

Christ the King Catholic Church

Religious Education Handbook



Religious Education Office: 870-2509, Fax: 357-6023
William Woodard, Director, bwoodard@ctk-tampa.org

Parish Office: 876-5841, Website: www.ctk-tampa.org
821 South Dale Mabry Highway, Tampa, Florida 33609

Youth Ministry Office: 873-2804

Class Times: Session 1 8:50 A.M. - 10:05 A.M. 3 year-olds - Kind.
Session 2 10:15 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Kind. - 8th grade

Mass Times: Saturday Vigil 5:30 P.M.
Sunday 7:30, 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.
12:30 and 5:30 P.M.

Rite of Reconciliation:
Wednesday 7:00 – 8:00 P.M.
Saturday 4:15 – 5:15 P.M.

MISSION

The mission of parish religious education is to assist all people in learning and living the mystery of Jesus Christ. To serve this mission, through the help of God's grace, we offer formal and informal instruction and formation whereby each individual may embrace a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and live as His follower for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Sincere cooperation between parish staff and member families is necessary to bring about the formation of children and youth. Such formation includes their growth in understanding and acceptance of Catholic doctrine; awareness of, and active participation in, Catholic liturgical and sacramental life; embracing the fundamental principles of Catholic morality; exercising the life of Catholic prayer.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents are the primary educators responsible for the spiritual growth of their children. As stated in The Catechism of the Catholic Church #2226:

“Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years...Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.”

Pope John Paul II stated in 1979, On Catechesis in Our Time #23: “Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Jesus Christ works in fullness for the transformation of human beings.”

As Catholics, **we have an obligation to attend Mass each weekend** and teach our children about the Mass by word and example. It is the parents' responsibility to insure that their children attend Mass weekly. **Religious education does not take the place of Mass nor does it fulfill the obligation of participating in the Mass.**

PARISH STAFF AND FAMILY

All members of a community of believers are called to share in the ministry of witnessing to the faith. The term *catechist* is used in a broad sense to designate one who, directed by parish staff, participates in formal or informal religious education ministry. Recognizing that **parents are the primary catechists of their children**, the parish staff understands that the family, as the domestic church, is the place where faith is planted and nurtured. The staff is committed to assist parents in the cultivation of the on-going development of faith already begun in the home. We encourage each individual adult and child to develop his or her personal gifts and to grow, as Jesus did, in wisdom and grace. We wish to offer children opportunities to strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ by hearing and experiencing His words within the witnessing parish community. To this end the parish staff strives to:

- provide an environment where Gospel values are fostered.
- provide opportunities for prayer, reflection and liturgical celebrations to stimulate each one's relationship with Christ.
- provide intellectual challenges appropriate to each level.
- invite and encourage parish catechists, as witnesses of the Good News, to participate in opportunities to update and deepen their faith.
- offer sacramental programs that invite family and parish participation.

- challenge our students to bring the teachings of Jesus into their lives and, by service to others, into their families and the larger community.

These goals are best met in parish community life. Together as a Christian faith team of parish staff and family, we, by reason of our Baptism, can profess and bring to fulfillment the values and promises of the Kingdom of God.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THIS HANDBOOK

At the time of registration for Religious Education, all parents should sign and return to the Office of Religious Education an acknowledgement indicating receipt of this handbook and agreement to read the content found within. The procedures and policies as outlined in this handbook will govern all programs implemented by the Office of Religious Education of Christ the King Catholic Church.

HARASSMENT POLICY FOR NON-EMPLOYMENT SITUATIONS IN SCHOOLS/CENTERS, PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAMS OF THE DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

The Diocese of St. Petersburg requires that each parish, Catholic school or early childhood center establish and adopt this policy that prohibits any form of harassment by any individual. The Diocese of St. Petersburg strives for the establishment of Christian professional and supportive educational programs, schools, early childhood centers and parish youth ministry programs in non-employment situations. No parish, school or early childhood center will be responsible for off-campus harassment, unless it occurs at a parish-, school-, or early childhood center-sponsored event.

Purpose of the policy This policy intends:

that each individual be free from physical, psychological or verbal intimidation and harassment in the schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry settings;

that each individual involved in schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry programs maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for others and are reflective of each person's God-given dignity;

to encourage a heightened sensitivity toward behaviors that others may find offensive and intimidating, whether these behaviors refer to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, veteran status or disability.

