

St Robert Bellarmine Religious Education Handbook



MISSION STATEMENT

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son so that all who believed in Him would never die but have eternal life.” Jn 3:16

In the Rite of Baptism we read:

“Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

Our mission is to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. We believe that God is the source of all Truth. We believe that, by faith, we are all saved in Jesus Christ. We are each called by name to be His disciples and faithful stewards of His good gifts. As good stewards we are called to lead others to Jesus Christ through prayer, good works and examples. Beginning at baptism and continuing through life, we hope to enable the members of our parish community to discover, grow and mature in their faith experience. We will make every effort to help others to deepen their relationship with Christ and His Church.

In addition to instructing your child in Christian truth, we welcome this opportunity to assist you in fulfilling your primary obligation in teaching your children to walk in the ways of faith. This can only be done when each family places Jesus Christ and His teaching at the center of their lives through Sunday worship, family prayer and daily living of the Christian mission.

As partners in faith formation, we look forward to sharing the task of communicating Catholic Christian values to your children. As we pray together, talk together and plan together, we can fully integrate ourselves as believers of Jesus Christ. We embrace the Catholic standard of living by using as our guide Sacred Scripture, Tradition and the teaching authority of the Church. Together, we can support each other in instilling these values in our children.

A strong foundation in the Catholic tradition of faith in the Trinity will help our children navigate all the challenges throughout their lives. Living life in the Catholic lifestyle means being a witness to Jesus Christ everyday by what we say, what we do at home, at work, at school and at play. We join together each week in celebration of that witness when we gather for Mass.

Mass Attendance

Weekly attendance at Mass with your children is an essential part of their religious education and Catholic faith formation. Our Catholic tradition reminds us that Jesus is present in the Word (Scriptures), Sacrament (Eucharist) and in the people who have assembled. We join together in praise, thanksgiving and worship of God. The songs we sing and the scriptures we read remind us of the teachings of Jesus. Together, we are renewed, validated and affirmed. We make the choice to go deeper in faith and love with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (There is a beautiful song called " *All are welcome in this place!*")

PARTICIPATION AT Sunday Mass

Participating at Sunday Mass (or Saturday evening Mass) each and every week throughout the year is an awesome privilege and a grave responsibility for every Catholic Christian. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to His Church. The faithful give witness to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (#2182, Catechism of the Catholic Church). To be in our program of preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation means to commit to the weekly celebration of Holy Mass at Saint Robert Bellarmine throughout the year.

The Purpose of Catechesis



"My Sheep Hear My Voice"

We believe that God, through Jesus in the power of God's Spirit, speaks to the hearts of all people. We believe that His witnessing and believing people can hear His voice. The process of growth and maturing in faith demands careful attention and guidance. Until each person comes to the understanding of who they are in Christ, no amount of doctrinal information or memorization of facts are adequate to make them responsible and mature Christians. ***The ultimate purpose of catechesis is to enable the Word of God to speak to the hearts of every person so that it is heard and believed in through the sharing and supporting of our common vision.***

To Achieve The Goals Outlined In Our Philosophy We Have Set These Objectives:

- To develop in all persons a sense of wonder and awe, a familiarity with prayer and worship. To develop a spirit of love and determination to ever deepen their friendship and walk with Jesus
- To rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to move us into a deeper friendship with Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father
- To provide all persons with essential knowledge of the content of their faith that they may understand what it means to be a Catholic Christian
- To enable all persons to deepen their experience of, to better understand, and to more fully participate in the Sacraments of Initiation and Healing
- To enable each person to move in the Gifts and Power of the Holy Spirit
- To allow the Holy Spirit to move like a mighty wind within us, guiding us by the fire of His love
- To assist all persons in the formation of conscience and to establish Christian values that will foster Christian living

- To foster a love of the Word of God and an ease in using Scripture for prayer and direction in daily living
- To introduce to all persons the concept of community and the Christian dimension of spreading the love of Jesus (Evangelization)
- To allow all persons to experience Christian service and involvement through participation in the family, the parish, and the world community

Conformation Guidelines

The Sacrament of Confirmation is never to be taken lightly, nor is it to be received without proper preparation and careful consideration on the part of both candidate and those who both prepare and support him/her. It is for this reason that we make every effort to ensure that each person confirmed is properly formed in the faith of Jesus Christ, and has the knowledge and experience of the Church, which is His body, living and present in our world.

