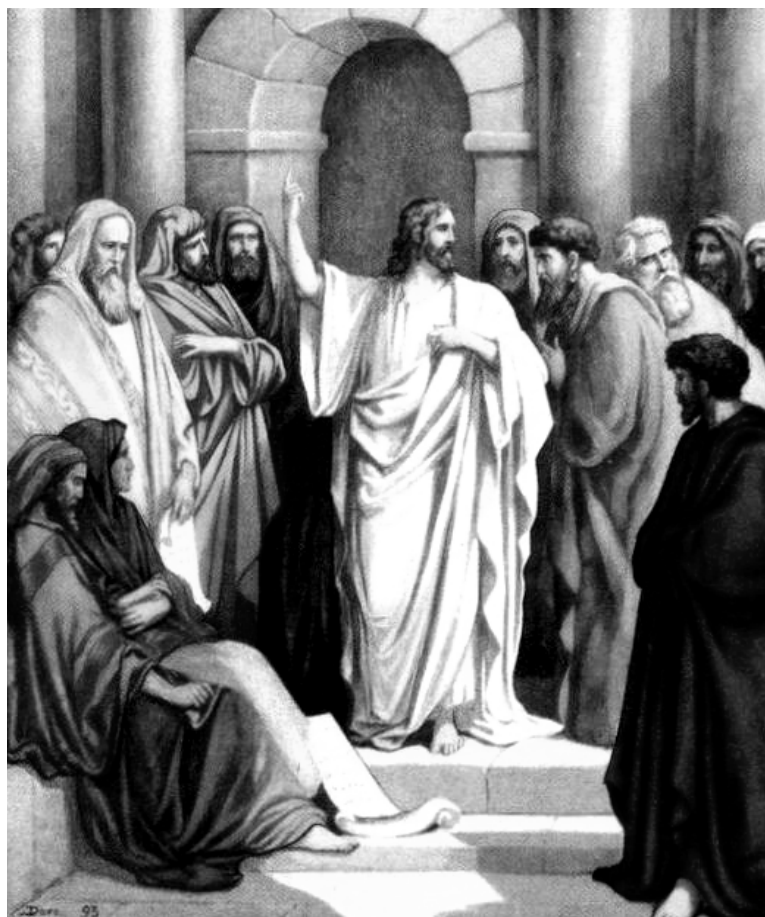


**St. Raymond of Peñafort  
Catholic Church  
Religious Education Program**



**Parent Handbook  
for  
Academic Year 2025-2026**

**"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:11**

Dear Parents:

Welcome (back) to St. Raymond's Religious Education Program (CCD) as we begin a new school year. I, along with DRE Virginia Osella, the rest of my staff and volunteers, look forward to doing our very best, with God's grace, to continue to provide your children the most outstanding catechetical program in the Diocese.

I consider it one of my main responsibilities as a spiritual Father to provide the best faith education possible for all my spiritual children, but most especially the youngest. I think we're doing a good job of that, and I am very proud of our staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to putting my hopes and prayers into practice.

I'm confident that this year we will build on our past years' successes, move forward in forming our children, united to the rest of the parish, brick by brick, as it were, into a great edifice of faith, with, as St. Paul writes: "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building, being framed together, grows up into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit." [Eph. 2:20-22]

I am also keenly aware that you parents are the primary educators of your children, and that CCD serves to supplement, or assist in, the religious education parents give to their children. I encourage you and your children to take advantage of what we offer, and make the best possible use of it, especially by coming to class on time every week, and completing the homework and extracurricular work presented. And I remind you, the building won't be built without the cement and steel girders that hold it all together and make it strong: the grace of Christ that especially flows from the sacraments. So, I encourage you to bring your children to Mass every Sunday, and to frequent Confession.

It is very difficult to be a faithful Catholic nowadays, but where would we be without our Catholic faith, this most special relationship with Jesus? This is more important than ever, as the government controlled schools grow more openly and actively hostile to our values and beliefs. What can be more important than making sure our kids know and love Jesus, are open to the fullness of His grace and love in this world, and will share in His happiness forever in heaven?

Again, I'm very excited about our new CCD year, and I'm committed to doing all in my power to make it the best year ever. I'm sure you are, too.