This policy is not intended to otherwise limit the expectation of staff, children, students and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebration, participating in and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the Sacraments, other liturgies, worship services and ministries.

Explanation of harassment

Harassment can result from a single incident or from a pattern of behavior involving verbal, written or physical conduct or communication.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of behaviors which could include, but are not limited to:

- Physical, mental or verbal abuse
- Insults, jokes or derogatory slurs based on one or more of an individual's protected status(es)
- Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
- Implicit or explicit requests for sexual favors
- Unwanted sexual comments (serious or humorous)
- Unwanted sexually suggestive telephone calls, letters, e-mail, etc.
- Comments or jokes based on issues of modesty and developing social awareness

- Unwanted forced involvement in any activity
- Coercion of religious styles or personal beliefs upon a participant
- Intimidation in front of or forced personal sharing in groups
- Inappropriate media or music use which would violate this policy

Confidentiality

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the accused, will be respected to the extent possible, but will be consistent with legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.

Reporting and investigative procedures

Any adult suspicious of child abuse or who has been informed by a child of abuse must immediately contact the abuse hotline: 1-800-96 ABUSE to report what has been learned of the abusive situation. In addition, individuals involved with the Parish Religious Education programs must report their concerns to their Catechetical Leader, the Pastor, or the Diocesan Director of Religious Education. If an individual is uncomfortable reporting to the above persons, the report should be made to the office of the Executive Director for the Diocesan Department of Catholic Formation and Education.

Individuals who engage in behavior which violates this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion, dismissal, discharge, and any legal consequences for this behavior.

Retaliation against individuals who in good faith file a complaint of harassment or participate in an investigation is prohibited.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ADULTS

The Catholic Church in west central Florida is blessed with a great diversity of persons created in the divine image. We respect, honor and celebrate the image of God revealed in human uniqueness, dignity and diversity, as described in scripture: "God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them" (*Genesis 1:27*).

We believe that every child is a gift from God from the moment of conception. We believe that the children enrolled in our schools, parish religious education programs and other youth programs must be treated with dignity, respect and care, as described in *A Sacred Trust, The Safety of Our Children* (National Catholic Education Association, 2003).

An adult involved in any role of a program is defined as a person who is at least twenty-one years of age, and who has been approved to work with young people by the pastor, principal, community organization leader or a designate (McCarthy, 2002). We serve all young people without regard to gender, creed, national origin, age, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, political beliefs or disabilities. All adults working with youth in any capacity must be approved through the proper background checks and screening as required by the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

This code is not intended to otherwise limit the expectations of staff, children, students, and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebrating, participating in and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the sacraments, other liturgies, worship services and ministries. This code is used in conjunction with existing diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and is not intended to supersede them.

Professional roles

1. Adults recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that are disrespectful to anyone of any group.

2. Adults work collaboratively with the pastor, supervisors and associates in community, ministry, or school programs. These adults distinguish their own private opinions from those of the Catholic faith or their profession in all publicity, public announcements or publications.
3. Adults have a responsibility in all relationships to witness the chastity appropriate to their vocation in life, whether celibate, married or single.
4. Adult leaders are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities working with youth. They are to be made aware of all diocesan policies for working with youth.
5. Adults are aware they have considerable personal power because of their position or ministry. Therefore, they will sustain respectful relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power.
6. Adults maintain appropriate professional boundaries, e.g., physical, sexual, relational and emotional. Appropriate use of time for working with, speaking with and engaging with children and youth is an important boundary. Adults are not to be available 24/7, but rather work within normal expected time frames.
7. Adults model healthy and positive behaviors with young children, adolescents and other adults.
8. Adults must never engage in sexual intimacies or overt sexual behaviors with children and/or youth. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, covert or overt seductive speech or any gesture that sexually abuses, exploits or harasses another person.
9. Touching should be age-appropriate and based on the need of the minor and not on the need of the adult. An adult is to avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. If a minor initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper.
10. Procuring, providing or using alcohol and/or any controlled substance for or with youth is inappropriate, unethical and illegal.
11. Adults should never possess or use alcohol or drugs while supervising and/or participating in a youth activity.
12. Adults always meet with young people in areas that are visible and accessible.
13. One-on-one meetings with a young person are best held in a public area. If that is not possible, then the door to the room is left open. A parent and/or another adult is to be notified about the meeting whenever feasible.
14. It is always a preferred practice to have two adults present in the area where youth are present.
15. Driving alone with a young person should be avoided.
16. Adults are not to be alone with minors in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, restroom, dressing facility, other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
17. Audiovisual, music and print resources used in programs must be screened prior to use to ensure their appropriateness for the participants. It is never appropriate to use an "R" rated movie without parental consent or without screening for sexual content, nudity, language, violence and themes or content which harm the dignity of the human person. Even "PG" movies should be reviewed carefully. Movies with ratings stronger than "R" are never appropriate. Music lyrics should also be reviewed to ensure their appropriateness. Parents should be informed of movies that will be used in conjunction with any program.

