

St. Anselm Catholic Church Sacrament Preparation Program



Parent/Guardian – Student Handbook

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." – MT 19:14

Purpose and Mission

When Jesus was asked what out of all the commandments was the most important, Jesus replied, “The first is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” – Mark 12:29-31

Our purpose and mission are one in the same. We, St. Anselm Church, strive to provide a safe environment where your children’s relationship with God can flourish and also help them build a relationship with the community of believers. We are many parts of one body.

Philosophy

Catechesis always begins in the home, and parents/ guardians are their children’s first catechists. With this in mind, the Sacrament Preparation Program desires to build off of an existing spiritual and religious foundation already formed by the child’s family. Parochial catechesis does not replace parental catechesis. They are mutually dependent on each helping the other. Passing on our Catholic Faith is both a tremendous joy and opportunity, but it also presents a challenge to both parents/ guardians and the parish community. True and honest spiritual and moral growth in children will only occur through the mutual engagement of both parents and the faith community. For this reason, the Sacrament Preparation Program desires to partner with parents/ guardians to encourage consistent spiritual and moral growth. Only through partnership will the child *and* the community of faith *both* grow in spirit, truth and love.

Our curriculum aims to teach and supplement the entire person: mind, body and soul. It is through the dynamic interplay of both topical instruction and liturgical prayer that the child grows in a more natural and fruitful manner. In short, the Sacrament Preparation Program aims not to be an academic course but an initiation into a broader, and much deeper, life of faith.

THE SACRAMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM FOLLOWS THE POLICIES, GUIDELINES, AND CURRICULUM OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO.

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Role of Parents/Guardians

As mentioned, a child's first and most lasting catechist will be his or her parents/guardians. As parents/ guardians you encourage the faith development of your child(ren) through:

- ❖ Taking your child(ren) to each Sunday Sacrament Preparation class on time.
- ❖ Attending the family mass with your child(ren) immediately following Sunday preparation classes.
- ❖ Engaging and discussing both the content that was discussed during your child's class and the liturgy of the mass with your child(ren).
- ❖ Involvement in the sacramental life of the Church, for example, regularly celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- ❖ Participation in parish activities and ministries.
- ❖ Sharing your own faith with your child(ren).
- ❖ Praying daily with your child(ren) and teaching them how to pray, as well as helping them memorize important prayers (Hail Mary and Our Lord's Prayer).
- ❖ Becoming a Volunteer! We need catechists (for all ages), walking supervisors and many more!
- ❖ Learning more about the Faith through adult formation programs and taking the time to address your own spiritual needs.

Role of the Child(ren)

In order to foster a healthy and fruitful learning environment for all our children we have the following expectations for your child(ren):

- ❖ Be respectful and cooperate with your teachers and teacher assistants.
- ❖ Be respectful of other children in your class.
- ❖ Listen carefully and participate in all the activities and lessons.
- ❖ Share what you have learned with your parents/ guardians.
- ❖ Follow all the attendance and safety guidelines outlined in this handbook.

Role of the Parish Community

As in any healthy partnership, the expectations and responsibilities are spread equally. For this reason, our parish community, made up of clergy, staff and parishioners, have the following expectations:

- ❖ To provide a safe and healthy environment for our children, teachers and parents.
- ❖ To foster an atmosphere that encourages the spiritual and moral growth of our children and their parents, and to do so holistically.
- ❖ To show how important our youth and children are to our parish by providing our support, as both clergy and parishioners, at every opportunity and through the liturgy.
- ❖ To support both catechetically and spiritually our volunteer Catechists.
- ❖ To provide consistent and systematic curriculum for our children that, at all times, nurtures them in their faith, challenges them to excel, and gradually initiates them into our Catholic Faith.
- ❖ To remember and live the belief that each individual child and their family is an immeasurable gift to our parish.
- ❖ To serve our children and their parents as Christ served, out of a place of love.
- ❖ To hold our Program and its curriculum to the highest standards and to constantly evaluate for improvement.
- ❖ To continuously pray for our children, their families, and our teachers.

Program Overview

St. Anselm Church welcomes all children, regardless of age into our sacrament preparation program. The child must be baptized, or scheduled to be baptized before they can receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. Both of these sacraments are celebrated by children at the conclusion of their second year of Religious Education. **The Archdiocese of San Francisco mandates that all children must have the equivalent of two years of Religious Education before they may receive these sacraments.** Religious Education starts with first grade then in the spring of 2nd grade, the child will receive the sacrament.

Older children (those beginning Religious Education in second grade and above) who have not fulfilled the two-year requirement will receive both sacraments in the spring of his or her second year of Religious Education.

There will be one workshop for both parents/guardians and the child who will be receiving the sacrament to attend.