Catechetical Components

“Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.” Acts 8: 14-17

In Brief

Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which deepens the Holy Spirit in order to root us more fully and more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to our faith in words accompanied by deeds.

Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian’s soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once in one’s life. The essential rite of Confirmation is anointing the forehead with the sacred chrism together with the laying on of the minister’s hand and the words: “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A SPONSOR

First, sponsors should have already received the three sacraments of Christian initiation; namely, Baptism, First Eucharist and Confirmation. If some persons have not yet received one of these sacraments, they should decline an invitation to be a sponsor until they do so.

Sponsors also should be practicing Catholics. They should participate at Mass on Saturday/Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and they should receive the sacraments of Holy Communion and Reconciliation regularly. The whole purpose of the sacramental life of the Church is to nourish us on our journey of faith. If those who lead the way are not nourished properly, they will falter and eventually be unable to keep up with the pace of Christian living. When that happens, how can they lead others?

We often talk about the Christian vocation. Sponsors should be living the Christian vocation faithfully and conscientiously either as single persons or as persons validly married in the church. Yes, religious and clergy can serve in these roles. But those married by a justice of the peace, those living together without the benefit of marriage and those who have been divorced and remarried without a declaration of annulment from the diocesan tribunal

concerning the previous marriage(s) are not eligible to fulfill the role of sponsor for Confirmation. It is possible to rectify that situation, but, unfortunately, one cannot do so hurriedly. This is why pastors always encourage folks not to procrastinate when they find themselves in such a painful dilemma. They are not excluded from the church community but they have incurred some impediments, which limit their participation in the full sacramental life of the church.

Sponsors also should be striving to live out in a very active way their own baptismal **commitment to Christ and his Church by the way they treat others. Furthermore, they should believe all that the Roman Catholic Church teaches and believes and** should be making a serious effort to lead a life of virtue, avoiding temptations that inevitably lead to sin.

Parents of those to be baptized or confirmed are not eligible to serve as sponsors, but grandparents and older age siblings are eligible. Parents have a more important role as first teachers of the faith.

Sponsors should be at least 16 years of age and thereby be able to assume the responsibility which God and the church place before them in serving as guides and companions for those being welcomed into the life and full share of the mission of the church.

Last but not least, sponsors should promise to give their support to these sacramental candidates by their prayers and the example of their Christian lives each and every day. The roles of sponsors are serious and effective evangelizing resources for our church's mission. In many ways, together with parents, godparents, and sponsors are the principal formators in the way of Christian living for those whom they accompany to the saving waters of Baptism and the holy anointing of Confirmation.

Attendance:

Due to a limited number of teaching hours, it is important that a student be present for each class unless illness or other serious reasons prevent their attendance. If a child is ill and unable to attend class, the parent must e-mail the Director. Students are responsible for completing any missed work.

Our policy on attendance is as follows:

All students will attend classes and avoid absences and / or tardiness. No more than 3 absences will be allowed throughout the year. In the case of an absence, a parent must email the Director in advance (or as soon as possible in the event of illness). Make-up work will be required. The policy on make-up work is below.

Excessive absences may prevent the student's advancement in the religious education program, as a major factor in Faith Formation is learning as part of a community. Students excessive absences may be required to complete additional make-up lessons over winter break or summer vacation in order to advance to the next grade. The Director will contact families individually if necessary.

MAKE-Up Work

Students who are absent from class must complete make-up lessons. Students who know they will be absent in advance should contact the Director to receive the make-up work. Students who have an unplanned absence will be given their make-up assignment upon arrival to the next class. Make-up work is due the following class.

