

SAINT JAMES RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Grades K through 8

“The desire for God is written in the human heart.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The health of a parish is in the ability to gather in community to nurture a lived faith for every person.

The mission of our Religious Education program is rooted in the idea that every moment of every life is an opportunity to grow in a personal relationship with God. Our response to God’s invitation is reflected in our relationships with others and in the way we serve and respect the dignity and beauty of all creation. Therefore, our goal is to nurture your child to recognize the presence of God in all things.

The text we use, *Finding God: Our Response to God’s Gifts*, weaves together experiences in prayer, Scripture, Catholic social teaching, and liturgy for children and adults – as individuals, as families, and as learners on a faith journey. It invites you and your child into a deeper relationship with God and the Catholic Church in service to the world.

In order for your child’s faith to grow as a “lived” faith it is important that you model this for them over the years. Help them connect their faith to the celebration of faith at Mass, in their sacramental preparations, and in the liturgical seasons.

It takes a parish to form the faith of a child. It takes a whole parish to form a living faith community – one person at a time.

May God bless us all as we journey together.

Nancy Lucash
Director of Religious Education

OFFICE HOURS

The Religious Education Office is located in the Family Center. The Religious Education Office hours from September to May are 9:30AM to 4PM Monday; 9:30AM to 8:30PM Tuesday and Wednesday; and 9:30-5:30 Thursday. During the months of June, July and August office hours are 9:30-4:00 Monday-Thursday

“TEACHING TOUCHING SAFETY”

The Diocese has mandated important Virtus training for all parents and children. The program is “Protecting God’s Children – Teaching Touching Safety”. This program is repeated at the beginning of each school year.

OFFICE RESOURCES

Video Materials/Reference Books/Music Recordings may be borrowed from the Religious Education Office and the Resource Room.

REGISTRATION

Families must be registered in St. James Parish in order to register for our Religious Education program. Call rectory – 609-737-0122 to register.

Registrations received after June 30 are charged on a graduated scale – (please see registration form). Graduated fee does not apply to **new** parishioners

If financial circumstances are such that it is difficult for you to make payment with registration, please call the Rel. Ed Office ASAP. Please **DO NOT** allow finances to become a hindrance to your child’s religious education, we will work with you.

IF YOU ARE NEW TO THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

1. Copy of child’s baptism certificate must be provided (unless baptized at St. James, Pennington). If child has been baptized in a non-Catholic Church, please contact the Director of Religious Ed. (609) 737-2717.
2. A letter from your prior parish stating child’s prior level(s) of religious education completed will be needed with your registration.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

If your child is attending a Catholic School and is preparing to receive a sacrament, your child needs to be registered in the Rel. Ed. program (no fee) so the family can be notified of events involving parents or students.

2nd grade parents will attend/participate in parent meetings, Parents and students will attend and/or participate in the First Penance Service, First Holy Communion retreat day, parent/student rehearsal, and the First Communion Mass.

7th grade students/parents **must attend** Parent/Student meeting, complete Student Workbook, Sponsor Workbook, participate in Penance Service, Class Mass, and Confirmation Retreat.

8th Grade student attendance at 6 class sessions as well as a Parent Meeting, Penance Service, student & sponsor rehearsals, and Confirmation Mass **are a must.**

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES

We will try very hard to have no more than 12 students in a class.

Skipped Grade Level: If a child has missed a grade level – please call the Rel. Ed. Office so other arrangements can be made to make it up.

No participation in 1st Grade: If a child has not been enrolled in 1st Grade (which is required for reception of First Penance and First Eucharist in 2nd Grade), contact the Rel. Ed. Office to make arrangements. If child was enrolled in another program for 1st Grade, please provide letter from the former parish or Catholic school.

Students in Grades 2 and 7 and 8 MUST attend classes in the Family Center

Attendance: It is important for students to attend ALL classes. Notify the child's Catechist or Rel. Ed. Office if student is ill or unable to attend. All Students MUST be 'signed-out' by parent with the child's teacher.

per Diocese of Trenton: "Religious Education Programs are to include a minimum of 28 hours of instruction."

