

**ST FRANCIS BY THE SEA
CATHOLIC CHURCH
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

2009-2010

45 Beach City Rd
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926
843 681-6350 x248



Class & Meeting Times

Grades Pre-K4- thru 1st: Sunday @10:15-11:30 a.m.
Grades 2nd thru 8th: Wednesday @6:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

STAFF

Father Michael Oenbrink, Pastor

Father Christopher Smith, Parochial Vicar

Mitzi Weaver, Director of Religious Education

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Schedules and class information are also available at www.stfrancishhi.org. Click on ministries, Christian Formation and then go to Religious Education

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The Religious Education program accepts its responsibility as co-educators with the family and the Church to provide a solid catechetical experience for children.

Parental Involvement

During the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960's the Church reaffirmed that parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of the faith. Parents are called to serve as role models of inspiration for their children through their own prayer life, education in faith and in support of the Church.

The Religious Education program of any parish is designed to support, not act as a substitute for parental responsibility. The parish, through volunteer catechists, parish staff, and pastor desires to work as a team with parents. Together we provide our children with a sound program to help them become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Parents who may have concerns or questions about their child's religious education classes should address them first to the catechist then, if necessary, to the Director of Religious Education, and then to the Pastor.

Program Goals

- Present our Catholic Faith accurately, authentically, and completely, consistent with the age and readiness of the students.
- Provide an atmosphere where children can develop their faith.
- Foster a clear sense of Catholic identity and pride, an appreciation of Catholic beliefs, values, prayers, practices, and sacramental celebrations.
- Stewardship helps our young people:
 - Develop a sense of responsibility towards outreach and justice for the greater good in our homes and throughout the community and world by an active appreciation and involvement in the stewardship way of life.
 - Develop attitudes and behaviors that identify them as followers of Jesus.
 - Nurture a respect and appreciation for all that is good in the human experience.
 - Create an atmosphere of interdependence between administration, catechists, parents and students that promotes mutual respect, concern, and preserves the integrity of the Catholic faith.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STAFF

Our catechists are volunteers who give generously of themselves and devote time to spread the message of our faith and to build up our faith community. Most are not teachers by profession, however, all possess a love of the Church and a desire to help our children grow in the love of Jesus.

All Catechists are required to:

- Be in good standing with the Catholic Church, living their faith in their daily lives.
- Attend regular catechetical meetings where continuing education takes place.
- Conform to all Diocesan requirements which include a background screening and Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

ACTIVE PARISHIONER

In the day-to-day operation of the parish the term "Active Parishioner" is used in a number of instances. It is defined as a registered parishioner who attends Mass on a regular weekly basis, Sundays and Holy Days, contributes their time (volunteering), talent (teaching, choir, parish ministry, etc.) and treasure in the parish offertory and that the contribution of treasure is done in an accountable way, i.e., parish envelopes. If you chose not to use the parish envelope, your check is considered "loose" and counted as an unknown contribution. If you want to be an "active parishioner" you need to:

- Register at the parish office
- Use your envelope
- Find a meaningful way to use time and talent for the good of the Church

We encourage all families to be active members of the parish. *Remember, you are your child's number one role model.*

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS

We at St. Francis by the Sea are committed to creating an environment where all children and vulnerable adults are safe. We have instituted safe environment programs to assure the safety of our children. One is the VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Program™ for adults. Another is *Teaching Touching Safety* which is being given to all children in the school, Religious Education program, and Youth Group unless their parents opt them out of the coverage. It is offered each year, in the fall, as a part of the Religious Education curriculum.

This is an excellent program, and taught at an age specific level. Parents who do not wish their child to be covered must sign the opt out portion of the registration or complete a form to opt their children out from attendance. This form must be returned to the Director of Religious Education prior to the coverage date which is included on the Religious Education Class Calendar.

MASS ATTENDANCE

“The celebration of the Mass, as an action of Christ and the people of God hierarchically ordered, is the center of the whole Christian life for the universal Church, the local Church, and for each and every one of the faithful. ‘For therein is the culminating action whereby God sanctifies the world in Christ and men worship the Father, as they adore him through Christ the Son of God.’ The mysteries of man’s redemption are in some way made present throughout the course of the year by the celebration of the Mass. All other sacred celebrations and the activities of the Christian life are related to the Mass; they spring forth from it and culminate in it.” *Document of the Second Vatican Council*

Simply put, **attendance at the Sacred Liturgy, Sunday Mass, is a privilege and obligation.** Attendance at **religious education class is in addition to not in lieu of Mass.** We urge parents to attend Mass with their children and to position themselves so the children can see and hear what is going on.

