

*Saint Brigid Parish
School of Religious Education
(SRE)*

Handbook 2023-2024



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Religious Education

Personnel

Pastor: Rev. Wojciech Oleksy

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SRE Coordinator: Polly Hergenreder

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Director of Faith Formation: Valerie Walker

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Catechists:

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|--------------------------|--|
| Kindergarten | Cindy Mueller and Katie Strelzyk (assistant) |
| First Grade | Nicole Zalapi and Ashley Vazquez |
| Second Grade | Steve Strelzyk and Diana Bentivegna |
| Third Grade | Bernadette Smith, Tatiana Smith, and Odalis Munoz |
| Sacramental Preparation | Kelly Metoyer (Thursday evenings) |
| Fourth Grade | Katy Teichert and Ella Hahnfeld (assistant) |
| Fifth Grade | Evelyn Putnam and Olivia Montoya |
| Sixth Grade | Bill Showalter and Emmy Lawler (assistant) |
| Seventh Grade | John Rapp |
| Eighth Grade | Erin Gibbons and Ian Lawler (assistant) |
| Special Sacramental Prep | Patti Gleason, Connie Marcos and Ximena Gonzalez (assistant) |
| Confirmation Y2 | Deacon Marcelino Hernandez |

Hall Monitors: Amanda Markadonis and Jim Martinez

All catechists (not assistants) have a St. Patrick's email. It is the first letter of their first name, their last name followed by @stpatrickwadsworth.org



Philosophy

Parents are the first educators of their children in the faith, and family catechesis continues through all stages of life. As families live out their daily lives and interact with one another they deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ by learning how to interact with others in all situations of daily life. This has been a consistent message of Pope Francis, emphasized in his meetings with the Bishops in 2014-2015.

Pope John Paul II also repeatedly wrote about the importance of the family in religious education. In 1979 (*Catechesis in Our Time*), he said:

The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable.....Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words, but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel.

.....Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.

Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis. (§68)

Parents and the parish function as partners in this enterprise. With communication and cooperation, we create an environment in which children can grow in their faith. As participants in the religious education program, **parents make a commitment to the religious formation of their children at home**, which includes:

- ◆ Learning prayers and Catholic practices
- ◆ Exploring the Scriptures together (weekly Sacred Scriptures can be found in the bulletin or online at www.stpatrickwadsworth.org)
- ◆ Sharing values and morals
- ◆ Exploring ways to actively live out your faith

As part of their children's catechesis parents also commit to making sure their children fully participate in the SRE program, completing all the requirements as per their teachers and grade level.

An essential part of this commitment is for the families to worship with their children and the whole parish at Mass on Sunday (or Saturday night) and to help prepare their children for the sacraments.

The role of the parish is to support the parents in their role, but not to take it over. A primary goal of our catechetical program is to help parents bring to the home what their children are learning and make it a part of family life.

In order to meet these goals, the parish community assists and supports the family by providing a welcoming environment where families can worship together. The parish also provides a religious education program which gives the students an experience of community learning with their age group, but does not replace the parents.

The parish financially supports the religious education program, it recruits and trains qualified catechists, assures that there is a sound curriculum and the necessary materials available to implement it.

Curriculum

Each grade level includes age-appropriate learning about Church teaching, Scripture, the Church's liturgy and prayer, feasts and seasons, Mary and the saints, and Christian morality. In addition, each level concentrates on specific topics and themes. In the Archdiocese of Chicago, preparation for a child's reception of 1st Holy Communion and Confirmation is a **two-year process for each sacrament**. It requires enrollment in a religious education program (or Catholic school) for the school year prior to the year that each sacrament will be received. At St. Brigid children normally receive the Sacrament of Penance in second grade, First Communion in second or third grade (depending on previous year) and Confirmation in eighth grade.

The curriculum is structured so that each year provides a foundation for the next year. Students who skip years are missing valuable background.

The program elements, including classroom work, other activities, Scripture and liturgy and family discussions, work together to give children a well-rounded foundation for their adult faith.

While we will teach these concepts and prayers in class, it is the responsibility of families to see that students master the basic literacy foundation.

We use **Pflaum Gospel Weeklies** in Kindergarten through eighth grade (www.pflaumweeklies.com). In fourth grade the children receive **Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics**, which is used from fourth through eighth grade. Each sacramental grade has additional materials to help them prepare for the sacraments.

