

# St. Giles Parish

## Partners in Handing on the Faith

### Religious Education & Formation Handbook



The work of handing on the faith to children helps the whole family in its evangelizing mission.

It naturally begins to **SPREAD** the faith to all around them, even outside the family circle.

*-Pope Francis  
Amoris Laetitia, 289*

#### OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Religious Education program at St. Giles Parish. This handbook has been developed to provide information regarding our program, procedures and requirements. Please review the contents of this handbook with the students in your household who are enrolled in our programs, and where applicable, your childcare provider.

Statements in this handbook are subject to amendment with or without notice. The Religious Education program will attempt to keep you informed of all changes as soon as practical, however, some changes might be made immediately due to unforeseen circumstances.

## OUR PARISH MISSION

As the sacramental community of St. Giles, we are inspired by Jesus Christ to live His teachings as grateful disciples. We do this through worship, education, spiritual formation, and service.

## OUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MISSION

It is the goal of the St. Giles Parish Religious Education programs to support the efforts of parents in handing on the gift of our Catholic faith to their children. Our programs are designed to offer children and their parents opportunities to deepen not only their knowledge of our Catholic faith, but also to deepen their personal relationship with our God through prayer, communal worship, and service to others.

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## Admission

The St. Giles Parish Religious Education programs do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, nationality or ethnic origin in the administration of its policies, supplementary programs or any other program-based functions.

## Registration

Each program year, parents wishing to enroll their child in one of the parish's religious education programs will be required to complete the online registration process for the upcoming year. This includes families currently enrolled in one of our programs.

## Tuition and Fees

Tuition is charged on a per student basis with a maximum family amount. Tuition is set each program year to cover administration costs to operate each of the parish religious education programs.

**Families preparing for reception of a Sacrament are required to pay an additional fee, indicated on the registration form, which covers the expenses for those programs.**

If at any time a financial hardship develops, please contact the Religious Education Office. Full or partial scholarships are available for qualifying families. All scholarship requests are kept strictly confidential.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

### Student Code of Conduct

The St. Giles Parish Religious Education programs strive to provide an environment that affords students the opportunity to explore, expand, and deepen their own spiritual growth as well as their knowledge of our Catholic faith. For this to occur, we have established the following student code of conduct:

Each student is expected to:

- display good conduct both in class (online or in-person) and when arriving or departing from the program
- cooperate and participate with their fellow classmates during activities and discussions
- be attentive by actively listening to their catechist and classmates
- show courtesy and respect to all
- treat their classroom and the materials in their classroom with care and respect

## COMMUNICATIONS

Website: [www.stgilesparish.org](http://www.stgilesparish.org)

As part of our parish wide goal, the Religious Education Office is striving to be more environmentally sound by posting all program information on our parish website located at: [www.stgilesparish.org](http://www.stgilesparish.org)

In addition to descriptions of each of our parish's religious education programs, information regarding class calendars, upcoming events, and parent information pages are also posted and updated each month. Parents will also find helpful links with information on Catholic parenting and faith formation opportunities for adults and children alike.

### Flocknote Messaging, Electronic Mail & Text

The Religious Education Office sends a vast majority of our communications via the Flocknote messaging system, electronic mail and text systems. Please be sure to adjust your SPAM to accept messages from our office to be received into your account. Please notify the office with the email address you check most often and notify us of any changes to your email address during the year.

## SACRAMENT PREPARATION FOR CHILDREN

### Sacraments: First Reconciliation and First Communion

All of us come to the Eucharist through our Baptism. It is through this initiation rite that we are connected to the community of faith. This rite also lays the foundation for our participation in the weekly celebration of Eucharist. The ritual of Baptism contains three essential components of what it means to be a member of this community of faith: discipleship to Jesus, membership in the community, and service to others. These three themes are also essential to our understanding of and participation in the celebration of the Eucharist.

We are honored to journey with you as you begin to formally prepare your child to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist for the first time. This is a special time... a holy time for you, your child, and our parish. This special time offers all of us - adult and children - many opportunities to deepen our faith and to grow in our understanding and appreciation of both the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

As we begin this journey together, it is important to think about the role parents play in "handing on the faith" to their children. Know that our parish will help support you in many ways. It is vital for you to understand that while your child may be enrolled in either the parish school or parish religious education program, it is you, their parents who have the greatest impact on your child's faith and faith development. How you live your faith at home is crucial to the faith formation of your child.

Sacrament preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist here at St. Giles Parish each begin with a gathering for parents only to engage in meaningful conversation about issues of faith. At this point the parents are supported in their work of preparation by the RE staff and Sacrament teams. At the close of this home preparation period there is one retreat for parents and children to experience together.

A calendar listing the specific dates of events/meetings in preparation for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist are posted on the Sacrament pages of our parish website: [www.stgilesparish.org/sacraments](http://www.stgilesparish.org/sacraments)

Reservation forms for events may also be found on the Sacrament pages.

### Off -Track: Sacraments

St. Giles follows the requirements of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Catechism of the Catholic church that requires two years of FORMAL religious education and formation prior to reception of the Sacraments of First Reconciliation & Eucharist and Confirmation.