St. Raymond of Peñafort, pray for us.

In the love of Christ,

Fr. De Celles

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## **St. Raymond of Peñafort Catholic Church**

### **Religious Education Program**

The mission of St. Raymond's Religious Education Program is to teach the truths of the Catholic faith, as taught by the one Teacher, Jesus Christ, handed down by the Apostles, and reiterated through the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. An understanding of Jesus' command to love God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself is central to our Religious Education program.

We are dedicated to providing the catechists and assistant catechists with the tools necessary to communicate the faith clearly and accurately. Our goal is to have a catechist and assistant catechist in each classroom to meet the students' needs. We strive to keep class size at a reasonable level so that teachers are able to convey the Catholic faith to the students in a systematic and orderly manner.

The core elements listed below form the foundation and strength of St. Raymond's Religious Education Program.

- Jesus Christ is recognized as the one true Teacher.
- The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist are the "source and summit" of our Catholic faith.
- The Word of God is revered and incorporated into weekly lessons.
- Our Blessed Mother, as the first disciple of Jesus, is our model.
- Parents are recognized and respected as the primary educators of their children.
- The Catholic faith is presented in its fullness and entirety as both knowledge to be learned and a life to be lived.
- The Sacramental life is central to developing and sustaining the Catholic faith.
- Frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist is encouraged for the entire family.
- The Gospel values as expressed in the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, and Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are professed, cultivated and practiced.
- The virtues are fostered and practiced in everyday life.
- Studying the lives of the saints as examples for our own lives is promoted.
- The practice of prayer for growth in the spiritual life is emphasized. Family participation in Mass, Holy Hours, Rosaries, Novenas, and personal prayers are promoted and encouraged.
- We acknowledge that each child is created in the image and likeness of God, created as male or female, and each child's dignity as a unique child of God is to be nurtured and developed.
- Jesus' command to love God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is central to living out our faith.

## **Parents' Role**

- Parents are the primary educators of their children in the area of faith formation, especially by the example they set. The family is the *Domestic Church* and the place where a child first experiences the Catholic faith; it's hard to beat "catechesis at the dinner table!" Parents are asked to work with their child in completing the homework assigned by the Religious Education teacher. **Parents should review that homework for completion and accuracy and should sign the completed homework.**

The Religious Education program should merely complement, *not replace*, the religious education children receive in the home. The Religious Education program assists parents in their God-given role as educators of the Catholic faith by:

- Providing weekly religious education classes for the children in a classroom setting
- Having the children spend time in the presence of Our Lord in the Tabernacle
- Providing weekly homework assignments on which students and parents should work together
- Presenting the truth of the Roman Catholic faith as handed down by Jesus Christ through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church, and the Church Fathers

## **Students' Role**

All classes begin in the church with "Holy Ten Minutes" of prayer. Students should arrive no earlier than 15 minutes before class is scheduled to begin, but should make every effort to be seated in the church five (5) minutes prior to class start time. Students are expected to be punctual and prepared for class each week. In addition:

- Each week, students should bring their textbooks, writing utensils, and completed homework assignments signed by a parent or guardian.
- Students should come ready to learn and to participate in class.
- Students should exhibit Christian behavior at all times.
- Christian love of neighbor demands that every student has the right to learn in a classroom where students are well behaved. Similarly, every catechist and assistant catechist has the right to teach in such an environment. In the event that a student finds it difficult to exhibit proper behavior, the catechist will call upon the Religious Education office for assistance. Every attempt will be made to integrate the child into the classroom prior to contacting his/her parents.
- **Diocesan Electronic Device Policy: cell phones, smart watches, etc. are to be left at home.** If a child brings any of these items to class, it will be taken from them and returned at the end of the session.

**If your child needs to contact you, they can do so using the phone in the RE Office.**

## **Dress Code**

**Modesty is our policy - all students are expected to dress modestly!!**

Articles of clothing which depict drugs, alcohol, profanity, weapons, and/or sexual innuendo are forbidden. No student should wear excessively baggy pants, or pants with rips. All pants and shorts must be worn at the waist. If shorts are worn to class, they must be of appropriate length – NO SHORT SHORTS; shorts should be no more than three inches above the knee. **No hats are allowed. No headbands with accessories extending above/beyond the band are allowed.**

**No one should wear tight-fitting clothing including leggings**, unless leggings are worn under a dress or a tunic which is at least mid-thigh length. Halter tops, tank tops, midriff shirts, spaghetti straps, or clothing that may be considered immodest dress should not be worn.