The goals for each level are outlined below:

Kindergarten The goals of the kindergarten program are to help young children discover their membership in a larger family, the Church. They are introduced to the stories of our tradition in the Bible, the family of the saints and basic prayers. Families are asked to read with their children at home to help reinforce the concepts presented in class.

First Grade The goals of the first grade curriculum are to introduce students to a structured study of their faith. The concentration is on 1) helping them to begin to understand their creation by a loving God; 2) helping them to learn formal prayers of the church and to live a life of prayer; 3) helping them to understand their membership in the church.

Second Grade The goals of the second grade curriculum focus on:

- 1) The life and person of Jesus;
- 2) How the church celebrates the sacraments in its liturgy;
- 3) How prayer and the sacraments can draw us closer to God.

The children also prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance: The Rites of Reconciliation and First Communion for the first time. In addition to their text, children study from a supplemental book at home with their families.

Third Grade The third grade curriculum concentrates on what it means to belong to the Catholic Church as a global community of believers. Themes taught in first and second grades are repeated in greater depth, as the students are growing in their understanding. They specifically explore:

- 1) How the church functions;
- 2) What the church believes in the Profession of Faith: The Creed;
- 3) How the church depends upon Scripture.
- 4) They will be able to pray the Rosary independently.

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| Fourth Grade | <p>The focus of the fourth grade curriculum is the foundation for morality in the Beatitudes and the Commandments. Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Learn how our moral tradition is rooted in the Old and New Testaments; 2) Learn what the church teaches about how we should live our lives; 3) Explore ways that they can “do good and avoid evil” in their everyday lives. |
| Fifth Grade | <p>The fifth grade curriculum concentrates on the sacraments and the liturgy of the Church. In addition, they will explore the Scriptures further. Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Learn about each of the sacraments in more depth; 2) Have a working familiarity with the liturgy and the liturgical year; 3) Explore the life and message of St. Paul. |
| Sixth Grade | <p>Sixth grade is a required prerequisite to the Confirmation preparation which begins in 7th grade. The sixth grade curriculum focuses on the Old Testament. Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop a working knowledge of the major themes of the Old Testament in salvation history; 2) Explore more about Judaism and the world of the Scriptures; 3) Be able to describe the links between the Old Testament and the Christian tradition; 4) Become familiar with the Psalms. |
| Sacramental Prep (Reconciliation & Holy Communion) - One Thursday evening/month | |
| <p>Children in grades 4 through 7 who have not received these sacraments will attend their regular grade-level class, but they must also attend one additional class each month to prepare to receive these sacraments in the spring. (Schedule TBD)</p> | |
| Baptismal Prep for School-age Children - Two Thursday evenings/month | |
| <p>School-age children who are not baptized, just like adults, are entitled to fully experience the rites of Christian Initiation. These children will not attend the Sunday classes, but will meet twice a month on Thursday evenings, and in the spring will receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the same time. They will also participate in other rites (rituals) throughout the year. In the following year, they will be expected to register for their regular grade level SRE class. (Schedule TBD)</p> | |
| Seventh Grade (high school option also available) Confirmation Y1 | <p>The seventh grade curriculum focuses on Christian morality, Jesus and discipleship. At the beginning of the year the students will study a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told to us in the Gospels, and also will pose the challenge of discipleship. The second half of the year lays the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and gives the students information about the Church’s guidance in moral decision-making. The children also begin the formal preparation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.</p> |
| Eighth Grade (high school option also available) Confirmation Y2 | <p>The eighth grade focus is the study of the Creed, The Acts of the Apostles, life in the church, a review of Catholic teaching and immediate preparation for Confirmation. The review of the Creed, what the church believes, provides a foundation to profess that belief in the Sacrament of Confirmation. The second half of the year focuses on the ways that the Christian life is lived out by those who are fully initiated Christians, through ministries of service.</p> |
| Sacramental Prep | <p>In the Archdiocese of Chicago, preparation for a child’s reception of Confirmation is a two-year process. It requires enrollment in a religious education program (or Catholic school) for the school year prior to the year that the sacrament will be received. At St. Brigid, children normally receive Confirmation in eighth grade.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(continued on next page)</i></p> |

This is a more intensive class (additional sessions/assignments) in order to meet the two year requirement for Confirmation in a condensed timeframe. If they have missed Reconciliation or Holy Communion, that (or they) will also be included.

