

# St. Michael's Catholic Church Religious Education Handbook

(Revised July 2016)



## *Jubilee Year of Mercy*

Father Bill Skoneki - Pastor

Father Norbert Jurek – Associate Pastor

Gerilyn Murray - Parish Catechetical Leader

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the Child/Youth Religious Education program at St. Michael's parish is to help children and adolescents deepen their Catholic faith and identity through traditional classroom instruction, sacramental preparation and extracurricular projects.

Our overall mission is to:

- Teach children and youth to worship God in Spirit and truth especially through the Sacraments
- Nourish Christian community
- Proclaim the Good News to all persons, inviting children to carry on the Great Commission
- Teach the saving message of Christ
- Teach compassion toward our brothers and sisters, particularly the poor

## **ADMINISTRATION**

The Pastor has ultimate responsibility for all parish religious education, and all sacramental preparation is conducted with his guidance. The Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) in cooperation with the pastor oversees the catechetical program for children and adolescents. The PCL is responsible for recruiting and supporting teachers, selecting textbooks and other resource materials, planning and executing Sacramental preparation programs, and conducting parent meetings and communications. Finally, our Catechists serve as the backbone of the religious education program. Catechists are volunteers who recognize the call to help spread the Word of God to children and youth. They come from a variety of backgrounds and vocations and are actively involved in parish life.

## **ROLE OF PARENTS**

As parents, you are the primary educators and role models for your children (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2221-2226). You introduce them to Christ and shape their beliefs about God, the Church, and our faith in Christ. It is important that you maintain an active role in their religious education offered through the parish. Please consider volunteering in the classroom or offering your assistance to the catechists through other means. Prayer is also important, for and with your child. Read the Bible to them, review the classroom text and activities, and bring them to Mass on a regular basis. By showing your commitment to the Church, its teachings, and your child's religious education, he/she will grow closer to his faith.

## **CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT PROTECTION PROGRAM (CAPP)**

In accordance with the Child Protection Policy decreed by the Archdiocese of Mobile in July 2003, all priests, deacons, school administrators, teachers, youth ministers, parish catechists, support personnel, and other volunteers who have substantial contact with children are required to participate in an annual education program on child protection and abuse. This training is completed no later than 60 days after the assumption of duties. Additionally, the Archdiocese of Mobile requires instruction on abuse awareness be given to children in all grades, typically in October. Please refer to the Child Protection Policy available from the PCL for specifics and additional information.

## **COMMUNICATION**

It is especially important for parents of children and youth enrolled in religious education to review the church bulletin on a weekly basis. Events, calendar updates, and other items pertaining to the religious education program will be posted in the Religious Education section. If you forget a bulletin or are absent, you can view it online at the church website: [www.stmichaelsauburn.com](http://www.stmichaelsauburn.com) or contact the church office.

Catechists and PCL communications are generally by email. Please notify the church office if the email listed on your child's registration form changes during the year.

If there is a concern about a reported problem in the classroom, parents should discuss any classroom issues with the teacher first. Often misunderstandings can be quickly resolved when parents talk to the teacher. If the issue cannot be resolved with the teacher, parents should speak with the PCL. If the issue remains unresolved, parents are welcome to approach the pastor for resolution.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS AND PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Medical or personal information is not published or released. It is kept on file and will be shared with catechists or volunteers if it is necessary for the health or safety of your child or other children in the class. Parent contact information is shared with teachers for safety and communication purposes.

## **CLASS TIME AND ABSENCES**

The Archdiocese of Mobile requires that our religious education program consist of 30 hours of catechesis throughout the year. Grades one through six meet on Sunday mornings from 9-10:05 a.m. Three-year-old, four-year-old, and Kindergarten classes meet during the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Seventh and eighth grades meet on Sunday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m. as do high school CYO students in grades 9-12. To ensure classes begin on time, drop off is allowed ten minutes before classes begin. Refer to the religious education calendar for days off, holidays, and special events.

Attendance can have a lasting impact on children's attitude toward the faith. While parents are the primary instructors, catechists freely give of their time to help you keep your promise to raise your children in the faith. Missing one of the sessions is equivalent to missing a week of school since students only meet once a week. Please use the same criteria used in secular schools to determine whether your child is too sick to attend class. If your child is absent, please ask the teacher for make-up material. Chapters covered each week can be found in the class curriculum guide. Guides are also available on the parish website for grades Pre-K through Gr. 6. After 3 sequential absences, parents are contacted. After 6 sequential absences, children are removed from the class roll; however, parents may call or email to reinstate children in class after speaking with the PCL. Children in grades pre-K through grade 3 must be picked up after class by a custodial parent, older sibling, or a designee whose identify has been made known to the catechist or PCL.

