

Saint Frances Cabrini Parish  
Religious Education Program  
Family Handbook

Family Commitment Prayer

Dear God our Father, you have called  
all Christian families to be a sign of your love  
to the world.

Help us to be generous with the gifts of life  
and love that you have showered on our family.  
May we share them so that our homes become  
true signs of unitive and fruitful love.

Let us never forget to thank you each day  
for all that sustains us and to look to Christ,  
who comes to us in the events of family life,  
in the Sacraments of the Church,  
and in service to the poor.

In all of this, our family becomes  
a living expression of your Church,  
a hallowed home of life and love.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, may all of us—  
spouses, parents, and children—share,  
as members of his Body, in Jesus' mission  
to build a civilization of love.

Father, we ask this in Jesus' name  
in union with the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

## **Mission Statement**

**Saint Frances Cabrini Parish Religious Education Program exists to offer praise and glory to God through proper faith formation aimed at promoting a life long love of Jesus Christ within the youth He has entrusted in our care.**

**To attain our mission, our students and their families are encouraged to:**

- full, active, and conscious participation at Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation**
- develop the habit of personal and communal prayer**
- demonstrate love of others based on the dignity of each individual created in the image and likeness of God.**

# **The Role of Parents**

*Seeds of faith are planted and nurtured in the home*

Parents are the first teachers of the faith to their children. In the ritual of Baptism, parents promise to guide and encourage their children in living the Catholic faith. The Parish Religious Education Program exists to assist parents in this important task.

## **THE SIX TASKS OF CATECHESIS HOW FAMILIES SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS:**

### **1. Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith.**

The textbook, approved by the United States Bishops' Conference Office for the implementation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, presents the authentic truths in a manner that is age – appropriate for the student. Parents support the Prep's efforts when they become familiar with the child's textbook and monitor the completion of weekly homework.

### **2. Catechesis promotes understanding of the meaning of liturgy and sacraments.**

Our faith journey began in the waters of Baptism. Weekly, we are nourished by the Eucharist, “the source and summit” of Catholic life. Sacraments bring healing, peace, and grace to our lives. Family participation in the liturgical life of the Parish Community is essential to this task.

### **3. Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ.**

The challenge of lived faith is to model one's life to that of Jesus. In age-appropriate increments, our students are introduced to the Commandments and Beatitudes as guidance for Christian moral living. In this effort, families are also challenged to live gospel values, especially the Beatitudes and Works of Mercy.

### **4. Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.**

We come to know Jesus through prayer: talking and listening to God. Prayer at the beginning of the day, at meal times, and at bedtime could incorporate the traditional prayers of our Church, so that the children will learn these prayers.

### **5. Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.**

God is a Trinity of Persons. We, who are formed in God's image and likeness, are by our very nature formed to be in communion with God – and also with each other.

The family can be seen as a small faith community. In the home, children learn kindness and respect for others.

**6. Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.**

Jesus came to establish God's Kingdom on earth. We are called to bring the gospel message to all whom we meet, and to understand that our brothers and sisters include every person: near and far, young and old, healthy and frail, rich and poor.

Through their words and actions, parents powerfully convey this message to their children.

(Reference for the Six Tasks of Catechists: *National Directory for Catechesis #20*)

## **Expectations Regarding Our Students**

### **Preparation**

Students should come to class on time and prepared to work.

Therefore, we expect every child to carry a PREP bag that will hold:

- ✓ Textbook
- ✓ Program Folder
- ✓ Pencil or pen
- ✓ Homework

## **I. ATTENDANCE**

The faith formation received in the Parish religious Education Program is ongoing in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is imperative that children attend their PREP sessions regularly.

Parish Religious Education includes, but is not limited to the material contained in each grade level textbook. Prayer, community, and interaction with believers are also essential for faith formation. Accordingly, a student should be absent only for a serious reason.

If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, a parent ***MUST*** complete the following procedures:

1. Call 215-946-1115 to report the absence. A parent must leave the child's name, grade level, the date of the absence, and the reason for the absence.
2. If your child will be attending the session late, a parent must call the number listed above and provide the same information.
3. If your child fails to report to a session and no phone call is received, then the absence will be recorded as unexcused unless a doctor's note is provided upon returning to the Program. You will also receive a call from the Religious Education Office.
4. After the third unexcused absence the Director of Religious Education will contact the parents by phone to notify the parent that the child may be required to repeat the grade level and that dismissal from the Program could result should unexcused absences continue.
5. **ANY STUDENT ACCUMULATING SIX UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL BE DISMISSED FROM THE PROGRAM.** The student may re-enroll the following school year. Upon re-enrollment the student will be required to repeat the previous grade level that was not completed. This procedure may delay the reception of sacraments.
6. Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to the program. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child's formation up-to-date when possible.
  - An **absence is excused** when a parent note is received, and assigned make up work has been completed. Accordingly, no absence should ever be unexcused.
  - Please note the specific plan for how a missed class can be made up in your child's group. Make up work is to be completed within one month if the absence is to be considered "excused."