The children are guided into a relationship with Jesus by developing a basic understanding of His Church and teachings, and they will cover the sacraments, traditional prayers, the Saints, Holy Days and the Bible.

The schedule of sessions for this cohort will be finalized after the ages and needs of these students are known.

In general for the 2023-24 School year, parents and/or students are expected to attend all sessions associated with the sacrament grade, such as the parent meetings and special events. Confirmation candidates will also need to complete an agreed-upon number of service activities.

Reinforcement at Home

- Reinforcement at home is essential for the entire program to be successful.
- Students will have assignments to do at home. The cooperation of the parents in making sure that the work is completed is essential.
- Sometimes homework will consist of activities or memorization of prayers, etc.
- Students are expected to make up work when they are absent.

If students miss a grade, have excessive absences, or if they aren't able to complete the requirements that are necessary for them to be successful at the next level, it is the responsibility of the family to make sure that the work is made up and the material is mastered in an appropriate time frame. Please contact the parish office (847-244-4161) to discuss circumstances and possible alternatives.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to participate in-person and be ready to begin class at 9:15 AM. Students who are late must come to the table near the Boehm Center for a tardy admittance slip. This is so we have a record of who is in the building to ensure the safety of all students and catechists.

Students are expected to attend class every session. If illness interferes, it is the parent's and student's responsibility to contact the catechist for any work that might have been missed.

Because of the limited number of sessions, every session is important. While we understand that family events will mean an occasional missed session, these should be kept to a minimum.

If you know that your child will be absent, please e-mail your child's catechist to let them know.

We consider 4 absences to be excessive. Make-up lessons can be obtained from the catechist. Helping the child to complete them is the responsibility of the parents.

For purposes of preparation for sacraments, **more than four** absences will mean that the students and parents will need to meet with the Pastor/Coordinator of Religious Education.

Sports activities are **not** considered legitimate excuses for an absence or early dismissal. We are more than willing to work with coaches to insure that attendance in class does not impede a child's participation on the team. (In short, it makes more sense for a student to miss the first quarter of the game rather than half of a limited class session).

Cell Phones

We ask that cell phones not be brought to SRE. There is a phone in the school that a student may use if necessary. If a student does bring a cell phone, it is to be turned off and not used during class time. If a student does use his/her cell phone during class time, the catechist will take the phone and the parent will need to pick up the phone at the end of class.

Safety and Discipline Policy

All the catechists and other volunteers and employees who have contact with the children have undergone a security and background check. In addition, each one has participated in *Virtus* training, an initiative of the Archdiocese which is in compliance with “Protecting God’s Children.” *Virtus* educates those who work with children about preventing child abuse. They have also all completed training as Mandated Reporters with the Department of Child and Family Services. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend this session when child safety is taught.

Students shall contribute to the learning experience by cooperating with the classroom rules, as explained by the catechist. These rules are:

- Respect yourself, others, and things.**
- Contribute to the learning environment.**
- Follow program and classroom procedures.**

If the child is regularly disruptive, parents will be notified.

Children are not allowed free access to the building unsupervised by adults. This policy is for your child’s safety and building security.

As students arrive for class, they should gather in the main hallway by the Boehm Center or front office of the school. At 9:15am. they will be allowed to go as a group to their classroom. Parents may walk their children to the classrooms.

Late arriving students must report for a tardy slip before going to their classroom.

Children in grades K to 4 must be picked up at the classroom by a parent, legal guardian, authorized adult or sibling who is a student in fifth grade or higher. Children who are in grade 5 to 8 can be dismissed to the main hallway by the Boehm Center to meet their parents.

Records and Parent Visits

Access to Records

Custodial parents can request the student’s record by notifying the Pastor/Coordinator by phone or in writing. Please give us one week notice.

We respect the rights of non-custodial parents with regard to religious education records and program related information. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the program administrator will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the religious education records and other religious education 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 program administrator with a certified copy of the court order.