STEWARDSHIP

We encourage you to help your child find ways to use their time and talent to help others in the community. Within the Religious Education Program we conduct a food collection at Thanksgiving and Christmas to help make baskets for needy families. In addition, we have a coin receptacle which we collect spare change throughout the year and donate the money to Mustard Seed, a community in Jamaica that helps orphaned and handicapped children.

Help your children to appreciate that stewardship is as important to our Christian development as is the knowledge of and the celebration of our Catholic beliefs and rituals.

REGISTRATION

Registration of new students takes place during the summer months. Requirements include:

- Filling out a registration form
- Being an active member of the parish
- Filling out parish registration form if not already registered
- Presentation of a Baptismal certificate for each child and a First Communion certificate for any child that has made his/her First Communion

Re-registration takes place in the spring and is for children currently enrolled in the program who will be returning in the fall. You do not need to resubmit Baptismal and Communion certificates. Re-registration allows us to maintain current records and to plan resources for the new school year.

TUITION

Tuition is charged to each family to help defray the cost of operating the Religious Education program. Tuition rates are less than the total cost to run the program and are designed to make the program affordable to most families. The rates are:

\$40.00 one child
\$60.00 two children
\$75.00 three or more children

There is an additional \$25.00 fee in the 8th grade to help defray the cost of retreats and the Family Honor program.

A student text is included in the tuition fee. If lost or misplaced, a fee will be charged for a new book.

No child will be refused admission to the Religious Education Program because of inability to pay tuition. Parents for whom tuition would cause a severe financial burden should contact the Director of Religious Education for a reduction, a waiver, or to set up a payment plan.

TRANSFERS IN AND OUT

Students in grades 2 through 8 who are transferring into the program from another parish should obtain a letter from their former parish indicating that the child had been attending religious education and his/her completed grade level.

Parents should request these records as soon as possible from the previous parish as they are necessary for the appropriate placement of the child in the program. It is important to have these records prior to the start of the school year because any child in grades 2 – 8 who has had no previous religious education or who has missed a year might be required to complete a remedial program before entering his/her class. See Transition Classes for more details.

If a student is transferring out of the program, it is the parents' responsibility to request a letter from the Director of the program. This letter will transfer the student and verify for the new parish his/her completed level of religious education.

TRANSITION CLASSES

Any child enrolled in grades 2-8 who has had no previous religious education or has missed a year of religious education will be assessed to determine the need for a remedial program before entering the class.

The purpose of remedial training is to relieve the student of undue embarrassment as they enter the classroom for the first time and to allow the teacher at each grade level to spend class time on the curriculum for that grade.

Upon completion of the program, the Director of Religious Education will place the student in his/her grade level. A remedial program will be designed to fit the needs of the individual student.

CURRICULUM

Pre-School

Stories of God's Love from RCL Benziger is a religious education program designed for pre-school children. It helps children develop positive attitudes about themselves, their family, and friends by discovering and learning more about the many gifts, talents and abilities God has provided. Children develop a respect and awe for all of God's creations.

Elementary (Grades K-6)

Faith First Legacy is a program that eliminates learning gaps by introducing the pillars of the *Catechism*- Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer- every year, in every grade level. It utilizes a developmental method reinforcing learning and builds an age-appropriate faith as children mature each year. Scripture study develops an understanding of the Bible. Lectionary-based lessons and additional activities are available for FREE at www.FaithFirst.com. Parents have a resource that they can go to with their children outside the classroom. Older children may be given assignments or take tests at the Faith First web site. It is a great program that integrates classroom learning with parental knowledge and partnership outside of class.

Junior High Curriculum

The middle school program is from St. Mary's Press and is a program called *Catholic Connections*. There is one student book that is used for three years with 2 sections being completed per year. The curriculum consists of a program that links faith concepts to our day to day life and helps prepare our young people for Confirmation.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Students may have homework assignments throughout the year. Check with your child each week for homework assignments. Parents will be notified of incomplete assignments and asked to see that all assignments are completed.

