

St. Patrick Church

Religious Education Program

Family/Student 2017-18 Handbook

Parish Statement: We are a Community of Word and Sacrament called by Christ to Grow in Faith, Hope, and Love; Foster Community; and Evangelize.

REMINDERS:

- **ITEMS BROUGHT FROM HOME/ LOST AND FOUND:**

St. Patrick Church is not responsible for personal items that get lost, broken, or stolen. Found items will be taken to the RE office. Items not claimed within two weeks will be donated to the needy.

- **CELL PHONES:**

Students are not permitted to use cellular telephones during class unless allowed by the catechist for project research. **Please for everyone's safety, refrain from using cell telephones while driving into & out of the church especially in the parking lot.**

- **FOR CLASS CANCELLATIONS:**

Weather related and county-wide emergencies, we follow the decisions of the Houston County Public Schools.

- **Please always keep in mind all of our wonderful teachers are volunteers! Please thank them for their faithful commitment, there would be no RE program without them. Thank you to all of our wonderful families that bring their student faithful as well.**

Prayer for Family Commitment

Loving and merciful Father, who instituted the family as an instrument of your fruitful love and raised it to be a sacrament of the love of your Son for His Church, send forth your Holy Spirit to forgive us for our sinful failures, to heal the personal and social wounds that afflict us, to bring consolation to the vulnerable among us, and to enable us to reach out in compassionate care to all those families in need. Make possible within us and for us what only you can do. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The 2017 theme will be "Living as Missionary Disciples." Those who the Community has designated to serve as catechists will be called forth to be commissioned for their ministry. Catechetical Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that each person plays, by virtue of Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. Catechetical Sunday is an opportunity for all to rededicate themselves to this mission as a community of faith.

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/>

WELCOME

We warmly welcome your family to the St. Patrick Religious Education (RE) Program. The goal of the program is to help you fulfill the formal religious education of your child. Our students are the Catholic Church of the future. The registration of your son/daughter indicates your commitment to raise your family with an appreciation of the Catholic faith and an understanding of the promises you made at your child's Baptism.

OBJECTIVES

- * To teach the Word of God, foundational beliefs and traditions of the Catholic Church.
- * To build a faith community.
- * To encourage the student and family to pray and attend Mass regularly.
- * To call the student and family to service within the community.

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Website: <http://www.StPatrickGA.org>
Friend us on Facebook @ [St. Patrick Catholic Church RE Program](#)

MISSION

The only thing we leave this world with is our salvation and the greatest gift that we can give our children is faith. The Catholic Religious Education Program should be one that respects the individual child, develops their moral compass, provides personal support, encourages a sense of belonging for each child, ensure the non-diluting of the Catholic Faith and Her Traditions. Religious formation is accomplished through age appropriate experiences and instructions, which build a community of faith both within the Religious Education Program and our St. Patrick worshipping community.

"Parents are the primary educators of their children" (see Catholic Catechism under "The duties of parents" http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a4.htm) The example of Christian life lived by parents/guardians is irreplaceable. Catholic families pray, attend weekly Mass together, participate in parish activities, community service and assist in the financial support of the church.

We assist families in Catholic faith formation and in sacramental preparation. We offer a spiritually developing program for all students; curriculum is based upon holy scripture, catechism, doctrine, prayer, traditions and principles with age appropriate lesson plans that build a faith foundation with continuous attendance. The effectiveness of our program is dependent upon respect and cooperation between the students, parents and catechists.

MASS: *Students are expected to attend Mass each week with their family. Participating in the celebration of Mass enhances the experience for students and helps them practice good stewardship! Some of the opportunities to serve include: Children's Choir, WHIM (our Praise Band), altar servers, lectors, and ushers.*

Our Religious Education program is a ministry of the Catholic Church. The curriculum implemented is in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and has been approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). In addition, to meet the Diocese of Savannah local requirements - Protecting God's Children: "A Lesson on Teaching Touching Safety" is included in the curriculum annually.

For class cancellations due to weather related and county-wide emergencies, we follow the decisions of the Houston County Public Schools.

Please help us serve your family best:

PARISH REGISTRATION:

To be eligible for RE classes, families must first be registered with St. Patrick parish. Parish Registration forms can be found in the church Narthex under the locked office box (or a copy can be obtained from the Church office – allowing us to meet and welcome you) or the [ConnectNow link](#) at our website (www.stpatrickga.org/ home - just follow the prompts).

COMMUNICATIONS:

Communication between home and the RE Department is very important. The goal is to have an ongoing relationship with the families of our students. Information may be disseminated through class flyers, the church website, e-mails, Facebook post, church bulletin, the US Postal Service, or text messages. Please read, as information may reflect changes in previous publications and will supersede any prior communication (please feel free to contact the

DRE with any questions or if there is any need for clarification, always willing to help). Please notify the office of changes in address, e-mail, phone numbers or any family/health issue that impacts the student.