Access to Children

We presume that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorced or separated. Thus, unless informed otherwise in writing with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have unqualified access to the child, the religious education program will permit either parent to have access to a child while at St. Patrick and will release the child to either parent.

Parent Visits

Parent visits to the class are welcome. Please let both the office and the catechist know in advance when you are planning to visit. If you need to talk to your child’s catechist, please e-mail them to set up a time.

Sacrament Program and Policies

Students must have completed one full year of Catholic religious education (here at St. Patrick or elsewhere) immediately prior to beginning preparation for a sacrament. **In order to have complete records, we must have a copy of your child's baptismal certificate on file, if s/he has been baptized.**

Requirements for celebrating the sacraments at St. Patrick

Meet minimum attendance standards for the regularly scheduled class and group sessions. Must include one year of prior preparation before beginning the sacrament preparation program.

Weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist, either here or at another Catholic church.

Participation in additional preparation sessions, such as prayer days and retreats.

Satisfactory completion of service requirement for Confirmation.

Baptism

Children who have not been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church should call the Parish Office (847-244-4161) to make arrangements for the appropriate actions. Depending on the child's age, additional classes may be required.

First Penance (Reconciliation/Confession) and First Communion (Eucharist)

The students in the second grade are prepared for the Sacrament of Penance and First Communion as part of their class sessions. These class sessions are in conjunction with the formation which they receive with their families. The most important preparation children can receive for the Eucharist is to be regular participants at Saturday/Sunday Mass.

Many students take part in the program in the second grade, However, students of all ages can be part of the process, with older students working in their own groups. Students who missed Reconciliation and/or Holy Communion will attend one Thursday evening a month, in addition to the regular grade –level classes on Sunday mornings.

Students who are eligible for Confirmation will not meet on Thursday evenings, but will meet for an extended time each Sunday we have in-person SRE classes. See Sacramental Prep on page 6-7.

Confirmation

Confirmation is celebrated in the spring. Most students will be confirmed in eighth grade. Students must have completed the sixth grade class before beginning the two (2) year Confirmation preparation sequence.

Sixth Grade: Introduction to the Old Testament

Seventh Grade: Discipleship and Morality; Jesus and the Gospels

Eighth Grade: Review of the Creed and Sacraments, Acts of the Apostles, Confirmation

In addition to classroom work, students are expected to participate in the parish Confirmation program which consists of retreats, service work, and off-site activities.

For the 2023-24 school year, the student will be paired with a “parish partner” for several conversations throughout the year. Details on this will follow.

Participation in Liturgy and Prayer

Sunday Worship

Gathering to celebrate the Eucharist is both a privilege and responsibility for Christians. Families are strongly encouraged to come and worship together with their children every Saturday or Sunday.

At St. Patrick Church, Mass is being celebrated on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30am, Saturday at 6:00pm, and Sunday at 8:00 and 11:00am. Masses at Our Lady of Humility Church are Monday and Friday at 8:00am, Saturday at 4:00pm and Sunday at 9:30am. See the parish websites for details and schedule updates.

Masses are also available on television or the internet. Because you are in your own home, this is an ideal way to help children learn and practice the responses to the prayers, and to talk about why we do the things we do at Mass. Here are some examples:

The Prayers/Responses at Mass can be found here: <http://www.catholicTV.org/mass-prayers-responses> or more detailed versions at <https://www.rcbenziger.com/order-mass-act-spiritual-communion>

Morning Mass at Mercy Home: WGN-TV at 9:30am or online (stream or replay) at <https://www.mercyhome.org/sunday-mass/>

Catholic TV: <http://catholicTV.org/masses/catholicTV-mass>

Children's Reflections can be found online at various sites. Here are a few examples: <http://www.catholicTV.org/shows/childrens-liturgy>
<https://www.pflaumweeklies.com/category/sunday-gospel/>

Activity Pages: <https://www.saintandrew.org/childrens-liturgy-of-the-word/>

Other Resources for Faith Enrichment for Parents and/or Students

There are many family-friendly resources for faith enrichment available through our Parish subscription to Formed.org, and we often send out links. Please self-register with as many emails as needed for your family:

FORMED.org—Understand, Live and Share the Catholic faith. Over 4,000 titles—now available on almost any device! It's easy to start enjoying the new **FORMED!**

- To register as a parishioner go to www.signup.formed.org (or search for "Formed" on your favorite app store.)
- Enter our parish zip code **60083** to find our parish **St. Brigid** in Wadsworth.
- Register with your name and email address and you are in!

