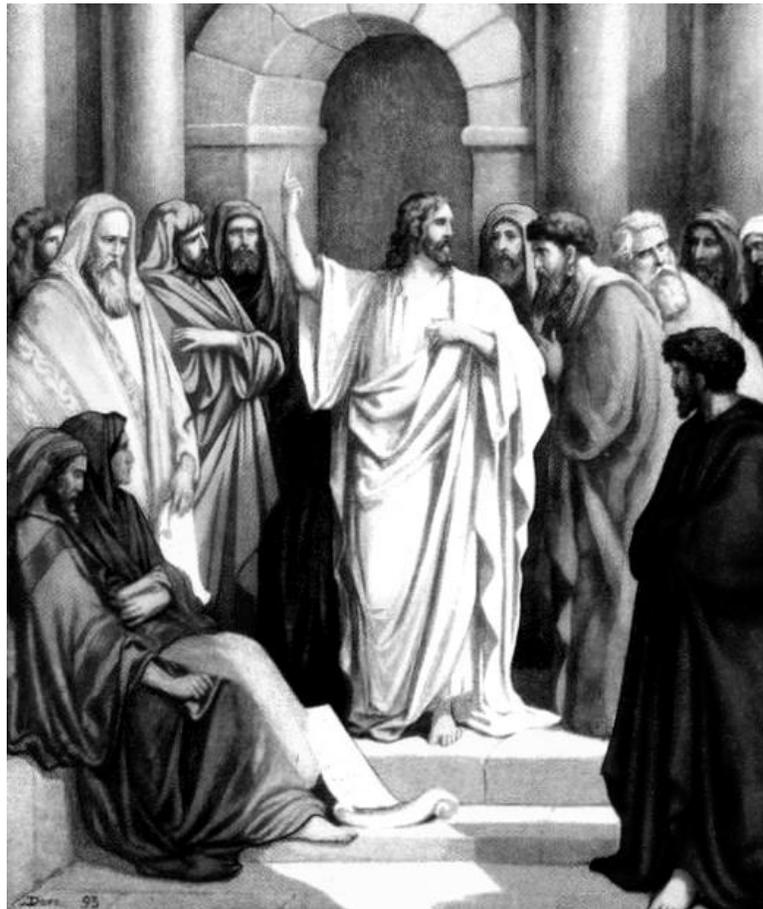


# **St. Raymond of Peñafort Catholic Church**

## **Religious Education Program**



### **Parent Handbook for Academic Year 2020-2021**

Dear Parents:

Whether you are a new parishioner or a return parishioner, I am delighted to welcome you (back) to St. Raymond's Religious Education Program (CCD) as we begin a new school year. Last year was a great year, as we saw both the level of enthusiasm and test scores of the kids greatly improve across the board. So I am very excited about the coming year, and, along with 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. Over the last few of years we've made a lot of changes to our program in pursuit of that goal. I am very proud of our staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to putting my hopes and prayers into practice. And last year it really all seemed to come together, and I am so gratified to see the positive effects in our students, and the satisfaction of so many parents who have come to understand and share in our vision. I thank you all for your patience and your openness to our efforts.

This year I'm looking forward to building on our past years' successes. We built a solid foundation, now we can 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 why we prioritize giving our kids a solid foundation in their faith. 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 the coming CCD year, and I'm committed to doing all in my power to making 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 Faith, as taught by the one teacher, Jesus Christ, handed down by the Apostles, and reiterated through the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

We acknowledge that each child is created in the image and likeness of God and each child's dignity as a unique child of God is to be nurtured and developed. 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 Faith.
- The Word of God is revered and incorporated into the weekly lessons.
- Our Blessed Mother, as the first disciple of Jesus, is our model.
- The 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 for the entire family is encouraged.
- The Gospel values as expressed in the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, 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 stressed. Family participation in Holy Hours, Rosaries, Novenas, personal prayers, and Mass attendance are promoted and encouraged.

## **Parents' Role**

- Parents are the primary religious educators of their children, 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 Faith by:

- Providing weekly religious education classes for children in a classroom setting and spending time in the presence of Our Lord in the Tabernacle in the Church.
- Providing weekly homework assignments on which students and parents should work together.
- Providing 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**

Students are expected to be punctual and prepared for class each week. Students should arrive no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of class, but should make every effort to be in class five (5) minutes before class begins. If there is no teacher in the classroom upon arrival, student and parent should wait in the hallway until the teacher or assistant arrives. **PLEASE NOTE:** Teacher reserves the right to prepare for class and not admit children until 5 minutes before class begins. 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 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.
- From the Office of Child Protection: students are asked to **leave cell phones and all electronic devices at home**. If they bring them to class, they will be asked to turn them off and leave them in a container in the classroom and retrieve them at the end of the session.