18. The computer and internet are acceptable and common means of communication and entertainment. Adults must never engage with sexually explicit and/or pornographic materials or chat rooms with children and youth. They should not use any computer software, games or any form of internet personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents.
19. Adults are trained to be aware of the signs of physical, sexual and psychological abuse and neglect.
20. Adults are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and will make appropriate referrals.
21. Adults agree to adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy and procedure for reporting abuse, suspected abuse or neglect.
22. Adults are aware of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, harassment, safety, transportation, parental permission and medical emergency policies.

BACKGROUND CHECK/SAFE ENVIRONMENT WORKSHOPS

To provide the safest possible environment for our children, all adults who take on positions of responsibility, and who at times will probably be alone with those they are serving, must be **Level 2 Background Screened and Fingerprinted** and must attend a **Safe Environment Workshop**. **No adult may work in positions of responsibility for children without having completed these two requirements.** The Safe Environment Workshop may be presented at the parish or at other locations only a few times each year. For this reason, your intention to volunteer with children should be known as far in advance as possible.

The parish will present annually a **Parent/Student Safe Environment Education Program** to provide children and their parents with information about, and skills for avoiding, potentially unsafe situations that could put children at risk for abuse of all types, but especially sexual abuse.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHILDREN

The first premise of this code is that children and youth function best when behaviors and expectations are clearly defined. It is accepted that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children in all aspects of their development. This experience aims at developing upright citizens and good Christians. As Jesus said to his disciples, "I give you a new commandment: love one another" (John 13:34-35).

In 1 Timothy 4:12, we read, "Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity." Timothy is urged to rely on the gifts he has received from God. This code urges our children and youth to rely on God's gifts to them, especially charity, chastity and purity. This calls the young to acknowledge and promote one's personal dignity and the rights that go with it.

It becomes important for children and youth to know the difference between "right" and "not right" relationships. "Right" relationships foster personal, spiritual, and emotional growth, e.g., the ability to communicate, to forgive, to show affection, to be honest, vulnerable, dependable, etc. "Not right" relationships become harmful, hurtful and even abusive. Abuse occurs when someone does not respect another's boundaries, uses power, tricks, threats or violence to cross or change another's boundaries, or inflicts hurtful or unwanted behavior (physical, verbal, emotional or sexual) on another person.

This code is used in conjunction with existing local or diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and is not intended to supercede them.

When engaging in formal and informal activities, functions and programs, children and youth are expected to behave appropriately at all times, respecting the rights of others.

1. Christian behavior is expected at all times.
2. Respect is required for individuals, the community and the facilities being used.
3. Cooperation and self-control are necessary when participating in programs and activities.
4. Dress must be in accord with the activity and appropriate for a Christian environment.
5. Unacceptable behavior and lack of cooperation will not be tolerated, but will be addressed appropriately. Examples of unacceptable behavior are as follows, though not limited to:
 - disrespect for adults and peers
 - use of vulgar language or gesture, use of racial slurs
 - damaging of property
 - fighting or intent to injure others
 - constant disturbance of others at work or in an activity
 - cheating
 - stealing
6. Possession of weapons, possession, sale or use of alcohol or drugs is forbidden.
7. No child or youth has the right to treat another in any manner that will cause physical or emotional pain. Therefore, harassment of any kind is un-Christian and unacceptable.
8. Coercion or threats to do something physically hurtful or for the purpose of exposing someone or something about another is unacceptable behavior.
9. Chastity is a virtue to be held in high esteem and promoted in practice. Sexual abuse of any sort, coercing a person to engage in sexual acts against her or his will, physically touching the sexual parts of another's body or treating a person like a sexual object are unacceptable and abusive behaviors. Consensual sex between students or initiated by minors to adults must never occur.
10. Religious education classes are a time for sharing in God's Kingdom. This sharing is a privilege and must be treated as such. Teachers deserve full support and cooperation. This includes listening, following directions and participating in the activities of the class. Walkmans, CD players, Nintendo or other entertainment devices not required for class are not permitted. Students who interfere with other students' rights and classroom goals by being disrespectful or persistently disruptive will have their parents called. If, after parent consultation to resolve the problem, the child's behavior does not improve, the student will be dismissed from class and provided with home-schooling materials.

