

# ***St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Church***



## **Religious Education/Faith Formation (PREP) *PARENT/STUDENT POLICY HANDBOOK***

***2016-2017***

***St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Church  
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## **Parent Orientation**

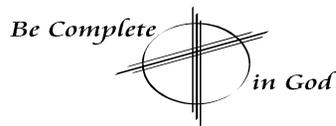
The first class of each school year will include a prayer service and parent orientation. Each family will be invited to gather in the Church for the opening of our program. The prayer service will also include the Commissioning of the Catechists and Aides

After the prayer service the Catechists and the students will go to their individual classrooms for their opening session.

The parents will remain in the Church for a brief Orientation.

Dismissal of the students will be at the usual end of the session from the classrooms.





## **Parish Religious Education/Formation Program (Formerly known as Confraternity of Christian Doctrine)**

The parish religious education/faith formation program promotes religious education and faith formation for all children not enrolled in Catholic schools. The program also provides opportunities for adults to advance in their knowledge and growth in faith.

Our parish has provided classes since September, 1989. Thus far we have relied upon the generous service of volunteer catechists, substitutes, and aides, to whom we are very grateful.

Besides providing formal religious instructions for students in a public or private school, which is paramount, we also include celebrations of liturgies such as Reconciliation Services, Eucharist's, etc. Prayer and the proclaiming and explaining of the Holy Scriptures during class are also important components of our program. Formation in our Catholic faith along with information about our beliefs and traditions that comprise our mission.

Since the formal religious education that we provide is dependent upon family co-operation, **we expect that the children and family celebrate the Sunday Eucharist each week at our parish Church.** We also expect that parents take an active interest in the program by seeing that the children attend classes regularly and punctually, and are prepared for them. Some parental input in the lessons is also needed.

We also ask that each family having a child in the program consider helping by way of serving as a catechist, substitute, aide, monitor, or assistant for a special occasion.

## **Classes**

Classes are presently held on Mondays. There is an afternoon session from 4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. and an evening session from 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. from September until April, with a break for the Christmas holidays. A calendar for the current year will be provided. In case of inclement winter weather, a catechist and/or an aide will telephone to cancel class if warranted.

**This two session schedule is dependent on enrollment and availability of sufficient catechists and aides.**

A special class is offered for children with disabilities during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays at the 9:30am Mass. Please contact the Director for more details.

## **Registration and Fees**

To help *partially* defray the costs of our program: textbooks, materials, utilities, building maintenance, etc. our fees are charged as indicated on the registration form.

Registration and payment of fees for the following year's program is made in the preceding spring of each year in order to enable the staff to prepare and order texts and materials in advance. All fees are non-refundable. There are additional minimal fees for students in the sacramental preparation levels (Levels 3 & 6).

New students are requested to present an official record of Baptism, *not a photocopy*, (as well as a letter or report card from a previously attended program.) These records will be returned promptly.

The registration fees do not cover the cost of our program. We rely upon the generosity of all parishioners to subsidize this financial shortfall. We also ask this of families who have children enrolled in our PREP Program.

Besides the fees listed, we request that you financially support our parish and our PREP program by regular contributions, using the Sunday offering envelopes. If you are not receiving envelopes, please contact the Church office. We ask that each PREP family contribute at least \$4 per week via any parish collection. E-giving is also an option. A number of families contribute far more than this minimum, for which we are grateful. **For families which do not meet this minimum, there will be an additional registration charge.**

In cases of financial hardship, after review, consideration will be given. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation, which makes religious education possible for your child(ren).

### **Discipline**

For catechesis to be effective, rules regarding behavior are essential. Parents are asked to see that their children are dressed appropriately for class. Dress is casual but respectable. Students should not chew gum in class, nor wear hats in class. Students are expected to be respectful to catechists, aides, and other students. Parents with children who have special needs should inform the staff.

### **Cell Phones**

We realize that these devices have become necessary tools in communicating with children, especially for working parents. Please make sure that your child turns the phone off and does not display it during class.

### **Sacraments**

To be eligible to celebrate the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation, students must be in our program (or in another approved program) *un-interruptedly for three years* (Reconciliation and Eucharist), and *for six years* (Confirmation). There is also a required program for parents that accompanies the students' preparation program for these sacraments.

### **Physical Improvements**

Every year the parish spends thousands of dollars to maintain and repair our aging buildings. As a parish community, we are working toward a permanent, modern, fully-equipped Religious Education Center in the not too distant future. Building Fund donations will be gratefully accepted for this purpose.

## **Curriculum**

The present textbook series, We Believe, which is approved by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, is published by *Sadlier Religion*. The doctrinal content is organized according to the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Scripture is foundational and interwoven throughout the program. Liturgical music is also built into the curriculum so that the children and adults can celebrate what they believe. In addition, homework and testing may also be given by the catechist. Progress Reports given at the end of each semester, will inform you of your child's understanding of this material. This textbook series covers, according to level progression, the central mysteries of our Catholic faith:

*God our Creator and Father*  
*God as Revealer of Truth and Love*  
*Jesus, the Divine Son of God*  
*The Holy Spirit*  
*God's commandments*  
*The Holy Scriptures*  
*The Church established by Jesus*  
*The Sacraments and God's life of grace*  
*The sacramentals of the Church*  
*The Heroes of Faith, Mary and the other Saints*  
*The Precepts and Tradition of Christ's*  
*Holy Catholic Church*