Classes are held in conjunction with our Religious Education classes. Classes are held on Sunday mornings from 8:45AM- 9:45am at St. Anselm School (40 Belle Ave). The program is made up of two phases, the curriculum-based phase which takes place in the classroom and the liturgical phase which includes attending the 10:00AM family mass. The children walk over from the School, with their teacher, to the Church where they meet their parents/ guardians for mass. **Mass attendance is a requirement of the sacrament preparation class. The first 3 pews are reserved for the children and their parents/ guardians.** Every so often the program will join our Religious Education program for a group class session in our parish hall. These meetings will be to the discretion of the DRE.

Curriculum

This year we will be using a new curriculum from St. Mary's Press called "Go Seek Find: Discover God's Treasures." This change in curriculum has been made in order to accommodate all age range of children who are registered in our preparation program and more importantly to start getting the children familiarized with the bible.

Here is how St. Mary's Press describes this new curriculum:

Go Seek Find: Discover God's Treasures is a new sacrament prep program centered on a new approach. Instead of using a traditional textbook or workbook, children interact with and explore *The Catholic Children's Bible*, seeing how Scripture relates to the themes they are learning about—in a way they can understand.

Children track their journey through Scripture to their destination of celebrating the Sacraments using colorful treasure maps and stickers. Fun, hands-on activities get them up out of their seats, moving and engaged in what they're learning.

When the day's adventure is complete, children simply pack everything in a special backpack, and they're ready to go for the next time!

The Sacrament Preparation Team:

Pastor: Fr. Jose Shaji
Director of Religious Education: Natalie L.
Sacrament Teacher- Tara T.

Children with Special Needs

If you have a child with special needs, arrangements can be made for catechesis as a group or on a one-on-one basis. Please contact the Director of Religious Education to find out more information. The Archdiocese of San Francisco also provides resources, classes and retreats specifically for children with special needs.

Baptismal Certificate

Children who will be receiving the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion are required to have their Baptismal Certificate on file with the parish office. Please attach a copy of your child's Baptismal Certificate to your complete registration forms.

Program Rules and Guidelines

Arrival and Dismissal

Classes begin **promptly at 8:45AM**. Parents are to drop off their children at the front of the school gate which is on Richmond Rd. The DRE will be waiting at the gate to greet children and direct them to the lunch benches next to the gate until their Catechists get them. If you arrive late to drop off your child and the gate has already been locked, for safety reasons, please text the DRE at 619-436-9341 and let her know you are at the gate.

For safety reasons parents/ guardians are not allowed to pick up their children from the School or along the road to the Church. There is only one

area where children may be picked up and that is at the Church. Children are to attend the 10am mass with their peers and can be picked up by parents after mass. If your child, due to medical reasons, is unable to walk from the School to the Church, please bring this to the attention of the Director of Religious Education.

If you need to pick up your child before class is over, the procedure is to let our DRE know ahead of time. She will have your child ready for you at the gate for pickup.

Rainy Days: If the forecast says it will be **pouring**, class on these days will be in our parish hall since your children are to attend mass afterwards. Our DRE will be using the app REMIND to inform parents/guardians when it is raining to drop their children in the parish hall for class.

If you do not receive a text message from the DRE through the Remind app that class has been moved to the parish hall, then class will remain at the school. The gates will be opened so that you can drive in and drop your child(ren) in front of his/her classroom. Please come in through the front gate and depart through the back gate. If it is only sprinkling or lightly raining we will walk to the church as usual. If it is pouring, they pick up will be at the school and you can drive in through the gate to pick up your child. If you cannot pick up your child(ren) from the school on rainy days and would like him/her to walk home, please inform our DRE ahead of time.

It is an Archdiocese policy to have sign in and sign out sheets for arrival and dismissal. Since we allow parents and guardians to drop off instead of walk in their children, I need you to sign the release form which is in the registration packet. This allows you to continue to drop off your children in the front of the school and pick them up at the church after mass.

Restrooms

Use of restrooms during Religious Education is discouraged. Children have a very short period of time for catechetical instruction and any time missed is significant. Please use the restroom before the start of class. Nonetheless we do allow children to be dismissed to use the restrooms if they need to.

Food and Drinks in the Classroom

No food or drinks are allowed in the classroom unless given permission ahead of time. However, your child can bring with him/her a water bottle. Parents/Guardians will be informed ahead of time when we give kids a special treat during class. If it is your child's birthday during a class time and you would like to bring something in to share with his/her class, you are more than welcome to, but please give the DRE a notice.

Change of Address/Phone/Email

Please notify the Director of Religious Education if you have changed your address, phone or email.