MEDICATION

The guidelines of the Diocese of Charleston will be followed regarding the distribution of medication during religious education classes. Parents are asked to administer any medication before or after any religious education class or activity and to make the teacher and Director aware of any possible side-effects. Parents are permitted to come to the school to administer medication to their children. If it is essential that a student receive prescription medication during class, the parents must meet first with the Director of Religious Education to go over the guidelines to be followed. This will be done on an individual case basis.

DRESS CODE

Children's attitudes and behaviors are affected by what they wear. We ask that children dress appropriately for religious education classes as well as Mass. **Tank tops, halter tops of any sort, and blouses with spaghetti straps are not permitted. No midriff should be showing. High heeled shoes, heeled shoes, and flip-flops are inappropriate and dangerous in a school atmosphere. Clothing that is torn, bears obscene or inappropriate messages may not be worn.** Good taste and proper judgment should be utilized. If your child is dressed inappropriately, you will be called to pick them up or bring them a change of clothing

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

Use of electronic equipment such as IPODS, cell phones, and video games is not permitted during class. If a child is caught using one of these devices, it will be confiscated and will only be returned to a parent.

HARRASSMENT

Every individual is entitled to respect due to each of his/her uniqueness as a child of God. At St. Francis we are committed to providing an educational environment which is free from physical, psychological, sexual or verbal harassment. Disrespect or harassment will not be tolerated and it will be treated as a serious offense.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline in behavior and habits are an important aspect of moral formation. The purpose of discipline is to foster personal development and to promote self-respect for others and for duly constituted authority. At St. Francis, we support a positive and constructive discipline philosophy.

Our goal is to foster a sense of right, justice, love, and respect for everyone. When our students misbehave they will be dealt with immediately. The action taken will be in accordance with the seriousness of the offense. Discipline problems should be infrequent since we only meet once a week for 1 hour. The following procedures will be used should the need arise:

First Offense: The teacher will take initial action to correct the problem. The student will be reminded of his/her responsibility to himself/herself and to the class.

Second Offense: The teacher will send the student to the Director of Religious Education. The Director will speak to the student and determine if it is necessary to call the parents so they may be aware of the infraction and become involved in resolving the problem.

Third Offense: The teacher will send the student to the Director of Religious Education who in turn will call the parents. The parents will be informed that the student has an in-school suspension and will be working independently, under supervision at the school until the parents meet with the Director of Religious Education.

If serious breaches of discipline occur, the student may be suspended or the matter referred to the Pastor.

SUSPENSION

Serious breaches of discipline may result in the suspension of a student from religious education classes or activities. These serious breaches include, but are not limited to the following:

- Fighting
- Conduct endangering fellow students, teachers, or school personnel
- Damaging or destroying school property
- Insubordination
- Violence
- Leaving the school building or grounds without permission
- Weapons (anything that could cause serious injury or damage)

When an incident that leads to suspension occurs, the Director of Religious Education, and the Pastor shall investigate the alleged offense. Investigation will include a discussion with the involved student and giving the student an opportunity to be heard in regard to the alleged offense.

INTERNET EDUCATION

Except during sacramental preparation years, an option for families who are unable to regularly attend classes is available. It provides for religious education at home, grades 1-6, using the Faith First program and the internet. We will also ask you to bring your child in periodically so we can evaluate your child's progress and assist you. You will be asked to go through the regular registration process and at home materials will be provided to you. Each week your child will complete a chapter review on-line and email it to the religious education office at ccdoffice@stfrancishhi.org. The at home schedule will follow the classroom schedule, except for the 6th grade which uses a different book in class, so that on weeks when a child can attend class, he/she is at the same place as his/her peers. I encourage all students to use the classroom option, and particularly 6th graders. The classroom interaction gives the children a greater sense of their Catholic community.

Contact the Director of Religious Education to see if this is an option your family might wish to explore.

SACRAMENTS

Preparation for the Sacraments is an integral and important part of the Religious Education Program. They are celebrations that mark important phases in a child's faith journey. Celebrations of the sacraments provide the immediate family and the faith community an opportunity for reflection and renewal.

Parental involvement in the Sacramental preparation of children is of the greatest importance. Parents are **expected** to take an active role in the faith journey of their child. It is the parents' responsibility to:

- Nurture the spiritual life of the child
- Encourage an active family prayer life
- **Regularly attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation**
- Participate in **ALL** parent meetings
- Encourage open dialog and discussion about faith issues and what the child is learning in class
- Read parent letters and review take home materials
- Ensure that the child is completing any homework assignments

RECONCILIATION/EUCHARIST PROGRAM

Remote preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist begins in the 1st grade. Immediate and formal preparation occurs in the 2nd grade. Both Reconciliation and Eucharist take place in during the 2nd grade class year. Reconciliation is generally in February with First Communion in May.