There is an online component with this textbook series that can be accessed at [www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve](http://www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve). Follow the 2 steps on the home page according to the child's appropriate grade level. Please make use of it. *As required by the Archdiocese, a brief age appropriate lesson titled Teaching, Touching Safety will be given by each catechist during the year as part of the Program for Protecting God's Children.*

## **Faculty, Staff and Parent Involvement**

Our dedicated catechists and aides are all volunteers. Some are currently or have been professional educators. All catechists have taken or are in the process of taking the courses required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

All adults in the classrooms are required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to have obtained FBI, Criminal and Child Abuse Clearances along with completion of a two part Safe Environment Training. Parents are invited to visit and sit-in their child's classroom. Please contact our Director to arrange this and to obtain a visitor badge for this occasional opportunity. All adults in the classroom will be required to wear an ID badge during class time. Visitors are asked to sign in at the front desk of the Religious Education Building.

A list of our staff will be provided so that you will be able to contact them directly.

For many years, we have had the services of a full-time paid Director of Religious Education professionally credentialed. The Pastor of the parish is also very involved in our program.

Parents of students in our program, who serve as primary full-time catechists, are exempt from registration fees. Part-time catechists and aides receive a partial reduction.

## **Parking**

Out of genuine concern for the safety of our students, we request that parents observe our parking regulations:

1. When arriving, please see that the children enter the proper building. No running to class.
2. When picking up child(ren) at the end of classes, please come to the area in front of the buildings which are sectioned off by the safety cones to walk your child(ren) to your vehicle.
3. If staying for a class session, please park in the lot by the rectory or on the adjacent lawn.

## **Attendance**

Regular and punctual attendance is required. When a student is absent, we request that parents send an explanatory note to his/her catechist. Lesson assignments for the class(es) missed are to be made up. This letter does not excuse the student but states a reason for the absence. Lateness is very disruptive to the classroom environment. *Students who are either absent five or more times, or habitually late will be expected to either repeat the level or to make up the time after formal sessions end.* Thank you for your understanding and co-operation.

## **Homeschooling**

This is an option available for religious education. Conditions may be obtained from the Director. Regular attendance at Sunday Mass is expected for those who wish to be homeschooled.

## **Transfer Students and Level Progression**

Students who have attended another program (part-time religious education or Catholic School) are required to submit documentation (usually a letter) concerning their attendance and completed level. Out of a genuine concern for the students' religious education and fairness to all, *no skipping of levels is permitted.* PREP levels do not always correspond to grades in school. Children entering Level 1 must be at least in First Grade in their full time school.

## **Remedial Help**

Remedial help will be provided when a student either does not comprehend the lessons and does not meet minimum testing scores. This remedial service will be offered when requested usually during the summer.

## *Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Parish Mission Statement*

*We, the people of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Parish in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, recognize our call: to grow as brothers and sisters in Christ; to edify the Christian family; to reflect the risen Christ; and to build a center of nourishment, community, education and service proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World to all those who would follow Him.*

*Baptized into Christ Jesus, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, empowered by His gifts of Grace, we are unified by faith into one body, the Presence of Christ in the world today.*

*Let us grow in enlightenment by participation in service and prayer.*

*Let us grow in stature through Worship and celebration of the Sacraments.*

*Let us grow in humility by sacrificial acts and giving.*

*Let us grow in Spirit by leading an exemplary life in word and deed.*

*Let us grow in wisdom through reading the Word of God, in the Holy Bible and in the Sacred Tradition of Christ's Church*

*We pray to God in communion with Our Blessed Mother and with St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, to guide us on our path to show the light of Jesus Christ to all the world until we reach our heavenly home.*

**Succinctly:** *A Parish community living and sharing our faith in Jesus Christ.*

**PREP Mission Statement:** *Leading others to know, love and serve God.*

## **A PARENT'S PRAYER**

O Heavenly Father, make me a better parent Teach me to understand my children to listen patiently to what they have to say, and to answer all their questions kindly. Keep me from interrupting or contradicting them. Make me as courteous to them as I would have them to be to me.

Forbid that I should never laugh at mistakes or resort to shame or ridicule when They displease me. May I never punish them for my own selfish satisfaction or to show my power.

Let me not tempt my children to lie or steal. And guide me hour by hour that I may demonstrate by all that I say and do that honesty produces happiness.

When I am out of sorts, help me, O Lord, to hold my tongue. May I ever be mindful that my children are children and I should not expect of them the judgments of adults. Let me not rob them the opportunity to wait on themselves and to make decisions.

Bless me with the bigness to grant them all their reasonable requests and the courage to deny them privileges I know will do them harm. Make me fair and just and kind and fit, O Lord, to be loved and respected and imitated by my children.

Amen.

## **PRAYER TO THE MERCIFUL FATHER**

O Lord, I want to be Your good and holy child.

Help me that my eyes show Your mercy to others by not  
judging them.

Help me that my ears hear the needs of others by responding  
to  
them in Your name.

Help me that my hands do good deeds for others by  
following  
Your Golden Rule.

Help me that my tongue is an instrument of peace by using  
kind  
and noble language.

Help me to always walk in your ways of love and mercy so I  
may  
have everlasting life with You in heaven.

Amen.



**Revised: August 2016**