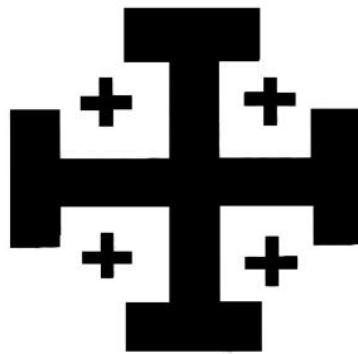


2017-2018  
Religious Education  
Family Handbook



Catholic Church  
of  
Saint James

Conway, South Carolina

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The ultimate goal of our Children's Religious Education Program is to lead children of our parish to love the Person of Jesus Christ and understand and appreciate the salvation and the new life of grace that He won for us. Through the power, grace, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we strive to lead everyone to a life of prayer and communion with God and to be of service to others who are in need. We seek to foster community and unity in our parish. In cooperation with parents of the parish, the St. James Religious Education Program offers sacramental preparation, religious education instruction, opportunity for the learning of prayer, Catholic catechism, and an understanding of the faith. Our program and policies are aligned with those of the Diocese of Charleston.

## **PERSONNEL**

Fr. Tim Lijewski – Pastor

Mrs. Paulette Flench – Pastoral Associate / Religious Education Coordinator (843)347-5168, ext. 234

Email: [pflench@stjamesconway.org](mailto:pflench@stjamesconway.org)

## **TEXTBOOKS**

Textbooks are issued at the start of the year. They should be treated with care. The charge for lost or abused textbooks will be based on fair market value.

Textbooks used at St. James Catholic Church:

- Gospel Weeklies –Kindergarten, Grade 1, 3-6 Pflaum Publishing Group
- Creemos/We Believe- Grade 2
- First Reconciliation, Together in Jesus – Pflaum Publishing Group
- First Eucharist, Together in Jesus – Pflaum Publishing Group
- Confirmados en el Espíritu / Confirmed in the Spirit -- Grade 7 – Loyola Press
- Decision Point- Grade 8

**CURRICULUM GUIDES** are available for every grade level in the Religious Education Office. Parents may obtain a copy by request.

## **RECORDS**

PERMANENT RECORDS are kept on file in the Religious Education office. They contain a child's Religious Education and sacramental history. This information is used to facilitate a quicker re-registration process for the next year or in the event a family moves away.

## **REGISTRATION**

Registration for the following year's classes begins during the summer. **If your child is new to the religious education program, please provide a copy of your child's Birth Certificate and Baptismal Certificate to include in your child's file.** Parents are urged to complete registration forms immediately with appropriate book and supply fees. Families moving into the parish after the first week of Religious Education are welcome to register any time during the year. The Coordinator of Religious Education has discretion to make the decision for enrollment in any unusual case. The Religious Education Program is open to children of registered parishioners only.

## **COLLABORATION WITH CATECHISTS**

For Catholic parents, the mission to catechize is rooted in the Sacrament of Marriage which consecrates them for the Christian education of their children. "This Sacrament enriches them with wisdom, counsel, fortitude, and all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to help the children in their growth as human beings and as Christians." (On the Family, Pope John Paul II, 1981,38) By virtue of this sacrament, parents are the primary

educators of their children. By enrolling your children in our Religious Education Program, you are asking us to assist you in that process by providing a foundation in Church teachings and morals.

Therefore, parents are encouraged to communicate with their child's catechist throughout the year so that a collaborative effort may be made, each supporting the other in providing a foundation in Roman Catholic doctrine and morals. Together, you are to fulfill the mandate Christ gave His followers to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

### **PARENT PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM**

Our catechists are an integral part of the St. James Religious Education Program. We invite parents to volunteer to be **catechists, aides, or substitute catechists**, especially in the class where their own child is placed. If parents are interested in teaching or assisting in the classroom, they need to speak to the Coordinator to complete the necessary requirements established by the diocese.

Parents who are not teaching are encouraged to volunteer in other ways, such as making phone calls, serving at sacramental receptions, donating refreshments, being hall monitors, etc.

***WITHOUT YOU, THERE IS NO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM! THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO!!!***

### **CATECHISTS**

Pictures of the catechists, grades, and room numbers can be found by each classroom door. Our Religious Education catechists are **volunteers** from the parish who make a personal commitment to being a catechist for your children. We keep them informed about the Diocese of Charleston training and workshops available to them.

### **STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

Students are expected to behave in a manner appropriate for their age. Appropriate behavior will be discussed and articulated at the start of Religious Education classes.