## **Dress Code**

It is preferred that shorts not be worn to class. If shorts are worn to class, they must be of appropriate length – NO SHORT SHORTS. If shorts are worn, they should be no more than three inches above the knee. 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 must be worn at the waist. **No hats or 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 under a “big shirt”/ 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. Boys should not wear tank tops or any other articles of immodest dress.

> 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 /Early Dismissal/Absence**

**Because of the different configurations of each parish, the Office of Risk Management has asked that every parish formulate their own policy with regard to dropping off and picking up children for CCD classes.** Father De Celles has decided not to change the policy which is already in place, which requires parents to escort their children (Grades K-8) to the classroom and also to pick them up at their classroom when the session has ended.

Your child should be in his/her seat and ready to begin class at the starting time, as students will be going up to the church after class attendance is taken.

Consistent and faithful attendance is vital for understanding the material presented. Please make every effort to get your children to class each week. **Please inform the Religious Education Office if your child(ren) will be absent.**

**IMPORTANT:** If a parent or guardian must pick up a child early, he/she must first check in with the Religious Education Office to sign the child out. Someone from the RE office will retrieve the student from class. 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 year (Grades 2, 7, or 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.**

**Please note:** three tardy arrivals or early dismissals equal one absence.

## **Tardiness**

Out of Christian charity and respect for the teacher and classmates, **please arrive for class on time**; tardiness can be a serious distraction! If a student arrives after opening prayers have begun in the classroom, please have the child wait outside the classroom until prayer is concluded, then he/she may enter. **If a student arrives after their class has gone up to the church, the parent must stay with the child in the Parish Hall until their class returns. Please DO NOT take the student directly to the church** as this will only interrupt the meditation time of the students in the church.

## **Class Cancellations**

Please note that Religious Education classes follow Fairfax County School closings *for inclement weather*.

If classes or after school activities/programs in Fairfax County Schools are cancelled due to inclement weather, the religious education classes at our parish are also cancelled. If Fairfax County schools dismiss early due to inclement weather, religious education classes are cancelled. On bad weather days, if classes have NOT been cancelled, please use your best judgment in bringing your child to class if the roads in your neighborhood seem unsafe.

When in doubt, check 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, email, or 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 First through Eighth Grade. Each student will also receive a supplemental *“Basic Study Questions”* booklet. High School texts include the *Didache* series in Grades 9 and 10 and *Catholicism and Ethics* in Grades 11 and 12.

## **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 home-schooled for religious education only. The exam questions will come from textbook material covered in class as well as from the Basic Study Questions booklet.

**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.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Parents who homeschool their children in all subjects including Religion, **and have students in Sacramental preparation (Grade 2 and Grades 7-8)** are asked to administer the Religious Education exams to their children or to have them come in and take the test during exam week. These parents may alternatively administer a midterm and final exam using the tests from the particular homeschool program they are using. Please provide the Religious Education Office with the completed and graded test.

## **Student Evaluations**

Catechists will provide a standard written evaluation of a student's progress twice during the school year (January and May). The student will be evaluated on understanding content, participation in class, homework completion and behavior. The report will include midterm and final exam grades and may also contain comments from the Catechist.

## **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 request a brief description of each grade level curriculum from the Religious Education Office or view the Scope and Sequence section 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 (BSQ) booklet** for their grade level, building on the previous year's requirements. Please work with your child to learn these prayers and lists. **The only way your child can master a prayer is through repetition, and the only way to master the required lists is by memorization.** Praying regularly at home will help them to master the required prayers, and memorization drills will help with learning the lists.

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 providing 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.

## **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 training to take place every year. St. Raymond Religious Education program uses *Formation in Christian Chastity* for Grades 1-8 and *Called to Protect* for Grades 9-12 to meet this requirement.

The appropriate program will be presented to students in Grade 1 and in Grades 5-12 during the month of October. It is not a requirement to present the program to grades 2-4. The Director of Religious Education or the RE Secretary will be presenting the material to each class.

Please go to the Child Protection/Youth Training link on the Diocesan website: <https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/child-protection/youth-training-programs/> to review information pertaining to all grade levels. If you wish to opt your child out of this presentation, and you did not indicate such on the Registration form, please contact the Religious Education Office no later than **September 30, 2020.**