STUDENT PHOTOS:

St. Patrick Church reserves the right to use student pictures in publications (no names are used). If you do not want your child's picture used, notify the DRE in writing prior to August 30, 2017.

VOLUNTEERS:

Volunteers are extremely important and contribute to the success of our RE Program. We invite parents/guardians, grandparents, and other adult and teen parishioners to become involved in our RE ministry.

All volunteers must fulfill the Diocese of Savannah Volunteer requirements; complete a Diocese of Savannah Volunteer Application form, read and sign a Volunteer

Code of Conduct Agreement, have a background check and attend a Protecting God's Children VIRTUS Workshop. All volunteers are responsible for reading the VIRTUS information updates provided to them. Volunteers are invited to attend RE meetings and workshops.

CLASS ATTENDANCE/CANCELLATION:

Attendance - is recorded weekly. Students are expected to attend every class. Contact the RE office by phone, text or e-mail if your child will be absent from class. No more than three excused absences (all class work must be made up).

webpage or Facebook post if classes are canceled; or you may contact the office. **Safety first! If travel conditions are dangerous, please do not risk it!**

For class cancellations due to weather related and county-wide emergencies, we follow the decisions of the Houston County Public Schools. When possible, the RE office will try to contact families by text, e-mail,

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION:

The Diocese of Savannah requires two consecutive years of formal catholic formation classes for the reception of First Communion and Confirmation respectively. Students beginning these classes should note and prepare to meet all of the requirements necessary including homework assignments, projects, retreats, community service hours and attendance. Students may only miss 10% of total class time which works out to roughly 3 classes a year. During the two years of preparation, parents/guardians of students will be required to attend designated parent meetings/sessions. They will also be invited to attend various other programs/meetings, which are designed to nourish and strengthen faith and spirituality. These programs are extremely important and every effort should be made to attend.

First Communion:

Preparation is 1st and 2nd grade with the sacraments bestowed at the end of 2nd grade. They must be of the age of reason (at least 7 years of age) to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Candidates must complete the minimum of ten hours of parent supervised family community service by Easter.

Attire for First Communion Mass for boys shall be dress pants, shirt and tie. Suit/sports jackets are optional. Girls' dresses should be white and modest (with proper undergarments). Length should cover the knees or longer. No veils or gloves are necessary. When planning for this special day, you know your child best. Please do not purchase anything that will distract their attention from Mass.

Confirmation:

Preparation is 6th - 8th grade with Confirmation at the end of 8th grade.

Candidates are required to participate in service projects. Parents are encouraged to accompany their son/daughter on projects. Details are included in the Confirmation packet distributed at the Confirmation Meeting for the parent and candidate.

All Confirmation candidates are required to complete all syllabus requirements, participate in designated spiritual retreats and nights of reflection. Notification will be given regarding dates and times.

Attire for Confirmation day think business interview quality, for young men dress pants, shirt and tie. Suits/sports jackets are optional. Young ladies' dresses/skirts/slacks/blouses should be modest (with proper undergarments). Length should cover the knees or longer. Absolutely no spaghetti straps or strapless tops. Modest means modest!!

St. Patrick RE also offers programs for students who have not received the sacraments at the traditional age. Please contact the RE office to make arrangements.

Here at St. Patrick Church, we have been blessed with many awesome volunteer teachers! All staff and volunteers are screened according to the guidelines of the Diocese of Savannah, Virtus trained, plus they are all audited by an outside source (with background checks completed). That said, if something raises a concern with your child and/or family, please bring the issue quickly to the Director of Religious Education (DRE) or Pastor's attention. This will allow us to evaluate the situation and find an amicable solution together in a professional and Christ-like manner.

DRESS CODE/PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION:

Students attending St. Patrick RE classes and events are expected to adhere to the Houston County School Dress Code and dress in a manner that is supportive of a positive learning environment that is free of distractions and disruptions. Any clothing that is viewed as distracting because of extremes in style, fit, color, pattern, fabric, etc., shall not be permitted. Undergarments may not be exposed at any time. Pants, skirts, shorts, and dresses must be knee-length or longer, and must have a hem. Pants must be worn at the waist. Sagging pants are not allowed. Shorts appropriate for young children are permitted.

The DRE is charged with the enforcement of the student dress code and is given wide latitude of discretion in the determination of proper dress and behavior of students. Students who are found to be in violation of the dress code are subject to parental notification and removal from class.

PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION:

The St. Patrick Catholic RE Program always promotes friendship, charity, kindness, Christian love, respect for self and others. Note that displays of affection - such as kissing or embracing which connote more than simple friendship - are inappropriate and not permitted in the RE Program at any

time. The DRE reserves the right to determine what constitutes appropriate behavior during a RE function/program. Please feel free to contact the RE office if there are any questions.

