



Saint Frances Cabrini Church
Parish Religious Education Program
Family Handbook

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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 members of our family,
adults and children,
as members of His Mystical Body,
share 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

The purpose of the Saint Frances Cabrini Parish Religious Education Program is to support parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children. We strive to provide a solid foundation, through well-structured instruction in the essential and basic beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, upon which the children of our parish can develop a mature faith. To attain our mission, the catechists, staff, students and their families are encouraged to:

- engage in full, active, and conscious participation in the celebration of the Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation
- develop the habit of personal and communal prayer
- recognize the dignity of each individual created in the image and likeness of God
- cultivate a sense of stewardship by generously sharing their time, talents, and treasure.

The Role of the Parent

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.

Parents are expected to:

- register their child for PREP prior to the start of each academic year
- ensure their child attends PREP on a regular basis and notify the office of absences
- review assignments with their child and reinforce concepts taught in class
- maintain open communications with the catechists and the PREP office

The Role of the Catechist

A catechist is a faith-filled person, called by God to instruct others in the ways of the Catholic faith, who by word and example leads others to an intimate relationship with God.

Catechists are expected to:

- respect the students and their parents
- prepare lesson plans with stated goals, objectives, tasks, and assessment strategies
- teach the curriculum for the assigned class level using approved textbook and materials
- honor and respect the confidentiality of the students and their families
- develop a partnership with parents through frequent communication and open dialogue

The Role of the Student

Children have an innate sense of God and are capable of actively participating in their own spiritual development and faith formation.

Students are expected to:

- maintain open, respectful communications with the catechists and other students
- come to class on time and prepared to work (with textbook, folder, pencil/pen)
- complete all assignments in a timely manner
- fully and actively participate in all classroom activities, prayer services, and Liturgies.

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)

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 the textbook. Prayer and a sense of community, gained through interactions with believers, are also essential for faith formation. Each child makes a unique contribution to classroom discussions and activities. Accordingly, only for a serious reason a student should be absent.

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

1. Complete the online PREP Absence Notification form found on the parish website or 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 a child will be late for a session, a parent must call the number listed above and provide the same information.
3. If a child fails to report to a session and the absence was not reported in advance by the parent, then the absence will be recorded as unexcused. The Religious Education Office will call the families of all students whose absence was not reported in advance. After two unexcused absences, the Director of Religious Education will contact the parent by phone to notify the parent that the child may be dismissed from the Program and be required to repeat the grade level.
4. After the third excused 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 a pattern of absences continue.
5. **ANY STUDENT ACCUMULATING SIX EXCUSED ABSENCES OR FOUR 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.
 - Please note the catechist's plan for how a missed class can be made up in the child's specific group. Make up work is to be completed within one week of the absence.

II. ARRIVAL AND 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 to be dropped off or picked up on Goble Court. All cars are to come onto the parking lot and follow the flow of cars for drop off and pick up.
- 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 not walk from a parked car in the parking lot without being accompanied by an adult.
- 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. Should a parent develop a pattern of late pick up, the Director of Religious Education will contact the parent by phone to notify the parent that the child may be dismissed from the Program and be required to repeat the grade level.

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.

III. 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 the 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.

IV. CONSISTENT ENROLLMENT

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:

- 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 the satisfactory 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 PREP 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 Custody 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, possession of pornographic materials, sexting, 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 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 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 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 the 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, pornographic materials, 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 AND 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. Refusal on the part of the parent to cooperate will result in the student's immediate dismissal from the Program.

VIII. CELL PHONES AND 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/pen, and all materials required of the class.
- Students do not arrive hungry. Remember, there is no eating or drinking permitted in the school building, except when provided by the catechist.

- Students are reasonably alert, responsive to questions from the catechist and participate 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 the session should be an exception. No student may leave a classroom without proper supervision. Students should be reminded to address bathroom needs before coming to PREP.
 - If a child has a medical need to use the lavatory frequently, parents are to send 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 and other hats or head gear are not to be worn in the school building.
- No chewing gum is permitted in the school building.
- Students are to walk with dignity throughout the school building, to and from church, and inside the church.

Testing and Evaluation

- The younger 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.
- Archdiocesan mid-term and final assessments will be administered to all levels.

Progress Reports

Three Progress Reports will be issued during the academic year.

The purpose of this communication is:

- 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.
- to document attendance records.

The Progress Report is to be signed and returned at the next session.

Fire and Other Emergency Procedures

- An annual fire drill will be conducted. Parents will be notified of the date of the drill.
- 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. A copy of the report will be sent home with the student.
- 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.

IX. SAFE ENVIRONMENT

As mandated by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and in cooperation with the Office for Child and Youth Protection of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, all PREP staff, catechists and volunteers receive Safe Environment Training to ensure that all young people in our Program come to know God and His Church in a safe and appropriate setting. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia 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 staff, catechists and volunteers.

Our program offers age-appropriate personal safety instruction annually, including internet safety. Through these lessons, we seek to ensure that children receive important information on how to stay safe. Parents may request to review a copy of the lesson plan prior to the scheduled Safe Environment class.

X. 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 within the Parish where the family is registered. A student exhibiting chronic absences or chronic lateness, that is, three or more, or who is a persistent discipline problem may have reception of Baptism, Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and /or Confirmation deferred until the following year or later.

At least one parent is required to attend all parent meetings related to preparation for a child's reception of a sacrament. It is preferred that both parents attend the meetings. A parent's inability to attend these meetings will be considered an indication of their choice to delay their child's reception of the sacrament.

XI. PREP FEE

The 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 a child is dismissed from the Program due to excessive absences, lateness, problem behavior, or is dismissed for any other reason, there will be no refund of the PREP Fee.

XII. SNOW EMERGENCY AND CANCELLATIONS

Weather Cancellation

PREP may be cancelled for the evening whenever 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. In the event of inclement weather a parent will:

- check their email account and the Parish Mobile App for messages.
- check the Parish Website at www.saintfrancescabrini.net.
- call the PREP Office at 215-946-1115.

XIII. COMMUNICATION

Calendar

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

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 jeanemadden@saintfrancescabrini.net

Direct communication with the 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 changes, parents will be informed of the need to review the updated document.