

St. Emily & St. Thomas Becket Religious Education



2017-2018 Family Handbook

Every Wednesday from 6:15 to 7:30 PM, until May 2, except the following dates:

- November 22
- December 27
- January 3
- March 28

February 14 is Ash Wednesday. Regular classes will not be held, but there will be a service at 5:00 PM and mass at 7:00 PM

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September, 2017

Dear Families,

Welcome to our Religious Education Program - where we are truly “Partners with Families in Children’s Faith Formation.” As your child’s first and foremost catechist, your role in passing on the Catholic faith is irreplaceable. Your actions in everyday life – what you say and do, what you value, and how you treat others – will have the greatest impact on your child’s moral development and determine the value they will place on this faith for the rest of their lives.

Our role as catechists is to support and enhance all you do to raise your children in a faith-filled home. We help to pass on the history, rituals, and traditions of our Catholic faith through class room learning, faith-sharing, prayer, Scripture, sacramental preparation and participation in the liturgy. We can and will do our best to teach, mentor, and nurture the Catholic faith you chose to raise them in on the day you had them baptized. Thank you for choosing us to be your partners.

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Statement of Philosophy and Purpose

“The aim of catechesis is to lead believers to a deeper knowledge and love of Christ and the Church and a firm commitment to follow him” (*National Directory for Catechesis*). Focusing on Jesus as the very center of catechesis, the goal of the St. Emily – St. Thomas Becket Religious Education Program is to promote the knowledge of faith, meaningful participation in liturgical worship and the sacramental life of the Church, offer moral formation, teach prayer and lead believers to become disciples of Christ.

Parents are the first educators of their children in the faith. They remain the most important ones, no matter how long a child goes to school.

St. John Paul II repeatedly wrote about the importance of the family in religious education. In 1979 (*Catechesis in Our Time*), he said,

The family’s catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable.... Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children’s tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel.

...Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.

Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.
(§ 68)

Parents and the parish function as partners in this enterprise. With communication and cooperation, we create an environment in which children can grow in their faith. As participants in the religious education program, **parents make a commitment to the religious formation of their children at home**, which includes

- learning prayer and Catholic practices;
- exploring the Scriptures together;
- sharing values and morals;
- participating in service opportunities as a family.

Parents commit to making sure that their children attend the sessions on time and are prepared with the necessary supplies. They help to review homework at home and make up any work that is missed. They commit to enrolling their child continuously from first grade through eighth grade / confirmation.

An essential part of this commitment is for families to worship with their children and the whole parish at mass on Sunday and to help prepare their children for the sacraments.

The role of the parish is to support parents in their role, but not to take it over. A primary goal of our catechetical program is to help parents bring home what their children are learning here and make it a part of family life.

In order to meet these goals, the parish community assists and supports the family by providing a welcoming environment where families can worship together. The parish also provides a religious education program which gives the students an experience of community learning with their age group, but does not replace the parents.

Preparation for the Sacraments

Consistent enrollment is required every year corresponding to a child's public school grade level from first through eighth grade.

According to the policies of the Archdiocese of Chicago, two years of preparation are necessary for celebrating the sacraments. Students begin their preparation in the second year.

The students in the second grade (who have completed the first year program) are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist as part of their class sessions.

These class sessions are in conjunction with the formation which they receive with their families. The most important preparation children can receive for the Eucharist is to be regular participants at Sunday mass.

Many students take part in the program in the second grade. However, students of all ages can be part of the process, with older students working in their own groups.

These special sacrament classes for students who are not in second grade meet at another time in addition to Wednesday Religious Education.

Confirmation is celebrated in the late winter. Most students will be confirmed in eighth grade, if they have completed the two year confirmation preparation sequence. Students who begin in grade eight will begin with the seventh grade course and complete two years.

Students who choose not to be confirmed in junior high can prepare to celebrate the sacrament in high school.

In addition to classroom work, students are expected to participate in the parish Confirmation program.

Curriculum

Each grade level includes learning about church teaching, Scripture, the church's liturgy and prayer, feasts and seasons, Mary and the saints, and Christian morality. In addition, each level concentrates on specific topics and themes.

The curriculum is structured so that each year provides a foundation for the next year. Students who skip years are missing valuable background.

The entire program - classroom work, other activities, Scripture and liturgy, and family discussions - works together to give children a well-rounded foundation for their adult faith.

We will test students in grades 1 through Confirmation on basic religious literacy. While we will teach these concepts and prayers in class, it is the responsibility of families to see that students master the basic literacy foundation. What follows is a summary of the goals for each level along with the material which will be included in the baseline testing

[In order to help families, there is a link on the Religious Education web site with all the basic standards in one place.](#)

For students who miss enrolling for specific years, it is the responsibility of the family to help the student meet those benchmarks.