"10 As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ~ 1 Peter 4:10 NASB

HOMEWORK/PROJECT GUIDELINES:

Homework is given at the discretion of the individual catechist. The purpose of homework is to reinforce and expand the student's understanding of the lessons and to keep the parents informed and involved. If a student has been absent, any necessary make up work may be assigned at the catechist's discretion.

SERVICE PROJECTS:

Community Service projects are approved by the DRE and provide students with an opportunity to share their time, talent, and treasure with the greater community - to be the hands and feet of Christ. All registered families are asked to give a minimum of ten hours of service to the Church each year.

SAFETY/SECURITY:

*The Parish goal is to provide a safe environment for everyone. For the safety of all, **students must be signed in/out by parent/guardian. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure their child is dropped off and picked up safely! Make sure the catechist is present before leaving your child. Please do not drop children off early without prior approval as we are not staffed to supervise their safety outside of scheduled program hours.***

- * **LATE ARRIVAL:** Students arriving more than 15 minutes late may be counted as absent **and be required to accomplish make-up work. This is especially important for Sacramental Classes! We understand special circumstances will arise on occasion please make arrangements through the RE office in advance or as soon as possible.**
 - * **EARLY RELEASE:** Please early release is to be an **exception not an every week occurrence (to meet diocesan curriculum requirements and prevent classroom disruption). An authorized adult must sign the student out with their child's catechist; that person may be asked to show a valid photo ID.**
 - * **DISMISSAL POLICY:** Students must be picked up from the catechist. They **will only be released to a parent/guardian or authorized person as designated on the Registration Form. If a parent wants to give permission to older siblings or another adult (not listed as an emergency contact) to pick up their child, it must be submitted in writing** to the RE office in advance (Texting works as long as you are a current contact in DRE's cell phone). Students will not be **released without a properly authorized guardian.**
 - * **LATE PICKUP:** All students remaining after dismissal time will be brought to the RE office. **A Parent/guardian/emergency contact will be called. An authorized adult must come to the office to pick their child up.**
- ⇒ **If an emergency arises, please contact us at (478) 987-4213 - leave a voice message for RE or Text DRE.**
- * **EMERGENCIES:** Emergency contact information will be used to notify a family when necessary. **It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide the RE office with accurate phone numbers. As needed, 911 will be called.**

CONFIDENTIALITY: Catechists/RE volunteers will keep information entrusted to them **confidential providing no one's life, health or safety is at risk.**

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY:

St. Patrick Church is committed to providing a Christ-like environment that is always free of discrimination and harassment (biblical principle, for one example see Romans 2:11).

Discrimination consists of unwelcomed conduct, whether verbal, physical, and/or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status, such as gender, color, race, ancestry, national origin, age, physical disability, mental condition, marital status, veteran status, citizenship status or another protected group status. Harassment is behavior that threatens or torments somebody, especially persistently. Such conduct is immoral and illegal and will not be tolerated. As such, bullying is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated during any function, activity or event that is in any way associated with St. Patrick Catholic Church or the RE Program.

DEFINITION:

Bullying is any verbal, written, conduct or gesture directed at a person by anyone that has the effect of:

- * Physically, emotionally, or mentally harming a person.
- * Damaging, extorting or taking a person's personal property.
- * Causing a person to fear emotional or mental harm.
- * Causing a person to fear damage to or loss of personal property.
- * Creating an intimidating or hostile environment.

Bullying may involve but is not limited to: teasing, name-calling, slurs, rumors, jokes, false accusations, intimidation, stalking, innuendos, demeaning comments, pranks, social isolation, gestures, cyber-bullying or other verbal, physical or written conduct.

Cyber-bullying includes the misuse of digital technology by means of any technological tool such as; sending or posting inappropriate email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital images or website postings (including blogs and social network sites). This definition includes students and/or adults who either directly engage in an act of bullying or who, by their behavior, support another person's act of bullying. Please help us promote a safe, healthy, respectful and caring Christ-like learning environment for all.

REPORTING COMPLAINTS:

Each student and parent has a moral duty to report any bullying to the RE office immediately. If a student experiences (or a parent learns of) any incident of bullying, the incident must be promptly reported to the DRE. The DRE will provide the student/parent with a Bullying Complaint Report Form which must be completed by the complaining party so that the DRE may initiate further inquiry. False reports or accusations of bullying also constitutes a violation of this policy and may subject the offending party to appropriate disciplinary action.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION:

Any person found to have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include: temporary removal from the classroom, loss of privileges, community service, counseling, parent conference, suspension, expulsion, and/or notification to appropriate authorities. The disciplinary action may be unique to the individual incident and may vary in method and severity based on the Pastor's discretion.