## II. LATENESS

Sessions begin promptly at their designated times. Therefore, any student arriving after the designated starting time will be considered late. It is strongly recommended that children arrive at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled class time. Lateness will be noted on Progress Reports. Chronic lateness will require a conference with a parent and might interfere with your child's promotion and reception of sacraments.

- Students who arrive after 6:30 p.m. will be recorded as late.
- Students who arrive late must be brought into the building by a parent and check in at the PREP Office before being admitted to class.

### III. ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Students should arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of a session. All students are to enter the Father Laut Building using the double doors facing the church and follow these procedures:

- Students are not permitted in a classroom without adult supervision. Any student who arrives before his/her catechist **must** wait in the hallway.
- Students may be dropped off in the parking lot to walk carefully into the building.
- Parents of students in levels k-2 and SPRED Must come into the building to pick up their child.
- All students are to enter and exit the building through the double doors facing the church building. **The gym doors are not to be used for PREP.**
- Catechists will remain in the classroom until students are picked up. In the event that parents are especially late, individual students may be picked up at the PREP Office

Early dismissal should be requested only for a significant reason. The procedure for early dismissal is:

- The parent must send a note indicating the time of dismissal.
- At the announced time, the parent must come to the PREP Office and the Hall Monitor will go to the classroom and bring the student to the parent.

### IV. ENROLLMENT & ATTENDANCE

The faith formation provided in our Program involves incremental learning. That is each year builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that students remain enrolled in the Program consistently from year-to-year.

Any student who voluntarily leaves the Program for a period of one year will be required to make-up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the Program. For example, a student who leaves the Program for a period of one year after completing level 3 and re-enrolls in the Program when they are in grade 5 will be placed into the level 4.

Any student who voluntarily leaves the Program for two or more consecutive years must fulfill the following two requirements:

1. The student will be placed into a grade level that is one below their current day school grade level. For example, a student who leaves the Program after completing level 3 and re-enrolls when the student is in 6th grade:
  - The parent is required to provide home based catechesis for level 4.
  - Upon completion of level 4, the child is accepted into level 5 to continue his/her

faith formation.

## V. NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the PREP Office with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. Saint Frances Cabrini will request these documents in the beginning of the year. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide that document to the PREP Office immediately.

Our Program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a Court Order to the contrary, our Program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a Court Order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Director of Religious Education with an official and latest copy of the Court Order.

If a Court Order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Director of Religious Education with an official copy of the Court Order or cCustody Section of the Divorce Decree.

## VI. DISCIPLINE

The Parish Religious Education Program is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching. The program has **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form.

The above noted categories therefore do not cover every possible situation. The Parish Administration determines what is considered to be inappropriate behavior. This includes behavior that reflects negatively upon the Saint Frances Cabrini Parish Community.

Conduct by children or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic, by a child against any member of the Program, the child, if suspended but not

dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance before returning to the Program.

In the event a student engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, and has failed to respond to a catechist's attempt to stop or correct the behavior, the following action may be taken and at the discretion of the Pastor or Director of Religious Education:

1. **First Incident:** The student will be removed from the session and the parent or guardian will be immediately notified by phone by the Director of Religious Education. The Director of Religious Education will schedule a conference with the parents/guardians, student, and catechist to discuss the matter.
2. **Second Incident:** The student will be removed from the session and be suspended from the Program for a period of one session. The parents/guardians will be immediately notified by the Director of Religious Education and required to pick up their child. Prior to returning to the Program the Director of Religious Education will schedule a conference with the parents, student, and catechist to further discuss the matter.
3. **Third Incident:** The student will be removed from the session and dismissed from the Program. The parents or guardians will be immediately notified by the Director of Religious Education and required to pick up their child. Following a conference with the Director of Religious Education, parents, student, and catechist, the parents will be provided with the option of having their child repeat his or her current grade level the following school year or opting to complete the current year's material by home-schooling their child. In either case, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made.

The Parish Administration reserves the right to supersede the forgoing course of action depending on the particular circumstances of any given situation.

## **VII. CONTRABAND**

**BRINGING CONTRABAND TO PROGRAM SESSIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL BE CONFISCATED AND RETURNED TO PARENTS ONLY! Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.**

Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to, chewing gum, food, beverages, toys, electronic games, beepers, walk-mans, weapons, drugs, & alcohol and tobacco products.

It is unlawful for minors to be in the possession of alcohol or tobacco products. Students found to be in the possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the



Program. Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.

