

Introduction

The Child/Youth Religious Education program at St. Michael is built on the premise that parents are the primary instructors in the Catholic Faith and catechists are here to reinforce the teachings and sacred traditions of this faith. Catechists promote the Catholic faith 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 is ultimately responsible for all parish religious education and sacramental preparation. Under his guidance, the Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) oversees the catechetical programs for children and adolescents. The PCL is responsible for recruiting and supporting catechists, selecting textbooks and other resource materials approved by the Archdiocese and the pastor, planning and executing Sacramental preparation programs, and conducting parent meetings and communications. Finally, 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

Parents are the primary educators and role models for their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church: CCC 2221-2226). Parents introduce children to Christ and shape their beliefs about God, the Church, and our faith in Christ. It is crucial that parents or guardians maintain an active role in children's religious education offered through the parish. Please consider volunteering or substituting in the classroom or offering your assistance to catechists through other means. Prayer is also vital for the spiritual well-being of families. To build an enduring faith, parents are advised to read the Bible to children, review classroom texts and activities, and bring children to Mass each week. By showing your commitment to the Church, its teachings, and your child's religious education, your child will grow in faith and in the fruit of the Spirit.

Children and Adolescent Protection Program (CAPP)

In accordance with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Mobile, 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. Background checks are initially conducted prior to contact with children and training must be completed within 30 days after the assumption of duties. Additionally, the Archdiocese of Mobile requires that instruction on abuse awareness be given to

children in all grades during the month of October. Materials are available for parent review upon request. Please refer to the Child Protection Policy on the Archdiocese of Mobile website for additional information: <http://www.mobarch.org>

Communication

Parents can stay abreast of events, calendar updates, and other items pertaining to religious education programs by reviewing the church bulletin each week. The bulletin is also available online at the church website: <http://www.stmichaelsauburn.com>

Catechist and PCL communication with parents is generally by email. Please notify the church office if the email listed on your child's registration form changes during the year.

If parents are concerned about a reported problem in the classroom, please contact the teacher first. Catechist volunteers know firsthand what goes on in the classroom since most issues are merely misunderstandings that can be quickly resolved. 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 only.

Class Time and Absences

The Archdiocese of Mobile requires that the 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 and four-year-olds and Kindergarten children meet during the Sunday 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, parents can drop off children ten minutes before class but no earlier than that. Refer to the religious education calendar for days off, holidays, and special events.

Class attendance matters. Imagine how behind your child would be missing a week of school. That is the reality of missing one religious education class. Not only do children miss important life lessons but the attitude that our spiritual life doesn't really matter can become well established. If your child is absent, please ask the teacher about make-up material. The class curriculum guide, available in classrooms and on the parish website, provides chapters covered each week. Parents are contacted following three absences and children are removed from the class roll after six absences. Parents, however, may call or email the PCL to reinstate children in class after speaking with the PCL. To assure their safety, parents, guardians, older siblings or designated adults must pick up children in pre-K through grade 3 after class. All other children will be released from class at dismissal time.

Class Control

Catechists do their best to maintain control in the classroom by engaging student attention and by treating all with respect. Non-instructor adults who want to visit a class should first contact the PCL or pastor before entering the classroom due to Archdiocesan requirements for child safety training. If a student's behavior is disruptive during class, the catechist will speak to the student outside of the classroom or contact the PCL to speak to the student. Corporal punishment is never 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, parents or guardians, catechist, and the PCL. Possession of weapons, sexual harassment, racial slurs, fighting, bullying, or other inappropriate conduct will not be tolerated. Violations of these rules warrant immediate notification of parents or guardians and may lead to dismissal from the program.

Sacramental Programs

Both parent and child participation in Sacramental programs at St. Michael is important. Requirements include weekly class attendance for children, Sunday Mass attendance, and parent attendance at meetings. Participants in these programs must be baptized and a certificate of baptism must be on file with the PCL. Toward the end of catechesis, students are interviewed to determine overall readiness to receive the Sacraments. Children are expected to regularly participate in the Sunday liturgy as well as all Holy Days of Obligation. To ensure a smooth celebration of the Sacraments, participation in rehearsal(s) for First Communion Mass and Confirmation Mass is mandatory. Specific dates can be found on the R.E. calendar, in the bulletin as the days approach, and on the church website.

Children receive **First Reconciliation** and **First Communion** in grade two (minimum age of 7 years). Children must have at least one year of formal religious education prior to entering the Sacramental preparation class. Attendance is expected and parent meetings for First Reconciliation and First Communion classes are obligatory. Class times are from 9:00-10:05 a.m. on Sundays. The First Communion calendar, found on the Parish website and in children's folders has a complete class schedule of lessons covered. Alternate classes are offered to older children and adolescents who desire 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, catechetical program details, and administrative tasks should be directed to the PCL or pastor.

Confirmation is the final Sacrament of Initiation. 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 meet monthly. Requirements for Confirmation include: class attendance (weekly and monthly), 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 Confirmation catechetical program should be directed to the PCL or pastor.

Safety

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

Guests

As a courtesy, please contact the catechist or PCL before bringing guests to 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 students with more significant special needs. 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 at the Sacred Heart Hall entrance to drop off or pick up your child. Please be aware of traffic flow patterns designated by signs and arrows on the pavement. Do not park along any yellow curb or in any undesignated drive-through lanes, nor leave your car in any traffic circle. Please allow extra time if your child has to walk some distance to get to class. The side and rear entrances to Sacred Heart Hall are not open, but the rear door of the church provides quick access from the side lot. Finally, please do not block the circle drive waiting on children.

Outside Activities

No field trip, overnight retreat, or other activity that involves leaving the church property will occur without parental notification or permission. Students who cannot produce a permission slip and a current medical information form signed by parents will not be allowed to join the activity.