The textbook series in grades one through six is Sadlier's *We Believe*. Middle school classes use a variety of materials, including the *Catholic Connections Handbook* from St. Mary's Press. We also use the *Read and Learn Bible* in first year and second grade, the *Catholic Children's Bible* in third grade, the *Breakthrough Bible* in fourth, fifth and sixth grades and the *New American Bible* in seventh and eighth grades

First Year **The theme: God created me and loves me.**

The goals of the First Year curriculum are to introduce students to a structured study of their faith. The concentration is on 1) helping them to begin to understand their creation by a loving God; 2) helping them to learn the formal prayers of the church and to begin a life of prayer; 3) helping them to understand their membership in the church.

By the end of first year, students will be expected to know the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.

Second Grade **The theme: Jesus came to save us and we experience that salvation in the sacraments.**

The goals of the Second Grade curriculum focus on preparing the students for the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. In the course of this preparation, they concentrate upon 1) the life and person of Jesus; 2) how the church celebrates the

sacraments in its liturgy; 3) how they can draw closer to God in prayer and in the sacraments.

In addition to their text, first communion candidates use a supplementary text at home with their families.

By the end of second grade, students will be expected to know an Act of Contrition, the basic responses for the mass, and a prayer to say after receiving communion.

Third Grade **The theme: The story of Jesus and his Church.**

The Third Grade curriculum concentrates on what it means to belong to the church. Themes taught in first and second grades are repeated in greater depth, as the students are growing in their understanding. They specifically explore 1) how the church functions; 2) what the church believes in the Creed; 3) how the church depends upon Scripture.

By the end of third grade, students will be expected to know the Apostles' Creed and be able to describe basic personnel (priest, bishop, etc.) and basic structures (parish, Vatican, etc.) in the church. They will also be able to pray the Rosary.

Fourth Grade **The theme: How do we get to heaven to be with the Lord?**

The focus of the Fourth Grade curriculum is the foundation for morality in the Beatitudes and the Commandments. Students will 1) learn how our moral tradition is rooted in the Old and New Testaments; 2) what the church teaches about how we should live our lives; 3) explore ways that they can "do good and avoid evil" in their everyday lives.

By the end of fourth grade, students will be able to list the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the precepts of the church, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. They will also be able to pray the Examen.

Fifth Grade **The theme: Jesus comes to meet us in the sacraments.**

The Fifth Grade curriculum concentrates on the sacraments and the liturgy of the church. In addition, they will explore the Scriptures further. Students will 1) learn about each of the sacraments in more depth; 2) have a working familiarity with the liturgy and the liturgical year; 3) explore the life and message of St. Paul.

By the end of fifth grade, students will be able to list, describe and define each sacrament, to list the basic parts of the mass, to be able to describe the principal ministries in the liturgy, the major seasons of the church year and the holy days of obligation. They will also be able to recite the Nicene Creed.

Sixth Grade **The theme: God loves us and desires to save us.**

The Sixth Grade curriculum focuses on the Old Testament. Students will 1) develop a working knowledge of the major themes of the Old Testament; 2) explore more about Judaism and the world of the Scriptures; 3) be able to describe the links between the Old Testament and the Christian tradition.

By the end of sixth grade, students will be able to identify and describe in chronological order the major events in the Old Testament and the major events in life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They will also be able to pray with the Psalms using *lectio divina*.

Seventh Grade

The theme: Jesus died and rose to save us.

This year consists of two segments: Jesus in the Gospels and discipleship and Christian morality. The first segment will give a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told to us in the gospels, and also will pose the challenge of discipleship to the students. Is following Jesus, and letting that govern the choices in their lives, a decision that they are ready to make? The second segment will help lay the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and give the students information about the Church's guidance in moral decision-making.

By the end of seventh grade, students will be familiar with the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Luke. They will be able to engage in a discussion of sin, grace, conscience and specific moral issues. They will also be able to pray with the Gospels using Ignatian contemplation.

Eighth Grade **The theme: Jesus sends the Spirit to make us strong in our faith.**

The Eighth grade curriculum consists of three segments: the Acts of the Apostles, the Creed and a review of Catholic teaching and immediate preparation for confirmation. The review of the Creed, what the church believes, provides a foundation to profess that belief in the sacrament of confirmation.

By the end of eighth grade, students will be familiar with how the Church, guided by the Spirit, took root in human history. They will be able to describe how the Spirit continues to guide the faith of the Church and they will be able to profess that faith at Confirmation. They will have a greater familiarity with and ability to use the forms of prayer introduced over the years.

