

St. Michael the Archangel

Catholic Church

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOK



Prayer to St. Michael

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the Power of God, cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen

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<p>(All students, parents/guardians are required, per diocesan guidelines, to sign a Receipt of Acknowledgement annually, indicating agreement to abide by the policies and procedures set forth therein. The Acknowledgement [one per family] must be submitted to the Religious Education Office at least one week before the first day of class.)</p>	

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has some very interesting and very important things to say about the role of Parents in the lives of their children. All Catholic families should have at least one copy of the Catechism, and parents, in particular pay attention to what the Catechism has to say on their role, their rights, and duties. Paragraph 2221 of the Catechism reads, "The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children, but *must* extend to their moral education and spiritual formation. The *right* and *duty* of the parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable." Parents have the *first* responsibility for the education and the home is the natural environment for this.

It is not enough to have one's children baptized and then at the appropriate age to enroll them either in Catholic school or in CCD. Instruction of the Faith by the parents should be taking place from the very birth of the child. Parents themselves must be living out the Faith. You cannot hand on what you do not have. The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days should be taken seriously and observed *religiously* (pardon the pun). One of the saddest things a priest can hear in confession is when a child says he or she does not attend Mass because their parents do not go. In such cases, parents are not handing on the Faith, but on the contrary, are teaching their children hypocrisy and even cynicism.

Children observe what their parents say and do. A casual attitude to the Faith tells children, "We don't really believe but go as the mood suits us." Children who see their parents take the Faith seriously and who truly believe in and venerate the Eucharist are far more likely not only to themselves believe and practice the Faith but also to respect their parents as well.

The most precious and important treasure that can be given is the gift of a Child. A child is both a gift from God and a gift to God. Parents, I cannot urge you enough to practice our Catholic Faith if not for you own sake, for the sake of your children.

- Father Drummond, Pastor

MISSION

God made us to show forth His goodness and to be happy with Him in heaven. To be happy with God in heaven, we must know, love and serve Him. We learn how to do this through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who teaches us through the Catholic Church. Our mission at St. Michael is to assist parents in their work as the primary educators, to teach their children to know God so that they can learn to love Him and serve Him in this world and be happy with Him in heaven.

The goal of our religious education program is to cultivate an understanding and love of God. Therefore, we teach the students that:

- Everyone is made to the image and likeness of God; every life is precious from the moment of conception until natural death.
- The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the center of our Faith.
- The Sacramental life is central to developing the Catholic Faith, and the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist should be frequently received.
- Virtues should be fostered and practiced in everyday life.
- The lives of the saints should be read and studied
- Prayer is a source for growth and spiritual life. Mass attendance, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, Rosary, Novenas, personal prayer are all stressed.

CURRICULUM

Grades 1 & 2: For these two grades, we use the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd which takes its name from one of the earliest and most central presentations offered to children, the parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:3-5, 11-16). This catechesis is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the Catholic Church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. The children's "classroom" is an "atrium," a room that has been prepared specifically for this catechesis and which contains simple yet beautiful materials for the children to us.

Grades 3 - 8: We use the *Faith and Life* curriculum published by Ignatius Press.

High School: The St. Michael Young Adults meet as a group twice a month on Monday evenings. During the course of the year, the group explores the Bible using *The Great Adventure* edition published by Ascension Press. The history of Christendom is taught, using the works of Catholic historian, Warren Carroll (founder of Christendom College). Students are also introduced to apologetics using the Catholic Apologetics course in religion by Fr. John Laux.

PRAYERS TO MEMORIZE

Students are expected to memorize certain prayers each year. These prayers are posted on the main page of our website, www.stmichaelannandale.org/religiouseducation. Memorizing these prayers can only be done through repetition. Praying together regularly at home will help students learn these prayers.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT INSTRUCTION

The safe environment policies of the Diocese of Arlington require that all children in religious education programs be given safe environment instruction that is age-appropriate and that is in accord with Catholic moral principles. Our religious education program is based on the premise that parents know their children and where they are in their own personal development, and can best judge when their child is ready for specific lessons or information. The natural innocence of young children is protected in this way.

All students enrolled in the Religious Education Program at St. Michael are given the safe environment instruction using the *Formation in Christian Chastity* and *Called to Protect* programs. These programs aim to help students understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help when needed through their relationships with trusted adults. *Formation in Christian Chastity* and *Called to Protect* are NOT sex education programs.

Detailed information on what will be presented during the class will be given to parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year. Parents may choose not to have their child attend the safe environment class, and in that case, they are asked to sign an opt-out form.

ASSESSMENTS & GRADING

Faith requires an act of the will in response to a formed intellect. By faith, "man submits his intellect and will to God." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 143). We administer assessments in our Program because the memorization of prayers and the learning of specific terms and doctrines is necessary for "religious literacy;" i.e., giving the students the correct vocabulary with which to communicate the Faith. Faith is not a feeling. We need to use technical language (i.e., tabernacle instead of gold box) and avoid language that is confusing or would alter the substance of the Faith.

