

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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<small>(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.)</small>	

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

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 - 8 - *Faith and Life*, published by Ignatius Press. Students will be issued text and activity books at the first class. They are expected (unless instructed otherwise by their teacher) to bring their books to class each week. Students are also given access to the *Faith and Life* curriculum on-line through MyCatholicFaithDelivered.com.

High School - *Didache Series* published by the Midwest Theological Forum. Students explore Catholicism (doctrinal, scriptural, moral, and sacramental tenets) as young adults. This curriculum is also available for students to use on-line through MyCatholicFaithDelivered.com.

PRAYERS TO MEMORIZE

Students are expected to memorize the prayers that are given to them each year. At the beginning of the school year, each student is given a handout with the prayers that they should already know by memory and the prayers they are expected to memorize that year.

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* program. This program aims 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* is NOT a sex education program.

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

We administer assessments in our Program because the memorization of prayers, terminology, and doctrinal formulas is necessary for “religious literacy;” 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. 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*).

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. They are also given a print out of the prayers they are required to know for their oral assessment. There are no surprises.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

COMMUNICATION

The Director of Religious Education will communicate with parents/guardians primarily through email. Please be sure to check your email (and your spam/junk folders) regularly for important communications. *Catechists will contact only 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).

In order to comply with diocesan requirements, parents/guardians must complete and submit a new registration form each year. Registration for the fall begins each spring (generally in April) and ends August 31, a couple of weeks before the start of classes. Late registrations will be accepted on a case-by-case basis along with a \$50 late registration fee.

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.

ORIENTATION

Orientation is held in August each year. There are several days designated for orientation so that as many parents and students as possible can attend. At orientation, parents and students can pick up their books, get a tour of the classrooms, and learn how to navigate the online *Faith and Life* program.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Grades 1 - 8	Monday	6:00 - 7:00 PM	Junior School Bldg
Special Sacramental Preparation	Sunday	1:45 - 2:45 PM	Junior School Bldg
High School	Sunday	3:00 - 4:00 PM	Junior School Bldg

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.

The set of metal double doors inside the Junior School building that lead to the classroom area will open as soon as each classroom has a catechist or aide present (no later than 5 minutes before class). The double doors will be closed after classes begin and will not be reopened until 5 minutes before classes are scheduled to end. 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.

On the lower level of the Junior School building, there is a set of double doors that open to the outside parking area (directly off Ravensworth Road). This is an emergency exit only. **These double doors must remain closed at all times.** *If a student violates this rule, he/she will require parental escort to and from the classroom for the remainder of the school year.*

DROP OFF & PICK UP

Grades 1 - 5

- † Parents must escort their children to the proper classroom and leave them with the catechist or aide. Parents must remain with their child if there is no catechist or aide in the classroom. ***No child is to be left unsupervised at any time or “dropped at the curb.”***
- † Parents must pick-up their children at their classroom. A child 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.

Grades 6, 7, & 8

- † Students may proceed directly to their classroom.
- † When class is dismissed, students must leave the building through the same doors they entered.

Extra care should be exercised by everyone driving and walking in the parking lots, particularly on Monday nights when visibility is limited for several months of the year. *Please drive slowly and be on the look-out for other cars and pedestrians.*

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) on-line at the My Catholic Faith Delivered website. 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

Some classes take place in classrooms used by the St. Michael School. All students involved in Religious Education activities are asked 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.

HOMESCHOOLING

Parents who want to homeschool their children for religious education should notify the Religious Education Office. The Director of Religious Education would like to maintain contact with all homeschooling families, especially where the children are being prepared to receive the sacraments.

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. The Religious Education Office will also send an e-mail to parents regarding class cancelation. If you wish to be on the distribution list for e-mails, please make sure that the Office has a working e-mail address on file.

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

First Penance and First Holy Communion are received in the 2nd Grade, after having completed the 1st Grade curriculum. The Arlington Diocese requires a two-year preparation period for both sacraments. New students at the 2nd Grade level must have had one year of catechesis or pass a placement test.

Students (3rd Grade and above) 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,*** must attend the Special Sacramental Preparation class must attend the Sacramental Preparation class on Sunday afternoon *in addition* to their normal academic grade level class on Monday in order to receive the instruction and preparation 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 this examination to help him/her determine what sins have been 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 at the end of the 8th Grade after the student has completed the 7th Grade curriculum. New students at the 8th Grade level must have had one year of catechesis at the 7th Grade level or pass a placement test.

Students in High School who have not been confirmed must attend the RCIA classes on Monday night to receive special instruction and to prepare for this sacrament. Students will be confirmed **at the end of the second year of instruction.**

The requirements for students in the first year of preparation are:

- † Completed Sponsor Form
- † Confirmation Saint Information Form/Report
- † Sacramental Enrollment Promise signed by student and a parent.
- † Adoration - (student must spend ½ hour every week)
- † Family Holy Hour - (student must attend at least one)
- † Stations of the Cross - (student must attend at least one)
- † Year-end assessment with a passing grade of 70% or above.

Parents are required to attend the Confirmation meeting (see school calendar).

The requirements for students in the second year of preparation are:

- † Adoration - (student must spend 1 hour every week)
- † Family Holy Hour - (student must attend at least one)
- † Stations of the Cross - (student must attend at least two)
- † Attendance at Retreat
- † Year-end Assessment with a passing grade of 70% or above.

Parents are required to attend the Confirmation meeting (see school calendar).

TUITION & FEES

One child	\$125.00
Two or more children	\$150.00
Out of Parish Fee	\$50.00
Late Registration Fee	\$50.00
Homeschool (books and/or online access)	\$40.00
Confirmation Fee	\$75.00

Checks should be made payable to **St. Michael Church.**

Tuition is due at registration. If the student will be receiving traditional classroom instruction, the tuition covers general building maintenance, the cost of textbooks, and access to the online program. A late registration fee is charged for registrations after August 31. Tuition is non-refundable except in circumstances where the family moves to a location outside the Parish boundaries, in which case the refund will be mailed to the new address.

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.