### ***VIIa. SEARCH & SEIZURE***

It is the policy of the Parish Religious Education Program of Saint Frances Cabrini to respect the privacy of its students. However, in the event that a student is suspected of having weapons or drugs in his/her possession or is believed to be a threat to himself/herself or others, the Director of Religious Education will be notified immediately. The Director of Religious Education will conduct a search with an adult staff member as a witness. Refusal on the part of the student to cooperate will result in the parents/guardians being contacted and asked to assist with the search. Parents' refusal to cooperate will result in the student's immediate dismissal from the Program.

### **VIIb. CELL PHONES, PAGERS, & SPECIAL NOTES:**

We realize that cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communications open with children, especially for working parents. However, it is the policy of this Program that cell phones must be turned off upon entering the school building.

#### Classroom Participation

Although we understand that our students come to class at the end of a full school day, we can reasonably expect that:

- Students come prepared every week: with textbook, pencil, and all materials required of the class.
- Students do not arrive hungry. Remember there is no eating or drinking during class.
- Students are reasonably alert, responsive to questions from the catechist participating in classroom discussions and group activities.
- Students exhibit respect toward their catechist, other adults, peers and school property.

- Because our class time is limited, restroom and water fountain use during class should be an exception. No student may leave a classroom without proper supervision. Students should be reminded that bathroom needs are to be addressed before coming to class.
- If your child has a medical need to use the lavatory frequently, please send us a note to the PREP Office.

#### Student Attire/Demeanor

- Occasionally, PREP classes may go into the church for prayer. Accordingly, student attire should be neat and appropriate. A general rule could be that what is not acceptable in “day school” is not appropriate for PREP. Baseball caps are not to be worn in the school building.
- No chewing gum is permitted in the school building.

#### Testing and Evaluation

- The youngest students may be evaluated using verbal reviews, including memorization of basic prayers and simple Mass responses.
- Testing of Middle and Upper level students may be verbal or written through Chapter and Unit Reviews.

#### Progress Reports

Three Progress Reports will be issued during the academic year.

The purpose of this communication is as follows:

- To affirm student cooperation, participation, and understanding of material.
- To inform parents regarding areas that may need improvement so that parents can support the Catechist’s efforts.
- The Progress Report is to be signed and returned at the next session.

#### Fire and Other Emergency Procedures

- In October, a fire drill will be conducted.
- Every attempt is made to provide a safe and healthy environment.
- A minor injury or abrasion will be treated using the First Aid box available in the PREP Office. When a child suffers an injury during a session, an Incident Report will be completed and signed by the adult who witnessed the incident.

In the event of a serious emergency, the procedure is as follows:

- The Director of Religious Education will call the parents using all numbers provided. If necessary, emergency contact will be called.
- If none of the above is available and time is of the essence, an ambulance will be called and PREP staff will continue to try to reach parents while the Director of Religious Education follows the ambulance to the hospital.

## **XI. SACRAMENTS**

Preparation for the reception of a sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A student's desire to receive the sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus proper attendance and behavior are expected.

Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the sacraments of initiation, Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation) wit in the Parish where the family is registered. A student exhibiting chronic absences that is, three or more lateness, or who are a persistent discipline problem may have reception of Baptism, Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and /or Confirmation deferred until the following year or later.

## **XII. PREP FEE**

PREP Fee is a necessary and required part of the Parish Religious Education Program to ensure the most current and best catechetical resources.

In the event that your child is dismissed from the Program due to excessive absences, lateness, problem behavior, or for any other reason for dismissal, no refund of the PREP Fee will be made.

## **XIII. SNOW EMERGENCY & CANCELLATIONS**

### Weather Cancellation

PREP may be cancelled for the evening when inclement weather:

- Causes all Public and Parochial schools to close on a PREP day
- Causes all Public and Parochial schools to announce early dismissal
- Causes all Public and Parochial schools to cancel all after school programs

When inclement weather is predicted for an evening, a decision regarding PREP will be made by 3:00 p.m. Notification will be made via email. Also, in the event of inclement weather a parent will:

- Check the Parish Website at [www.saintfrancescabrini.net](http://www.saintfrancescabrini.net)
- Call the PREP Office at 215-946-1115
- Check the Parish Mobile App for messages

## ***XIV. COMMUNICATION***

### **1. Calendar**

Parents are provided with a yearly calendar at the beginning of the program year. ***This calendar is subject to change during the course of the year.*** Parents will be notified of changes by child's folder, parish bulletin, or email.

### **2. Parish Contact Information**

Parents should feel free to contact the Director of Religious Education regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. The Director of Religious Education may be contacted using any of the means listed below:

Phone	Rectory Office	215-946-1115 or 215-946-4040
Email	aholden@saintfrancescabrini.net	

Direct communication with your child's catechist is also a necessary component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to meet with their child's catechist to discuss any concerns or information that will enhance the learning experience.

## ***FINAL NOTE***

**The Parish Administration reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.**