If a student has not completed a full year of formal formation prior to the typical year of preparation for one of these sacraments, they will be considered Off-Track. They will be able to enroll and engage in formation with their similarly aged peers, and will engage in preparation for the sacrament during the following year, along with formal formation.

### Sacraments: Confirmation

One of the most rewarding parts of the eighth grade confirmation experience is the opportunity to live the Confirmation preparation process and then stand before our community, our bishop and the Lord to declare their eagerness to join the community of believers as full, adult participants. Just as your child grows physically, intellectually, and emotionally, he or she grows spiritually as well. As a parent responsible for the development of your child, you try to meet all of his or her changing needs. You foster and direct spiritual growth by the atmosphere in your home, the example of your life, and the celebration of the sacraments. You have seen that your child has been initiated into the faith through Baptism, and the Eucharist. Now your young teenager is at the stage of strengthening his or her commitment to the faith through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The goal of our Confirmation program here at St. Giles is to assist our young people to be receptive and responsive to the graces and challenges of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through studying together, they learn that Confirmation is one of the Sacraments of Initiation that deepens their relationship with God and the Church. Through praying together, they become more aware of the presence and action of the Spirit and his gifts within them, which empower them to live as Jesus did. Through service to others, they discover ways to fulfill the specific responsibilities that are theirs as Catholic Christians.

The Confirmation program is meant to give guidance to all those involved in the formation of the candidates and in the celebration of the sacrament so that Confirmation becomes a meaningful

faith experience for the candidates, the family, and the parish community. At the same time, this program aims to equip the candidates with the knowledge and attitudes necessary for the lifelong process of conversion to Christ. Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is also a two-year process, which begins during 7<sup>th</sup> grade and continues through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Information for confirmation candidates, sponsors and parents can be found on our parish website at: [www.stgilesparish.org/sacraments](http://www.stgilesparish.org/sacraments) with specific information and instructions to assist in the preparation of the Sacrament of Confirmation. This page also contains a calendar of meetings, events, and assignments required as preparation for reception of this Sacrament.

In order to keep each child's formation progressing, all material missed due to student absence from a session will need to be covered at home.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act requires the St Giles Parish Religious Education staff to report any suspected cases of abuse or neglect to children enrolled in one of our parish programs. As required by the Archdiocese of Chicago, all parish staff, religious education staff, and adult volunteers who work with children must undergo a criminal background check and must also be Virtus compliant.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

In order to provide a safe and healthy environment for all our students and volunteers it is essential for the Religious Education & Youth Ministry Office to be notified of specific allergies, medical needs and learning challenges that your child may have.

Parents/guardians will complete the health and learning needs information sections during the registration process. While this information is confidential, it may be shared with the adults who have volunteered as catechist and facility parents, only as needed, in order to assist in your child's formation experience.

Except in extraordinary circumstances that have been approved by the Director of Religious Education, no adult volunteer or staff person will maintain, supervise the taking of, or the administration of, any medications to students in our programs.

In the event of sudden illness or accidental injury, every attempt will be made to contact the parent of the student(s) involved. If the parents cannot be reached, the student's emergency medical release form containing the parent's instructions will be used. If emergency treatment is required, the child will be taken to the nearest hospital by ambulance and the Religious Education staff will notify the child's doctor. An adult will accompany your child until the parent(s) can take over.

Parents will be given documents provided by the Catholic Church to guide them with the distinction you'll need to help you educate your children about sexual abuse.

## STUDENT/FAMILY RECORDS

The Religious Education Office maintains a student file for every child enrolled in one of our parish religious education programs. All files are confidential. Parents may view their student/family file at any time by contacting the Religious Education Office at 708-383-3430 x 101.

## ADULT VOLUNTEERS

It is a tremendous honor to be invited to be part of your family's faith journey, an honor that also carries a great responsibility for demonstrating how to live this Catholic faith to the children of our parish. As our Parish Religious Education Programs steadily grow, meeting many of the program's basic needs is becoming more and more challenging. All of our Religious Education Programs/Events are staffed by adults in our parish who volunteer their time and talents for the benefit of our parish children's faith development. By volunteering your time and talents in one of our Religious Education Programs you will be demonstrating to our children how important their faith development is to all the adults of our parish. Your volunteering in one of these programs will not only be an example to our children of how to put your faith into action, but you will also be strengthening the religious education community by building relationships with other adults within the program and the parish.

PLEASE NOTE: All adults who volunteer in a capacity that involves direct interaction with the children enrolled in our parish religious education programs, or any parish ministry that serves children, are expected to complete:

- an online background check with the Archdiocese of Chicago,
- uphold the Archdiocesan Code of Conduct for Adult Volunteers,
- agree to the Department of Children and Family Services to conduct regular updates on your background checks status,
- completed a one-time Mandated Reporter training.
- complete online Virtus training in addition to maintaining Virtus compliance throughout the year by responding to the monthly updates.

All adult volunteers working with children have a confidential file kept in the Religious Education and Youth Ministry Office.