Hallow App - Search your favorite App Store. Contains free meditations, prayers, daily rosary and Scripture readings, and reflections from Fr. Mike Schmitz and Bishop Robert Barron, etc. This is a powerful resource for Christians everywhere looking to grow deeper in their relationship with God. (Some features require subscription.)

Prayer Services

All class sessions begin and end in prayer. There are two family events throughout the year, typically at the beginning of Advent and Lent. These events will be “All SRE Group” sessions.

Parents are welcome and strongly encouraged to attend these services with their child(ren).

Prayer at Home and Learning Prayer

Like anything else, prayer cannot be learned or become a habit if it is not regularly practiced. The religious education program can provide a framework to introduce prayers and to integrate them with what the children are learning.

The only way that children can actually learn the prayers is to pray them at home on a daily basis.

As a rule of thumb, this is what your child should know and by what grade:

During the first grade, children should master the Sign of the Cross and be able to recite the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the *Glory Be*. They may also learn the prayer to their guardian angel.

During the second grade, children should be able to recite an *Act of Contrition* and should also know the basic responses and gestures for the Mass.

During the third grade, children should have a basic familiarity with the Rosary and the Hail Holy Queen. They are also responsible for knowing the *Apostle’s Creed*. They should also know a thanksgiving prayer to say following Communion.

During the fourth and fifth grades, students can add other memorized prayers to their “repertoire” and be able to pray on their own. An example would be the *Prayer of St. Francis*. The children should also know the *Ten Commandments* as well as *The Beatitudes*.

By the end of fifth grade, students should also know the *Confiteor*, *Gloria* from the Mass and the *Nicene Creed*.

Sixth graders can memorize the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*.

Confirmation students can memorize the prayer, *Come Holy Spirit*.

Copies of these prayers can be found on our website under the SRE link.



Registration and Tuition

All families in the program are strongly encouraged to become members of St. Brigid Parish.

Students are expected to be registered in the program each year that they are in school. The program is developmental and covers a different area of the curriculum each year. Children who skip years are missing important background and will be at a disadvantage when they rejoin the program.

Tuition rates:

\$230 for one child.....non-parishioner rate \$280

\$330 for two children.....non-parishioner rate \$380

\$400 for families with three or more children....non-parishioner rate \$450

Payment is expected by September 10, 2023 and final payment by January 31, 2024

Tuition can be paid by check, cash (or credit/debit cards via the St. Patrick website, www.stpatrickwadsworth.org, under the DONATE NOW (GIVE CENTRAL link).

Tuition pays only a portion of the costs of your child's religious education. The parish community subsidizes the remainder. Tuition is used for staff salaries, textbooks and other materials, supplies for art projects and other activities and resources for the classroom, including audio-visual materials and online accounts.

Genuine financial need is no barrier to registering your child. We are glad to work out an arrangement for your family. We do ask families who apply for scholarship consideration to be regular in their Mass attendance. The Director of Faith Formation can provide other suggestions for ways to help serve the needs of the parish.

Non-Discrimination Policy

No child will be denied the right to participate in religious education classes due to race, color, national origin, or ability to pay.

Special Education

Students in need of special education have the right to catechesis and participation in the sacramental life of the church. We will accommodate any such students to the best of our ability.

If your child has special needs which are addressed in school, please meet with us and let us know of procedures and strategies used in those classes. Maintaining a consistent approach is very helpful for both the student and the catechist.

We will also assist parents in finding other resources that will meet their child's needs.

Emergencies and Closing Information

Emergency information is required at the time of registration. We need to keep the following on file:

The name and telephone number of your doctor.

The name and telephone number of a relative or friend to contact in case you are not available.

Any information about medication or physical conditions that we should know.

Catechists cannot give medications to children. If your child needs medication during class time, please stop at the front desk and we will escort your child to you for distribution of the medication.

Emergency Closing Information

To receive automatic emails on any changes in the SRE schedule (emergency closings) sign up for a free service on the Emergency Closing Center website: www.emergencyclosingcenter.com or the St. Brigid webpage. We will also try to send an email blast to all families.