**PAJAMAS (tops and/or bottoms) ARE NOT ALLOWED**

- A child who is dressed inappropriately according to the standards outlined above will be given a verbal warning. An email will be sent advising the parent/guardian of the warning given to the child. If the same child dresses inappropriately a second time, the parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to bring a change of clothing for the child.

## **Attendance: Arrival and Dismissal**

Parents should drop their children off at the front of the church and then **pick them up from their classroom** when the session has ended.

**Dismissal Policy:** In order to maintain a safe environment for all children and ensure that they are picked up by an authorized adult, **each child must be picked up from his or her classroom by a parent or authorized carpool driver**. Parents will wait in the vestibule to the parish hall until the scheduled end of class. **They will then be invited to proceed to the classrooms to pick up each of their children.**

## **Absence/ Early Dismissal/ Tardiness**

Please make every effort to get your children to class each week. Consistent and faithful attendance is vital for understanding the material presented. Please inform the Religious Education Office if your child(ren) will be absent – if your child is not feeling well, keep them home!!

**IMPORTANT:** If a parent or guardian must pick up a child early, he/she must check in with the Religious Education Office to sign the child out. Someone from the RE office will retrieve the student from classroom. **Please DO NOT go directly to the classroom to pick up your child!** This is extremely important for the safety of our children.

**If a student in a sacramental preparation year (Grades 2, 7, and 8) misses one-fourth (25%) or more of the scheduled classes, they may be required to retake the coursework for that year in the following year's program.**

**Tardiness:** Out of Christian charity and respect for the teacher and classmates, **please arrive on time;** tardiness can be a serious distraction – especially in the church when everyone is praying! If a student arrives after opening prayers have begun in the church, the child will wait in the Narthex with the Religious Education Assistant or a volunteer. **Please note:** three tardy arrivals or early dismissals equal one absence.

## **Class Cancellations**

**Please note** that the parish may not follow Fairfax County Schools' weather cancellation policies.

If there is a question as to whether Religious Education (CCD) classes are cancelled due to inclement weather, **please check your email inbox or the parish website: [www.straymonds.org](http://www.straymonds.org) for cancellation information.**

## **Learning Disabilities/Health Related Issues**

If your child has a learning disability or health related issues that would necessitate special consideration while attending religious education classes, please notify the Religious Education Office in writing by sending a letter or email, and by **entering the information on the registration form**. All information will remain confidential, but may be passed on to the catechist or assistant catechist to assist them in teaching your child.

## **Textbooks**

The textbooks used in our Religious Education Program are the following: "*Image of God*" series for Kindergarten and the "*Faith and Life*" series for Grades 1-8. A supplemental "Basic Study Questions" booklet will also be used for grades K-8. High School text for the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade class is *Catholicism and Reason*.

## **Testing**

**Midterm and final exams are given to all Religious Education students in grades 1 through 8** in a multiple-choice, fill in the blank or short answer format. The tests are given to students who attend Religious Education classes (and those students who are homeschooled for religious education and not using an approved program). The exam questions will come from textbook material covered in class as well as from the Basic Study Questions booklet.

**Please note:** students in grades 2, 7 and 8 are required to pass both the midterm and final exams with a minimum score of 70%.

**Please notify the Religious Education office if your child has testing accommodations in school. Every effort will be made to meet their special needs in the religious education classroom. If possible, provide a copy of your child's IEP or 504 plan.**

Catechists will **email exam grades** to the parents. Your child's teacher will send home a **Student Evaluation form or email you feedback** at the end of each semester.

**Homeschool Families, PLEASE NOTE:** Children who are homeschooled in all subjects including Religion, **and are in Sacramental preparation grades (2, 7 and 8)** are only required to take the CCD exams if the program being used is not an approved program OR the program

does not include exams. **Please contact the RE office for a list of approved programs.**

If the homeschool program is not a well-known program, parents must get approval from the pastor or take the RE exam. Parents of homeschool sacramental students **should submit the official test scores** from the approved homeschool programs to the RE office.