1. Respect for catechists and fellow students must prevail in every classroom.
2. St. James does not tolerate intimidation or prejudice. Bullying, including name-calling, harassment, and other forms of physical and psychological abuse, is not allowed.
3. Students may be sent to the Religious Education office for disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Catechists or the Coordinator of Religious Education will inform parents if disruptive or disrespectful behavior persists.
4. If, after consultation with parents, disruptive behavior continues, a meeting will be held with the coordinator and/or pastor to remedy the situation.
5. Students entering class during prayer time should remain at the classroom door until prayers are finished.
6. **NO cell phones** may be turned on during class. We realize that cell phones are second-nature to us; however, it is not necessary for a child to be on the phone or text messaging while attending religious education classes. If a child brings a cell phone to class it should be turned off and **out of sight**. If they use their cell phone during class, the catechist will collect the phone. The phone will be **returned only to the parent** after class.
7. If an **emergency** should arise and you must speak with your child/children, you may contact the Religious Education Office at 347-5168, ext. 234.
8. Students are not allowed to chew gum or wear hats in class.

### **ATTENDANCE**

**Class and Mass attendance go hand in hand in St. James' Religious Formation.** In other words, faithful Mass attendance is an extension of the catechetical process. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the source

and summit of the Christian life. The Church is most clearly itself in the Eucharist, as it gathers a people to listen to the Word of God and to share the one bread and the one cup until Jesus, our Lord, comes again.

**The first precept of the Church (“You shall attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.”) requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the resurrection of the Lord. (Catechism of the Catholic Church)**

### **MASS ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

1. Parents of children in our Religious Education Program are expected to understand that this teaching of the Catholic Church, stated above, makes them responsible for taking their children to Mass on a regular weekly basis. Regular weekly Mass attendance is essential to a student’s growth in faith.
2. Sports or extracurricular activities should not be excuses for missing Mass.

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

1. No more than **five** absences a year should occur for class attendance. **Five tardies = one absence. Students in Sacramental classes who miss more than four classes may have the reception of their sacrament delayed.**
2. Sports or other extracurricular activities should not be excuses for absence from class.
3. Exceptions to the absence limit based on illness or adverse family circumstances will be made by the Pastor and Coordinator after consultation with the parents.
4. Class attendance will be taken by the catechist each week at the start of class.
5. Students are expected to make up any work missed when absent. Catechists will provide make up work to students and/or parents. It is the student’s responsibility to ask for make-up work when a class has been missed.
6. **If you anticipate that your child will be absent, please call the Religious Education office in advance and your child’s catechist will be informed.**
7. A student who becomes ill during class should be brought to the Religious Education Office. Parents or Emergency Contacts will be called.

### **CONSECUTIVE YEARLY ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to attend Religious Education classes in consecutive years. If a student misses a year, they will be required to make up that year before they can be placed on grade level. However, exceptions can be made and the Coordinator will determine exceptions based on the circumstances of the student.

### **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

1. Students should arrive in their classrooms **ON TIME** or a few minutes before their scheduled time. **Students arriving before the catechist must stay in the hallway with their parent until the catechist arrives.**
2. **Tardiness is considered arriving 5 minutes late for class. Five times tardy will be considered an absence.**
3. Parents will be informed after a student has been late 3 times so that a solution to the problem can be found.
4. **Grades K, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5** are to be accompanied by their parent to and from their classrooms.
5. **Grades 6 through 9** may be released without a parent only if written permission is given by the parent and is on file with the Religious Education Office.
6. Parents should teach their children who is considered “okay” to pick them up from class. Any person that is not recognized by the catechist will be asked to go to the Religious Education Department and show identification while the Coordinator speaks via phone with a parent or guardian. In the event the parent or guardian cannot pick up the child, written advance notice should be given to the catechist who will in turn give that notice to the Coordinator.

7. Parents must park in the parking lot. Parents are not permitted to park in the circle in front of the church where the glass double doors are located.
8. Parents are responsible for picking up their child **ON TIME**. If a parent is late, the student must wait in the Religious Education Office until a parent arrives.

### **FAMILY MEETINGS and SACRAMENTAL FAMILY MEETINGS**

Parents are expected to attend all Family Meetings throughout the year that pertain to your child's grade. In this way, you can keep in touch with what is expected of your children as well as with the latest developments in the program. SACRAMENTAL FAMILY MEETINGS AND RETREATS are mandatory. Parents are allowed to miss these meetings for serious reasons only. A make-up meeting with the Coordinator will then be necessary.

### **FIRST RECONCILIATION, FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION**

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist in grade 2 entails year-long classroom instruction. Catechists follow curriculum guides issued by the Religious Education Office. Students are expected to attend Mass and class on a regular basis in preparation for these sacraments.

