

St. Anselm Catholic Church Religious Education Program

PreK-7th



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 and guardians are the first catechists of their children through both word and action. With this in mind, the Religious Education 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. The Religious Education Program desires to partner with parents 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 Catholic faith teaches us that we are not merely material beings, but rather, created in God’s image, we are fully persons. This means we are more than the sum total of our parts and consist of an organic and spiritual whole. Therefore, the Religious Education Program strives to reflect this full breadth of personhood in its method of teaching. For this reason 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 Religious Education Program aims not to be an academic course, but an initiation into a broader, and much deeper, life of faith.

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM (PreK-7TH) FOLLOWS THE POLICIES, GUIDELINES, AND CURRICULUM OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO.

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Role of the Parents/Guardians

As mentioned, a child's first and most lasting catechist will be his or her parents/guardians. It is precisely for this reason that the Religious Education Program (PreK-7th) strives to develop partnerships with the parents/guardians of the children in the Program. As parents/guardians you encourage the faith development of your child(ren) through:

- ❖ Taking your child(ren) to each Sunday Religious Education class on time.
- ❖ Attending the family mass with your child(ren) immediately following Sunday Religious Education.
- ❖ Engaging and discussing both the content that was discussed during Religious Education 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, for example, the Hail Mary and Our Lord's Prayer.**
- ❖ Becoming a Religious Education Program 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 (PreK- 7th grade), regardless of previous formation and sacramental preparation, to enroll in our Religious Education Program.

Classes for all grade levels meet on Sunday mornings at 8:45AM 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 takes place immediately following at the 10:00AM family mass. The children walk over from the School, with their teachers, to the Church where they meet their parents/ guardians for mass.

Liturgy of the Word for Children

After the mass begins, and before the scripture readings, the priest will call forth all the children for a special blessing. Then the children will be escorted to Centennial Hall where they will have their own Liturgy of the Word. The children will return to their pews in the Church after the Prayers of the Faithful so as to be present for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This is part of the liturgical phase of the Religious Education Program and is integral to your child's faith formation. It is important that children gradually become comfortable with the liturgy so that they can eventually learn, and enjoy, to be full participants in the mass.

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. Sacramental preparation can also be provided.

Curriculum

The Religious Education Program (PreK-7th) will be using a curriculum produced by Loyola Press called *Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts*. This is a comprehensive program that integrates learning for children through lessons, artwork, music, games, activities and prayer.

The curriculum is based on a teaching method known as "spiral curriculum" that integrates the fundamental themes of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* with Scripture and Catholic Social Teachings. As children are introduced to and revisit

concepts and vocabulary from one year to the next, their knowledge and experience both broaden and deepen. This program provides lessons in the faith and delivers those lessons through experiential activities that encourage lifelong practice.

Parents/ Guardians may access a wealth of online materials and learn more about the program by going to: www.findinggod.com.

On the website, you may download activities and resources that correspond directly to what your child is learning in class. Parents/ Guardians are strongly encouraged to work with their children using these resources.

Also, on the website, are educational games and resources for your child(ren). The online educational games correspond directly to the lessons in class and help provide a way to more fully integrate the lesson in fun and accessible ways for your child(ren).

Program Rules and Guidelines

Arrival and Dismissal

Sunday Religious Education begins **promptly at 8:45AM**. The DRE will be at the gate for drop off from 8:35am- 8:50am. Children are to sit at the lunch benches next to the gate until their Catechists get them. If you arrive after 8:50am to drop off your child(ren), you will notice that the gate has been locked. If the DRE sees you, she will open the gate for you, if not, the procedure is to call/text the DRE at 619-436-9341.

At the conclusion of the catechetical phase of Religious Education, the children walk with their teachers as one group from the School to the Church. Parents/ Guardians are asked to pick up their children only at the Church, either in front or in the pews. **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. 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 a parent/ guardian is late in picking up their child(ren) there is a reserved section in the front pews where children will sit. Children may also choose to sit in this reserved section with their classmates. **Children may not wait alone in front of the Church for your arrival.**

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 it is raining, 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.** Pick up will be the same. Please arrive between 9:40am-10am. 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 a release form. This allows you to continue to drop off your children in the front of the school and pick them up at the church.

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.

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) 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 Religious Education 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 classes in the Religious Education Program (K-7th) 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 take a friend with them to class they must receive permission in advance from the Director of Religious Education.

Parent – Catechist Communication

Partnerships require healthy communication. For this reason, the Religious Education Program promotes communication between parents and catechists. Parents 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 gaurdians 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 grades. Catechists and the Director will remain with the children until either a parent or designated person picks the children 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 her 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 (K-7th). 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 (K-7th) 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 (K-7th) 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.