## **Curriculum**

The Religious Education Program Curriculum, in accord with the universal Catechism of the Catholic Church, centers on:

- The Creed and Scripture
- The Liturgy and the Seven Sacraments
- Faith and Morals
- Christian Prayer
- The Virtues
- Apologetics (how to defend the Faith)

You can view a brief description of grades 1-8 curriculum and also view the Scope and Sequence for each grade level of the Faith and Life Series here:

<https://www.ignatius.com/promotions/faithandlife/scope.htm>

## **Prayers and Lists**

Each student is expected to memorize the prayers and lists found in the **Basic Study Questions booklet** for their grade level, building on the previous year's requirements. Please work with your child to learn these prayers and lists. **The best way for your child to master a prayer is through praying regularly at home, and the best way to master the required lists is by memorization.**

Why should your children learn these prayers and lists? Because the prayers found in the BSQ booklet are a small part of the beautiful treasury of traditional prayers and devotions of our Catholic faith. The lists provide the children with a glimpse into the foundations of our faith, as well as a base from which they will learn how to live their Catholic faith.

The children will be evaluated in Religious Education class to measure success in this endeavor.

## **Works of Mercy Service Project**

With the goal of teaching the children to look beyond themselves, the St. Raymond Religious Education program will participate in a service project in cooperation with the St. Raymond Respect Life Committee.

**Every other month, starting in September** we will collect baby supplies - diapers, wipes, formula and/or new or gently used clothing up to size 2T - for the MaRiH Center in Alexandria. A reminder will be sent from the Religious Education office the week before the collection will take place.



## **Safe Environment Education**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Article 12, requires that safe environment education and training be conducted for minors. The Diocese of Arlington requires the *Circle of Grace* training to take place every year.

The age appropriate program is presented to students in all grades, 1-12, during the month of October. Depending on class size, some grades are combined (usually 1-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12). The material will be presented to each class/ group only by the Director of Religious Education or a trusted designee.

*Circle of Grace* lessons emphasize the dignity of each person and that God is always with us and wants to help us stay safe. ***Circle of Grace* is not a sex education program.** Children and youth are taught to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated. *Circle of Grace* provides a strong parent component in which parents can actively participate in their children's education and formation.

If you would like more information about the content of this program before deciding if you would like to opt your child out of this presentation, please contact the Religious Education office no later than **September 25, 2025.**

## **From the Diocesan Office of Faith Formation**

### Policies for Schools and Ministries related to the Human Person and Gender Ideology

**Students attending classes or other parish-related events (onsite or off) should wear attire appropriate to the occasion and consistent with their biological sex and with Christian modesty.**

**All young people and their family members will be addressed and referred to with pronouns and names or nicknames consistent with their God-given biological sex.**

If a young person or family member proposes the use of any different name or nickname (male, female, or neutral) in connection with the assertion of an identity at odds with biological sex, that request will be denied. Any effort to affirm something that is not true does harm to the individual.

When a young person experiences distress, confusion about sexuality, or is diagnosed with “gender dysphoria,” “body dysphoria,” or similar issues, the individual and the individual’s family may wish to seek psychological counseling to address the causes of distress and to resolve other issues. In such cases, the Diocese of Arlington supports the family’s efforts to resolve the individual’s stresses and advises parents to seek counseling from professionals whose practice reflects a Christian view of the human person and adheres to Catholic teaching. Clinics or physicians that offer “gender-affirming care” do not align with Catholic teaching and have the potential to harm both the child and the parent child relationship.

Catholic teaching emphasizes the personal unity of body and soul, and the importance of accepting one’s sexed body as a gift from our Creator. Consequently, the Catholic Church opposes all interventions intended to facilitate the individual’s rejection of his or her biological sex, or to facilitate the individual’s assertion of an identity at odds with biological sex. The Diocese of Arlington cannot support or accommodate any aspect of what is commonly known as a “gender transition,” including social transition, medical transition (puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones), and surgical transition.

**7/2025**