Student Rules

Part of the role of the Religious Education Program (K-7th)/ Sacramental Preparation is to ensure the safety of all our children and to provide a healthy environment that fosters growth. To accomplish this we ask the children to abide by the following rules and guidelines:

- ❖ Students are asked to be respectful and courteous to their catechists, catechist assistants, staff and other children.
- ❖ Students are asked to be respectful of School property. As a shared space, the classroom is used throughout the week by other teachers and children. Materials, including inside desks, are not to be moved or touched unless by direct instruction from a teacher.
- ❖ There is no running or horseplay at the School.
- ❖ No gum, food or drinks should be brought into the classrooms, unless otherwise given permission. (Water bottles are fine)
- ❖ No electronic games, radios, etc. should be brought into the classrooms. *Cell phones must be turned off.*

Attendance

Promptness and regular attendance is vital for your child to grow in their faith and moral development. Because children only receive catechesis once a week for a short period of time, continued absence severely disrupts the child's learning process. Not only because of the content missed, but because the content builds on each other as the year progresses. **If your child cannot regularly attend classes due to special circumstances please contact the Director of Religious Education.**

Visitors

For the safety of the children and our catechists, adult visitors may attend a classroom only if given permission in advance by the Director of Religious Education. If you would like to stay with your child more than a couple times in the classroom, then it is mandatory that you complete a background check on Shield the Vulnerable. If a child wishes to bring a friend with them to class they must receive permission in advance from the Director of Religious Education.

Parent/ Guardian – Catechist Communication

Partnerships require healthy communication. For this reason, the Religious Education Program/ Sacramental Preparation Program promotes communication

between parents/guardians and catechists. Parents/Guardians may speak with catechists after mass or they can make an appointment through the Director of Religious Education.

Discipline Policy

One of the most basic concerns of the catechist is to maintain an environment that fosters growth through a comfortable setting. It is for this reason that part of the child's role is to be attentive during lessons and respectful to catechists and other children. If a child misbehaves in class or is disruptive, parents or guardians will be notified. The Director of Religious Education, in consultation with the pastor, is the final recourse in all disciplinary actions.

“No child may be disciplined corporally or corrected with abusive language.” Policy C.4 in the *Decree on Child Protection*.

Emergency and Safety Procedures

In case of an emergency, the Emergency Procedure Plan will be followed. In the event of a disaster all students will be evacuated to the large yard where they will assemble according to classes. Catechists and the Director will remain with the children until either a parent or designated person picks the child up. A checkout system will be provided for parents/guardians to sign out their child.

Medical Emergency/ Accident/ Sudden Sickness

In the case of an accident or sudden sickness, the Director of Religious Education or a delegate will give appropriate immediate care and notify the parents/guardians. No medication may be given by the Director of Religious Education or catechists without written parental permission.

Dangerous Materials

The Director of Religious Education or designated persons have the right and duty to protect the health and welfare of the participants of the Religious Education Program/ Sacramental Preparation Program. This includes the right to inspect property of any individual suspected of possessing alcohol, drugs, weapons and other illegal materials. If alcohol, illegal drugs, weapons, or other dangerous materials are found, then the police, parents/guardians and the pastor will be notified as appropriate.

Child Protection

The Religious Education Program/ Sacramental Preparation Program is committed to the protection and safety of all children entrusted to its care. As mandated by the Archdiocese of San Francisco, teachers and any adults, who work with children, volunteer or paid, are required to be background checked and follow the Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures Regarding Child Abuse and Harassment and participate in a Child Protection Workshop.

Each year, as required by the Office of Child and Youth Protection for the Archdiocese of San Francisco, the Religious Education Program/ Sacramental Preparation Program will provide a classroom lesson for pre-kindergarten through third grade entitled “Talking about Touching.” Parents will be notified before this lesson is taught and will have the option to formally “opt-out.” The “Talking About Touching” curriculum teaches children simple rules to guide them toward safe decision making in a variety of situations, teaching them:

- Safety rules about cars, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- What to do in the presence of guns or other weapons.
- How to respond to a fire emergency.
- Knowing when to ask permission from a caregiver.
- The definition of a safe touch and how to respond to unwanted touch.
- Standing up for safety in an assertive manner.
- Asking for help in uncomfortable and possibly dangerous situations.

Fourth grade through seven grade will be asked to take the online course developed by professional trainers at the website: www.shieldthevulnerable.org.

As required by state law, evidence of apparent non-accidental injury, suspected neglect or child abuse will be reported to Child Protection Services.

Harassment

As part of our commitment to ensure a safe and healthy environment the Program does not tolerate any harassment. Any form of harassment violates the guidelines set forth in this handbook and will not be tolerated. Please notify the Director of Religious Education of any possible concerns.

Right to Amend

The Director of Religious Education and the Pastor of St. Anselm Catholic Church have the right to amend this handbook at any time. Parents/ Guardians will be given prompt notification if changes are made.