Retreat Requirement

The purpose of the Confirmation retreat is to step aside from everyday activities, to quiet the mind and the soul to be better disposed and more sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit. This retreat also allows the candidate to fully focus on the meaning of the Sacrament that he/she has been preparing to receive. Although the practice is older than Christianity, the example of Christ's forty days in the desert makes such retreats an important practice to be imitated, as far as possible, by his followers.

Diocesan requirements stipulate that Confirmation students must attend a retreat. Retreat dates will be clearly defined by the beginning of the Confirmation program so that you are able to reserve that date on your family calendar. Extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the candidate will be taken into consideration and a make-up retreat will be scheduled.

RESPECT AND COURTESY

All candidates are to be respectful toward the coordinator, their classmates, and especially their classroom catechists. Disrespect, discourtesy, and class disruption will not be tolerated. The program coordinator, the parish priests, or a catechist may issue two "warnings" to a student who exhibits discourtesy, disrespect, or is a disruption. On the third offense, the student will be removed for the remainder of the class and sent to the coordinator. The parents will be notified by phone and the student will be placed on probation. Disrespect and discourtesy are clear indications that a student is not ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

CELL PHONES, TEXTING , AND INTERNET

The use of cell phones for texting and web browsing is strictly forbidden. Students may need cell phones to contact parents after class, but cell phones must be turned off and may never be used during class time. Emergencies should be reported to the coordinator of the program, who will contact parents if necessary. Catechists and the St. Robert Bellarmine staff reserve the right to confiscate cell phones. Cell phones confiscated will be given to the program director until the conclusion of the class session or event.

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to dress appropriately so as not to distract those around them. Hats are not to be worn inside the parish buildings. No tank tops for boys or girls. Skirts and shorts should be appropriate length.

Confirmation Name & Saint Reflection

As a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation, you will take the name of a saint as your "Confirmation Name." This will be recorded in the Catholic Church's official records, and the saint you choose will take a special interest in you –yes, YOU! You can ask in prayer for your saint's assistance and intercession, and trust that they will then pray for you to God.

You have two options when choosing a Confirmation name:

1.

You may choose your present baptismal name if it is a saint's name. This shows the sacramental connection between Baptism and Confirmation, which, along with the Eucharist, constitute the Sacraments of Initiation.

2.

You may also choose the name of a saint who inspires you. Taking a new name at Confirmation is an expression of a desire to accept a new role in the Church. There are several Scripture stories of peoples whose names changed after they experienced a call from God. Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, and Saul to Paul are a few examples.

It is important and necessary to know something about the saint before you decide on the name. Conduct research, and then write a one page minimum, double - typed report on your saint.

The report should include the following:

1. Birth, death date of the saint
2. Where they were born and lived.
3. A little bit about their early years.
4. What called them to a life of holiness?
5. What did the saint do during their lifetime or death that was Christ-like?
What are they known for?
6. What is their feast day?
7. Why did you select this name/saint?

Safe Environment Training:

As mandated by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and in cooperation with the Office of Education & Compliance of the Diocese of Providence, all St. Robert Bellarmine parish employees and volunteers receive Safe Environment Training to ensure that all young people in our parish come to know God and His Church in a safe and appropriate setting. The Diocese of Providence also requires mandatory background criminal investigations for those who work with children and young people. Only those who successfully pass a background check are permitted to serve as volunteers. The Office of Education & Compliance impartially investigates each and every complaint received.

RITE OF ENROLLMENT

I, _____, understand that my preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is a responsibility that I choose to accept. I thereby agree to:

- Cooperate to the best of my ability with the parish program preparing me for the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Participate in the learning sessions, activities, and spiritual opportunities provided by my parish community
- Try to become a more active and involved member of this parish
- Offer my talents and services where needed
- Accept more responsibility in my family, community and parish
- Participate in the weekend and Holy Day Masses regularly
- Seriously reflect on my decision to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation

I Place myself in the loving hands of God, and to ask for blessings and assistance, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, that I may keep the promises that I have made by this agreement.

•
Candidate's signature _____ Date _____

Witnesses: Parents _____