Additionally, students must be able to *comprehend* what they are taught. We can assess the level of comprehension by asking students questions orally and in writing. We cannot read minds.

Administering an assessment is the best method to determine a child's proper disposition and readiness to receive Holy Communion and other sacraments.

All students are given a written and an oral assessment at the end of each year to determine if they have learned the required material and can advance to the next grade and/or receive the sacraments that they are preparing to receive. Students are provided study guides with the answers to the written assessment questions. There are no surprises.

HOMESCHOOLING

Parents who are homeschooling their children independently, using another curriculum, should notify the Religious Education Office. The Director of Religious Education would like to meet the homeschooling families and maintain contact with them, especially where the children are being prepared to receive the sacraments.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

COMMUNICATION

The Director of Religious Education will communicate with parents/guardians primarily through email. This is so that there is a written record of what has transpired. Please be sure to check your email (and your spam/junk folders) regularly for important communications. Catechists also will contact parents and guardians by email. Contact with students via email is not permitted.

REGISTRATION

All students enrolled in the St. Michael Religious Education Program must be registered members of the parish, or provide a letter of permission from their pastor granting permission for them to be enrolled for instruction at St. Michael. Registration of non-parishioners is subject to the approval of the Pastor. To be enrolled in our Program, students **must be baptized** at the time of registration or by August 1 (one month before the beginning of the school year).

To comply with diocesan requirements, parents/guardians must complete and submit a new registration form each year. Registration for the fall begins each spring and ends August 31, a couple of weeks before the start of classes.

Please visit our website at www.stmichaelannandale.org/religiouseducation to obtain current registration and tuition information and to register for classes.

NEW STUDENTS. The student's Baptismal Certificate is **required at the time of registration**. Students who transfer from another parish and who have attended another parish religious education program must provide a record of their last grade completed, their attendance record and grades, and information on any sacraments already received. Registration will not be considered completed until all required documents have been presented.

New students in Grades 2 - 8 will be required to take an assessment for class placement.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Grades 1 - 8	Monday	6:00 - 7:30 PM	Junior School Building
High School	Monday	6:30 - 7:30 PM	Junior School Building

SECURITY

Parents/guardians **and** students **must become familiar with these security procedures**. They have been put in place for the safety of the children and to account for their whereabouts.

UPPER LEVEL - (for use by students in **grades 7 & 8**): The **doors under the blue awning** (Door #28) will be unlocked as soon as the classrooms have a catechist or aide present (no later than 5 minutes before class). These doors will be locked after classes begin. **High school**: the doors to the **All Purpose Room** will be unlocked around 6:15 PM and locked once class has begun.

LOWER LEVEL (for use by students in **grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6**): There is a set of double doors that open to the outside parking area (directly off Ravensworth Road) (Door #32). These doors will remain locked at all times. A catechist or aide will be at the door to receive students as early as 15 minutes before classes start. Parents and visitors are not permitted to remain in the classroom area unless they have first obtained permission to be there from the Director of Religious Education.

DROP OFF & PICK UP - Lower Level (**Grades 1 - 6**)

- † Parents can either (1) drop their child(ren) at the curb or (2) park their cars and walk their child(ren) to the door. **Please do not have your child walk by him/herself from a parked car.** Extra care should be exercised by everyone driving and walking in the parking lots, particularly when it gets dark; when visibility is limited for several months of the year. *Please drive slowly and be on the look-out for other cars and pedestrians.* **No child is to be left unsupervised at any time.**
- † Children will be released only to his/her parent/guardian. If the child is in a carpool, the child will be released to the individual indicated on the child's registration form.

ATTENDANCE

It is important that children attend each and every year of instruction because the curriculum builds on the material learned the year before. NOTE: Students returning to the program will be required to take an assessment for class placement.

Students are expected to be on time for class. The security doors leading to the classrooms are closed once classes have begun. There is no distinction between an "excused" or "unexcused" absence. All absences are marked simply as ABSENT.

More than four (4) absences in a school year may seriously jeopardize the student's advancement to the next level *and in the case of sacramental preparation, may require that the reception of the sacrament(s) be postponed until the following year.*

TARDINESS

Students who do not make it to class before the security doors are closed will not be able to attend class that day. They will be expected to complete the assigned lesson(s) for that week. If they complete the lesson on time, their absence from the class will not be counted toward the maximum absences permitted for the year.

CODE OF CONDUCT & DRESS CODE

Students are expected to respect the Parish/School and private property of others. Any student who damages Parish, School or private property will be responsible for replacement or repair of that property.

Cell phones and other electronic devices **must be turned off and not used during class.** It is preferable that students not bring these devices to school at all. The Catechist may, at his/her discretion, collect and hold students' devices during class. The Parish is not responsible for any lost or stolen electronic devices.