There will be required parent meetings for parents to assist them as they prepare their child for Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

Children who come to the program from other areas must bring a written record of the previously completed and current grade levels. Children who for any reason enter the program at an older age will be grouped and instructed according to grade level.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation is one of the three Sacraments of initiation along with Baptism and the Eucharist. Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism through an outpouring of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a time where the child personally accepts and makes the commitment to Catholicism that was made for him/her by parents at Baptism. It is an initiation into a fuller and richer faith life.

The process of preparation for Confirmation takes place over a two year period beginning in the 7th grade. During the 7th grade students are covered on the *Jesus the Christ* and the *God Revelation & Faith* sections of the student handbook. In the 8th grade the students use the *Holy Spirit and the Church* and the *Christian Morality and Justice* sections. There are doctrinal and scriptural components in all with references to the specific paragraph and number of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. A key element in these lessons is helping the student to determine the importance and relevance of the specific teaching to the church and to his/her life. There are projects associated with each section that help them to make the real life connection between faith and life.

During the 8th grade there are additional classes for the parents and child to jointly attend. IN those sessions we will use *The Spirit Sets Us Free* book. Parents and Confirmandi are also required to attend a Family Honor Workshop.

The preparation process includes stewardship activities. It is a time for the student to explore and discover what areas of community involvement are significant to his/her spiritual life. He/she will gain an awareness of the gifts and talents they possess and his/her ability to share them with others.

Our preparation process includes Religious Education, Stewardship, Retreats, Candidate Interviews, Individual assignments and **regular attendance at Mass.**

The essential role of the parents or guardians is to encourage, support, and affirm the candidate's involvement in the Confirmation process.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

Children in the Sunday program must be dropped off and picked up in the classroom.

All students should be in the classroom at least 5 minutes before the start of class. Time for instruction is limited so it is important that students be on time for classes. Children up to and including 3rd grade **MUST** be brought to their classrooms. For safety reasons we cannot permit young children to just be dropped off.

Wednesday classes are over at 7:30 p.m. **ALL CHILDREN MUST BE PICKED UP IN THE FAMILY CENTER at 7:30p.m. NO CHILD FROM ANY GRADE MAY LEAVE THE BUILDING WITHOUT A PARENT/GUARDIAN OR CAR POOL DRIVER.** We cannot leave the building until all children are picked up. **Catechists are volunteers and are already giving a great deal of their own personal time. Show them the respect they deserve by arriving and picking up your child on time.**

NOTE: Please be extremely careful in the parking lot area as children are often distracted and not watching car movement.

ATTENDANCE/ABSENCE

The Religious Education Program has a very limited teaching period in which to provide a consistency of instruction that enables our students to grasp the tenets of their faith. It is required that children attend regularly. We recognize that absence is sometimes unavoidable and we want to work with you.

Please make religious education a priority in your child's life. If you know ahead of time that your child will be absent, let the teacher know. If your child is ill and cannot attend, contact the Religious Education Office, 681-6350 x248 and notify the director.

When your child returns to class, make arrangements with the teacher for your child to make-up any missed work. Chapter reviews are also available on the Faith First web site, www.FaithFirst.com

Once class has started, no student is permitted to leave the building unless accompanied by a parent. The parent should first come to the Religious Education office to let the Director know of the need to remove the child from class. **No student will be allowed to wait outside the school building.**

Parents should notify the catechist if someone other than the parent will transport the child. Your child's safety is important to us.

Classes begin promptly at 6:15 p.m. A child who arrives after that time will be marked tardy.

When three unexcused absences and/or an excessive number of excused absences or tardiness occur, and there has been no effort to make up classes, the child may have to repeat the grade.

ACCIDENTS/EMERGENCY

Emergency contacts for your child and any information vital to the safety and welfare of the child must be on file in the Religious Education office. In case of minor accidents, first aid will be given by the school and parents will be notified of it.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PARENT LETTERS

Students are often given fliers or letters containing information pertinent to the program such as scheduling changes, attendance at church, informational needs, volunteer requests, and special events. Please check with your child weekly for this material.