PROGRAMMING AND VOLUNTEERING

Availability of classes is dependent on the generosity of adult volunteers who teach, assist and support classes of children. We encourage you to join our team of catechists, assistants and others devoted to providing a meaningful community experience for your child.

ADMISSION

Admission to the Religious Education program is open to all families who live within the parish boundaries and who are active, registered and contributing members of Christ the King Catholic Church. Exceptions to this policy may be made for those who, for a good reason, cannot attend the religious education programs at their own

parish. Catholic parents seeking an exception to this policy must obtain a letter from the Pastor of their parish granting permission for children to receive religious instruction at Christ the King Church. Upon receipt of this letter, the decision on exceptions will be made by the DRE in consultation with the Pastor of Christ the King Church.

SAFE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF STUDENTS

Your child's safety is of primary concern. Please sign your child into and out of his/her class. Students will not be released to anyone other than a parent/guardian unless written notice is issued to the Office of Religious Education, from the parent/guardian, granting permission otherwise. Any student (EC3 through Grade 8) not picked up by ten minutes after dismissal time will be taken to the Office of Religious Education to wait for their parent/guardian.

ATTENDANCE

We ask parents to take seriously the enterprise of parish religious education. Regular attendance demonstrates your commitment to this aspect of your child's spiritual development; bringing him or her to class on time shows how you value the program. If an absence from class is foreseen, please notify the religious education office. **We welcome your child's friends to class.** Please personally introduce your child's friend to the catechist before class begins.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

Sacrament involves relationship with Jesus and presumes faith. Readiness, not age or grade, is the criterion for the reception of a sacrament. The celebration of sacraments is the action of the community. The family has an essential role in the preparation for and celebration of a sacrament. Since the pastor has the canonical right and obligation to administer the sacraments to his parishioners, preparation and reception of a sacrament is done in and by the parish to which the family is registered and participating. Whether a student attends a parish religious education program or a Catholic school, the sacraments are received in the parish to which the family belongs.

Remote Preparation is a period of evangelization and systematic religious education prior to the year of immediate preparation. There should be at least one year of religious education prior to the year of immediate preparation for First Rite of Reconciliation and First Eucharist. This guideline is met through participation in a Catholic school or parish religious education program.

Immediate Preparation involves preparation separate from and in addition to current and regular religious education. These meetings require the participation of the children preparing to receive the sacraments and their parents. They are intended to provide parents with the information and skills necessary to determine if their children are ready to receive the sacraments.

Follow-up: Christian living has to be learned, and a child's religious life needs constant nourishment. The goal of the rites of Christian initiation is a permanent and maturing relationship with Jesus Christ. On-going participation in the liturgical/sacramental, catechetical and apostolic life of the parish strengthens and deepens that relationship.

ACRE TESTING

For purposes of assessing the Religious Education program at Christ the King, the Diocese of St. Petersburg has established guidelines for administering the Assessment of Catholic Religious Education to Grades 5, 8, and 12. From this process of program analysis, the Office of Religious Education at Christ the King and the diocesan Office of Religious Education can assess the effectiveness of their religious education efforts. The content of this exam includes a religious knowledge section, religious beliefs and attitudes section, religious practices section, and a perceptions section. This assessment questionnaire will be administered as directed by the Diocesan Office of Religious Education in the spring of the school year.

RIGHT TO AMEND

This handbook is meant to provide the parent/guardian with helpful information on how parish staff and volunteers intend to go about the work of parish religious education. It is not meant to cover every situation that may occur. Christ the King Parish reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified, in writing, if changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this handbook. This handbook was last revised in August, 2008.