Catechists will establish classroom rules and a routine at the beginning of the school year and these will be presented to the students on the first day of class. Catechists are expected to treat all students with respect and to be fair and consistent in their expectations and discipline of students.

DISCIPLINE: Parents are primarily responsible for the discipline of their children. Misbehaving students will be given a warning to cease misbehaving. If the behavior continues to disrupt the class, the student will be sent to the Religious Education office and the parent will be asked to meet with the Director. If necessary, parents will be required to attend class with the child for the rest of the school year **or** the child will be removed from classes entirely.

DRESS CODE: Catechists and students are expected to dress in a manner that respects their dignity as children of God who are made to His image and likeness. A good measure for appropriate dress is that if it is not appropriate for attending Mass, then it is not appropriate for the classroom.

- † No tank tops, halter tops, or spaghetti straps.
- † Skirts and shorts must fall past the middle finger when arms are held straight down at the side.
- † Pants must be worn at the waste.
- † No leggings, athletic wear, pajamas, and clothes with rips or holes.
- † No clothing that depicts drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, tobacco, profanity, violence, gang symbols, vulgarity, obscene images.
- † Head coverings are to be removed upon entering the school building, unless required for medical reasons.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS / LEARNING DISABILITIES

The Religious Education Office should be made aware of any IEPs or learning disabilities. We want to support the individual needs of all students in our program. The IEP must be presented at the time of registration and a copy of the IEP must be on file with the Religious Education Office prior to the first day of class. Likewise, if a student obtains an IEP during the school year, the Religious Education Office should be notified and the IEP provided for the student's file.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, please follow Fairfax County instructions regarding closures and delays. Information on cancelled classes will also be posted on the main Religious Education page (under Faith Formation) on our website (stmichaelannandale.org).

VISITORS

No visitors, including parents, are permitted in the classroom area of the school without the knowledge and approval of the Director of Religious Education. All visitors, including parents who wish to sit in on their child's class, must sign in at the Religious Education Office prior to class.

PHOTOS / VIDEOS

No photographs or videos will be taken of the students without the written consent of the parents or legal guardians. Names of students will not be posted on any public forum without first obtaining the written consent of the parents or guardians.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

The Arlington Diocese requires a two-year preparation period for the Sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion. The preparation for these sacraments is normally started in the 1st Grade. Students receive First Penance and First Holy Communion towards the end of the 2nd Grade. New students at the 2nd Grade level must have had one year of catechesis or pass a placement test.

NOTE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS of students grade 3 through 8 who have not received the sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion **and** who are older than the grade level in which these sacraments are normally received: you will be given instructions and the materials needed to help you prepare your child for these two sacraments. Students at the High School level who have not received First Penance and First Holy Communion must attend the RCIA classes on Monday night to receive special instruction and to prepare for these sacraments.

At the time of registration, each student preparing for First Penance and First Holy Communion will receive the following:

- † **Rite of Penance** – Please use this with your child to practice “going to Confession.” Have him/her recite the Act of Contrition **every day**. Your child will be given an oral assessment before the scheduled date of First Penance to determine if he/she is ready to receive the sacrament.
- † **Examination of Conscience** – Please review and have your child use the examination to help him/her determine the sins they have committed - in thought, word, action, or omission (failing to do a good work that should have been done). It is good to get your child into the habit of examining the conscience every night.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation is administered to students at the end of the 8th Grade after they have completed a full course of study at the 6th and 7th grade levels. New students who wish to enter the 8th Grade will be given an assessment to determine their proper grade placement.

Students at the High School level who have not been confirmed must attend the RCIA classes on Monday night to receive special instruction and to prepare for this sacrament.

The requirements for students in the FIRST YEAR of preparation are:

- † Completed Sponsor Form
- † Completed Confirmation Patron Saint Q & A
- † Sacramental Enrollment Promise signed by student and a parent.
- † Half an hour of adoration each week
- † Year-end assessment with a passing grade of 75% or above.

The requirements for students in the SECOND YEAR of preparation are:

- † Must be able to recite the Our Father and the Apostles Creed
- † One hour of adoration each week
- † Attendance at the Confirmation Retreat
- † Year-end Assessment with a passing grade of 75% or above.

NOTE: Parents/guardians are required to attend the Confirmation meeting normally scheduled in late September (see school calendar).

HANDBOOK RECEIPT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

SAINT MICHAEL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

We have received a copy of the St. Michael Religious Education Handbook. We have read it, and agree to abide by the policies and procedures set forth therein.

Family Last Name: _____

STUDENT SIGNATURE(S):

Signature	Grade	Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

PARENT / GUARDIAN SIGNATURE (S):

Signature	Grade	Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

This Receipt of Acknowledgement is must be received in the Religious Education Office by the first day of classes. Students will not be admitted to class without a signed Receipt of Acknowledgement.