## **CLASS CONTROL**

The teaching environment requires the instructor to maintain control. Non-instructor adults who want to visit a class are welcome; however, we ask that they contact the PCL or pastor before entering the classroom due to Archdiocesan requirements for child safety training. If a student's behavior is disruptive, he/she may be required to leave the classroom either to isolate the behavior from the rest of the class or to see the PCL for further action. Corporal punishment is not allowed. If the instructor/PCL is talking to the child privately, he/she will do so either in a public place (such as a hallway) or in a room where the door remains open. For serious or chronic misbehavior, a student may not be allowed back into the class prior to a meeting of the student, his/her parents, and the PCL. Possession of weapons, sexual harassment, racial slurs, fighting, bullying, or other inappropriate conduct will not be tolerated. Serious violations of these rules will warrant immediate notification of the parents/guardians involved and may warrant dismissal of the involved from the program.

## **SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS**

Participation by both child and parent in the sacramental programs at St. Michael's is especially important. Attendance is required, and parents may be asked to meet with the PCL or pastor if their child misses several classes. Participants in these programs must be baptized and a certificate of baptism must be on file with the PCL. Toward the end of the catechesis, students will be interviewed before receiving the sacrament to determine their overall readiness. Children are expected to participate regularly in the Sunday liturgy as well as all Holy Days of Obligation. To ensure a smooth celebration of the Sacraments, participation in the rehearsal(s) for First Communion Mass and Confirmation Mass is mandatory. Specific dates for these practices are available on the religious education calendar. Updates or time changes will be posted in the church bulletin, on the church website, and communicated by email.

Children receive their **First Eucharist and Reconciliation** in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (minimum age of 7 years). Children must have at least one year of formal religious education prior to being enrolled in the First Communion program. Attendance is expected and parent meetings for the First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion classes are obligatory. Class times are from 9:00-10:00 a.m. on Sundays. See the First Communion calendar for a complete class schedule. Alternate classes are offered to children or adolescents who are older and seek to participate in these sacraments. Catechesis will be determined on an individual basis for special cases. Additional questions regarding the responsibilities of parents/guardians and godparents, the catechetical program details, and administrative tasks should be directed to the PCL or pastor.

**Confirmation** is the final Sacrament of Initiation and preparation begins in the 9th grade. Weekly instruction occurs in conjunction with Senior CYO on Sunday night or High School Didache on Wednesday night. In addition to weekly instruction, specific sacramental preparation classes are offered monthly. Requirements for Confirmation will include, but are not limited to: class attendance, service hours, Confirmation retreats, and attendance at Sunday Mass and other Holy Days of Obligation. Additional questions regarding eligibility, the role and responsibility of parents/ guardians and sponsors, and the overall catechetical program should be directed to the PCL or pastor.

## **SAFETY**

The administration of St Michael's uses all the resources and information available to provide a safe environment for all people. It is expected that if a parent, teacher, volunteer, or child becomes aware of a situation that presents potential for injury, he/she will bring it to the PCL or pastor's attention. Good judgment and intervention are the best ways to avoid risks of injury; however, minor cuts, scrapes, etc. may occur even under diligent supervision. The PCL will evaluate the seriousness of injuries and either provide first aid or contact the parent/guardian. Medication will not be administered to any child without the written consent of parent/guardian.

## **GUESTS**

As a courtesy, please contact the catechist or PCL before allowing guests to attend class. Catechists prepare only for students on their rolls. Guests may need to register or provide emergency contact information prior to participating in a class.

## **TOYS AND FOOD**

Please do not bring toys or other items that are not part of an assignment. These items may become a distraction during class and may be taken away by the catechist to be returned at the end of class. We ask also that you refrain from bringing snacks, gum, candy or drinks to class unless requested by a teacher. Breakfast items should not be eaten during class. Please make an extra effort to bring your child to class on time, even on days when the parish offers snacks or donuts after Mass.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Children with learning disabilities or physical impairments are encouraged to participate in the regular classroom environment. Assistance and accommodations are provided on an individual basis including a special class for Sacrament preparation. Should a child require homebound assistance, the PCL should be notified and a religious education program will be incorporated with the guidance of the pastor.

## **TRAFFIC**

Because of the presence of children, all drivers should drive in the parking lot with extreme caution. **Please use the drop off circle by Sacred Heart Hall to drop off or pick up your child.** Adult volunteers will monitor the east parking lot circle 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after Sunday morning religious education classes. Please do NOT park along any yellow curb or in any undesignated parking space. Please allow extra time if you are parking and your child has to walk some distance to get to class. The side and rear entrances to Sacred Heart Hall are not open. Do not park and leave your car in any traffic circle. Parents of younger children who need to enter the building for drop off or pick up should park in designated parking spaces rather than block the traffic circle.

## **OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES**

No field trip, over night retreat, or other activity that involves leaving the church property will occur without parental notification or permission. Students who cannot produce a permission slip signed by their parents will not be allowed to join the activity.