- ◆ **If your child is absent more than 2 classes per month in ANY month – you need to call the Religious Education Office.**
- ◆ **Children who miss more than 8 class days in a school year will need to complete the missed chapters in the summer.**

Discipline: We believe a positive and affirming environment must be maintained if the sharing of thoughts, prayers and reading assignments is to be effective. Inappropriate behavior impinges on the limited time we have in class and on the learning of other students. Students unable to conform to this type of atmosphere will be asked to leave the group and meet with the Director. If the problem continues, parents of the student will be consulted. If the student continues to cause discipline problems, he/she will be asked to leave the program and do the work at home.

Home Study: This option is available for parents desiring to teach their own child at home. It is not meant as a class of students taught at home, which is not permitted according to diocese policy. Unit Reviews must be completed and returned to the Rel. Ed. Office by the end of the school year in order to advance to the next grade level.

All Students – Home Study & Family Center – must attend all class functions (Retreats, Penance Services, Activities, etc.

Sacraments:

If a child is unable to attend their sacramental service (First Penance, First Communion, Confirmation), other arrangements should be made directly with Msgr. Ron Bacovin. Notify the Religious Education Office as soon as sacrament is received so student records can be updated and the proper certificates issued.

Sacrament Rehearsals are a required part of sacramental preparation.

NO CELL PHONE USE is allowed during class session. The Religious Ed. Office is the only place to use a cell phone with permission. Encourage your child to turn off his/her cell phone prior to coming to class.

Vacation Bible School – (TBD) Open to parishioners only until July 1 – after July 1 non-parishioners will be accepted.

PROGRAMS

Kindergarten Classes

1st & 3rd Sunday of the Month - 9:45am & 11:30am - October through April

The Kindergarten curriculum focuses on God as a loving God, and introduces the children to the family of the Church and its special celebrations.

Grades 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Grade 1 classes held on Tuesday & Wednesday (4:15-5:30PM)

Grades 3 and 4 classes held on Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday (4:15--5:30PM)

Grades 5, 6 and 7 classes held on Tuesday & Wednesday 7-8:15PM; and Thursday 4:15-5:30

Parents also have option of "Home Study" for Grades 1 and 3-6

(parent teaching child one-on-one at home)

The Religious Education Program at St. James uses "Finding God" series from Loyola Press for Grades 1 and 3 thru 7 as the basis of our Curriculum. The program of 'Finding God' offers background and preparation in Church Teaching, Scripture and Tradition, and prayerful reflection.

Each grade level of "Finding God" focuses on a particular Catholic theme and relates it to the typical experiences and questions of children at that particular grade level.

The Grade level themes are as follows:

Kindergarten - The Lord Is My Shepherd

Grade One – God Loves Us, Jesus Loves Us. All are welcome

Grade Three – God wants us to know Him. The Father sends Jesus

Grade Four – All Seven Sacraments / The Ten Commandments

Grade Five – Eucharist / Liturgy / Moral Life

Grade Six – The Bible / Making Good Choices / Mission of the Church

Grade Seven – Our Response to God's Gifts

Grade Eight – Your Commitment to God

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST EUCHARIST

Grade 2 - "This Is Our Faith" *Silver Burdett-Ginn*

Course includes preparation for and reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist

Classes held on Tuesday & Wednesday (4-5:15pm) *(in the Family Center ONLY)*

CONFIRMATION

Grade 7 – Confirmation Preparation course

Course includes class sessions + Confirmation Investiture Mass + Confirmation Retreat Day

Classes held on Tuesday & Wednesday (7-8:15pm); and Thursday (4:15-5:30pm)
(in the Family Center ONLY)

Grade 8

Course includes 6 class sessions

Plus **‘Spirit Night’** *(an introduction to St. James Youth Group),*
Penance,
2 Rehearsals

Classes held on Tuesday & Wednesday (7-8:15pm) September-November
(in the Family Center ONLY)

HOME STUDY

Teaching Manual

This is meant to guide you through the required material. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Prayer

In your home, the instruction time should include a prayer time for each session – see suggestions in the textbook provided.

Unit Quiz

The Unit Quizzes are included in your Home Study packet. These must be kept current (send them in to the Religious Ed Office). This is the only means we have to make sure our Home Study children are keeping up with the material being taught to their peers in the Family Center