Preparation for Confirmation is a two-year process. Catechists follow curriculum guides issued by the Religious Education Office. Students are expected to attend Mass and class on a regular basis in preparation for these sacraments as well as completing the requirements in the Family Guidelines to Confirmation.

### **PRAYERS**

Some class time will be spent in praying (at least at the beginning and at the end of each class) and class time will be taken to explain the nature of prayer and the necessity of praying individually and together. Memorized prayer (Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be) are especially important in grades K through 5. Parents are encouraged to pray with their children at home. Grace before and after meals and bedtime prayers are encouraged.

### **HOMEWORK**

Homework can be assigned to supplement or reinforce class work. Homework assignments are directly related to class work and reasonable in length. Assignments can be varied and can include long-term projects (i.e. in grades 7 & 8 & 9). Homework should be completed and returned in a timely manner. Failure to complete homework in sacramental classes may result in a delay in the reception of the Sacrament.

### **HOME STUDY**

Children learn to be Catholics in relationship with other faithful Catholics in both the Church and the family. Our Religious Education Program provides a Catholic community where the tenets and practices of our Church are learned and appreciated while providing an enriching, ongoing faith experience for the entire family. Parents are encouraged to promote Catholic teachings in the home in addition to our classes here at the parish. However, we do not allow for home tutoring to take the place of attendance in weekly sessions. In certain extreme circumstances, it may be allowed, but only under a careful review of the student's situation and with the permission of the Religious Education Coordinator.

### **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

The St. James Religious Education Program is inclusive of students with special needs. If we are unable to accommodate the needs of students within our program or in special arrangement with parents, the Office of Religious Education of the Diocese of Charleston offers alternative options.

## **DRUG AND WEAPON POSSESSION**

1. In all cases, any controlled dangerous substance (drugs) that is found on parish grounds or in student's possession **MUST** be turned over to the police. The student will be detained until police are notified. Drug possession is grounds for dismissal from the program.
2. If there is reason to believe that a student intended to distribute the drugs to others, then the student **MUST** be turned over to the police. The Pastor and the Coordinator will be notified along with parents.
3. Weapons or objects that can be used as weapons are not permitted. This can include toy guns and knives. Possession of these types of items will result in the parents being notified. Additional consequences will depend on the severity of the incident.

## **PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN (VIRTUS)**

The safety and welfare of your child is one of our greatest concerns. Child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, is reprehensible – especially when the wrongdoer is affiliated with the Church. It is mandatory for any adult working with children to attend a VIRTUS session and complete other diocesan paperwork. Through knowledge and awareness we can all play an important role in the safety of our children. The VIRTUS program assists the Church in being a safe haven for children and enables our parish community to send the following messages to any person that would seek to do harm:

- Child abuse is not tolerated
- Children are vigilantly protected
- Victims are listened to, heard, and shielded from further abuse, and
- Offenders are identified and punished

Each year, catechists teach a class called "Teaching Touching Safety." Parents have the choice to allow their children to participate in the class or to "opt-out" if they wish to cover the material being taught at home. Copies of the "Teaching Touching Safety" program for children are available in the Religious Education Office.

## **CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

South Carolina law requires any person who has **reasonable cause** to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse to report the abuse immediately to the authorities. Any Diocesan employee (including a catechist volunteer) who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse must report it. Failure to report suspected child abuse (of any form) is punishable as a disorderly person offense. A copy of the Diocesan policy regarding abuse is on file in the Parish Office and on the Safe Environment bulletin board.

## 2017-2018 FAMILY HANDBOOK CONTRACT AND COVENANT

In accordance with the policies and regulations outlined in the preceding pages, please fill out and sign this page to acknowledge that you have read and understand the policies of the Religious Education Program at the Catholic Church of Saint James. **Please return this page to your child's catechist and it will be placed in your child's file.**

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Recognizing that my involvement as a parent/guardian is of primary importance in helping to prepare my child(ren) for a faith-filled life, I agree to abide by the guidelines set forth in the St. James Religious Education Family Handbook. I agree to discuss the Handbook with my child(ren), and pledge my full support of this policy, which fosters an atmosphere of Christian concern for others.

I have thoroughly read the St. James Family Handbook. I understand my responsibilities as a Catholic parent as presented in the Handbook.

_____ <b>Parent/Guardian Name</b>	_____ Date
_____ Please print <b>student's name</b>	_____ Grade
_____ Please print <b>student's name</b>	_____ Grade
_____ Please print <b>student's name</b>	_____ Grade
_____ Please print <b>student's name</b>	_____ Grade