Any student responsible for any unauthorized marking or drawing on parish property will be required to make restitution for the restoration of the damaged property.
8. Weapons - Students are forbidden to possess, handle or transport any instrument, on or around the parish premises that is generally considered a weapon. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following items: lighters, knives, guns, stun guns, pipes, chains, stars, fireworks, hazardous chemicals. This is a very serious issue and can be deadly.
9. Threats of Violence / Bullying - In response to the growing number of violent incidents in schools and churches across our country, as well as a desire to reemphasize Gospel values, violent threats of action will not be tolerated.
10. Cyber-Bullying - If any student is found to have posted an inappropriate comments or photos of another student, they will be immediately suspended from attending PREP class until after a DRE-Parent meeting has been conducted and a suitable resolution attained. Threats of violence should be reported to the principal, teacher, and parents.
11. Harassment - written, verbal, or physical, including cyber bullying is strictly prohibited.
12. Sexual Harassment is illegal under both state and federal law and is objectionable under any circumstance. Sexual harassment can be verbal, visual, or physical. Sexual harassment can take many forms: insulting sounds, noises, or words; offensive pictures, notes or objects; derogatory sexually-based humor or obscene gestures; unwelcome touching, pinching, deliberate bumping into another; suggestive remarks about a person's body, appearance, gender, or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment of a student, is unacceptable conduct. Volunteers or students who engage in any type of sexual harassment will be subject to appropriate discipline, including dismissal.
 - a. Retaliation in any form against a catechist or student who exercises his or her right to make a complaint under this policy is strictly prohibited and will itself be cause for appropriate disciplinary action.
 - b. Any volunteer or student who knowingly makes false charges against a volunteer catechist or a student in an attempt to demean, harass, abuse, or embarrass that individual shall be subject to the sanctions for misconduct set forth by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

KIDTALK

In accordance with the law of the State of Pennsylvania, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and with the values found in our Catholic tradition, any form of abuse, exploitation or any other similar action is explicitly prohibited. Persons acting on behalf of St. John the Baptist Parish, its programs and activities are reminded of this prohibition. Contact of this nature is absolutely forbidden and is cause for immediate removal and pursuant of reporting to the proper authorities.

Mandatory reporting of child abuse and/or neglect - The Archdiocese requires all paid staff and or volunteers to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the proper authorities. Whenever one suspects abuse or neglect of a minor, he/she shall immediately report any evidence to the DRE, who will then take the appropriate steps, which may include a report to Department of Children and Family Services, and local/state authorities. The report shall include any pertinent information, such as: the name and address of the child and his/her parents (or others having custody), the person's age, the nature of the person's condition, any evidence of previous injuries or disabilities, any other information which might be helpful in establishing the cause of such abuse or neglect, and the identity of the person believed to have caused such abuse or neglect.

HOME-BASED CATECHESIS

The Archbishop of Philadelphia grants conditional permission for Home Based Catechesis, allowing the Pastor of each parish to determine to make it available to his parishioners.

We do recognize that certain extenuating circumstances may prohibit in class enrollment. If you believe your child meets any of the criteria listed below rendering them eligible for home school catechesis, you are to schedule an appointment with the Director of Religious Education. Any/all required support documentation is to be submitted at this time.

Each case will be considered on an individual basis. After the DRE has had time to consult with the Pastor, a final decision will be made that is believed to be in the best interest of the child.

- 1) Medical reasons that prevent the child from learning in a group setting. A medical note is required.
- 2) Child is home schooled in all subjects. Proof of such is required.

The parent who is to accept the role of Catechist is held to the same standards of training expectations to that of classroom Catechists. Proof of working toward full Catechist certification is required. The program Director will make available to the parent all available training courses being offered to the classroom Catechists.

Children enrolled in Sacrament years, 2nd and 7th grade are expected to participate fully in classroom PREP. First Communion is a communal sacrament in which we are all sharing in the body and blood of Christ. Confirmation prepares the students for full membership in the Church, which involves participation in the parish community.

It is also important to keep in mind that as “Church”, we are a community of believers and ongoing involvement in parish life is an important element in faith formation and practice. Home schooled children are to participate in group programs within PREP and the parish so that they are not isolated from the community.

The U.S. Bishop’s National Directory for Catechesis (the “NDC”) states:

“As the primary educators of their children, parents have the right and the duty to choose the kind of educational environment that they determine best suits their children’s educational needs. All parents have an obligation to involve their children in the life and mission of the church. Since their children are being initiated into the life of the Church, which is fundamentally realized in the local parish, parents who provide catechesis for their children in their homes should participate fully in the life of the local parish. They should celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in the local parish, involve themselves in its charitable works, and attend appropriate training and formation sessions the parish or diocese provides.”

The NDC also states, *“If Catholic parents choose to provide catechesis for the children in their home, that catechesis must be both complete and authentic...home-based catechesis of children is a cooperative effort between the children, their parents, parish leadership, and the diocesan bishop. Parents who choose to be...their catechists must adhere to all guidelines for catechists as outlined by the diocesan bishop.”*

FINAL NOTE

The program director reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.

PARENTAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT AGREEMENT

Please sign the “Acceptance Page” at the conclusion of this handbook and return it to Donna Sciacca, Director of Religious Education.

Your signed acceptance page will be kept on file in the parish religious education office.

If DRE’s office does not receive your signed acceptance page of the handbook, and if your child continues to attend religious education classes in our parish, this office will accept your child’s enrollment in classes as your formal acceptance of the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

**St. John the Baptist Parish PREP Family Handbook
Parent/Guardian Acceptance Page**

Names of Child(ren) / Grade Level

I have read, understand, and acknowledge acceptance of the procedures and policies outlined in St. John the Baptist Parish's PREP Family Handbook by my signature below. I agree to support my child's Formal Religious Education as suggested within this handbook.

Please Print Name

Signature

Relationship to Student

Date of Agreed Acknowledgment

Please promptly sign and return the last page of this handbook to the Parish Office.