Student Placement Guidelines

- All children who have been baptized Catholic are expected to begin formal religious education in First Grade with continuous formation through Eighth Grade in a Catholic school or parish Religious Education program, in order to enroll in Confirmation Preparation in eighth grade at St. Emily Parish.
- Parents of new students in Second Grade and above must provide transcripts showing the child's previous and consistent participation in an Archdiocesan-approved Catholic School or parish Religious Education program beginning in First Grade.
- We place students in their grade-appropriate years and work with them and their families to prepare for the sacraments when they have completed two years of enrollment.
- Students beginning Religious Education for the first time in second grade are placed in the First Year class. In their second year, they will be placed in Third Grade.
- Students who did not attend in Seventh Grade will begin preparation for Confirmation in the Seventh Grade program, and when they are in Ninth Grade, be placed in the Eighth Grade program. They will be confirmed in Ninth Grade.

Communication with Families

Email is our primary method of communication. We must have at least one current email address on file for every family. Parents should routinely check their email for Religious Education news and updates. As a general rule, the parent e-news is sent on Tuesday afternoon.

*Please note that if you have a **Gmail or Yahoo** email account that you might find our emails in either your Promotions or spam folder. Please check them if you don't have an email from us.*

Reporting Absences –

There is an [online form you may use to report absences](#).

Or you may call us at 847-299-5865 (Press #2)

Parents should call in advance to report an absence. Leave your child's full name, grade, date, and reason for the absence. 24-hour voicemail is available.

Supply List

It is recommended that each child have a separate back pack or tote bag where all Religious Education supplies can be kept. Parents should check this bag weekly to ensure children have their Bibles and the following supplies each week.

Grades 1, 2, 3

- 1 two-pocket folder
- 1 box of 24 crayons
- 2-3 pencils with erasers
- 1 box of **washable** markers
- 1 glue stick
- Blunt scissors

Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

- 1 two-pocket folder
- 2-3 pens
- 2-3 pencils with erasers
- 1-2 highlighters
- 1 box of **washable** markers
- 1 spiral notebook
- 1 pack of 3 inch post it notes
- Bible*

*Students in grades 4, 5 and 6 are using the Breakthrough Bible. Grades 7 and 8 are using the New American Bible Revised Edition. (NABRE). Replacement Bibles can be purchased from the RE office.

Attendance, Make Up and Homework Policy

Acknowledging that the demands of today's society are many, parents are urged to make regular attendance at RE a priority for their children.

Please note that we consider more than 3 absences a year excessive. If a child misses more than this, we will need to evaluate to see if s/he is meeting the benchmarks for that grade.

If a child is absent, it is the parent's responsibility to see that he or she completes the make-up homework that the catechist assigns. Parents will be notified of the make-up via email, if possible. Parents are expected to participate in the lessons together with the children.

Return the assignment to the catechist.

Regular homework may be assigned by the catechist. It is the parent's responsibility to see that it is returned to class.

Progress Reports and Parent Visits

Progress reports are issued twice a year, so that parents can keep track of their child's work in the classroom.

Parent visits to class are welcome. Please let both the office and the catechist know in advance when you are planning to visit.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

When To Arrive

The back doors to the gym, off of the north parking lot **open at 6:05 PM**, before class begins.

They close at 6:20 PM. After that time, come to the front door of the school to receive a tardy slip.

The back doors of the gym **open for pick up at 7:20 PM.** They will **lock at 7:40 PM.** After that, please come to the front doors of the school and ring the Religious Education bell to pick up your child from the office.

Where To Park

At Arrival: Park in the north church parking lot. Enter through the back doors of the gym.

Please note that to protect your child's safety, we expect you to park and walk your child into the building.

If you arrive after the bell, please go to the attendance desk in the school hallway via the front center doors of the school to check in your child.

At Dismissal: Park in the north parking lot behind school.
Parents enter through back doors of the gym.

Tuition and Fees

The parishioner rate applies to families who are registered and active at St. Emily or St. Thomas Becket; those who are involved in parish life and/or ministries, attend mass here on a regular basis, and demonstrate a desire to financially support the mission of our parish through recordable contributions of \$250 or more in a 12 month period through parish envelopes or E-Giving.org.

The Non Parishioner rate applies to families who wish to enroll their children in our program but attend mass at a different parish and do not wish to support the parish through time, talent or treasure.

No child is denied religious education due to financial constraints. Tuition assistance and payment options are available for verified St. Emily Parish families who otherwise cannot afford Religious Education. Parents should contact the Director of Religious Education to speak confidentially about their situation.

Status	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children or more
Parishioner	\$300	\$425	\$600
Non-Parishioner	\$475	\$625	\$775

St. Emily Parish - The preferred method of payment is through e-Giving. [See this guide for help with setting up your e-Giving payments](#). You may also pay by cash or check in full or installments in the Religious Education office. Please contact Catherine Crino (ccrino@stemily.org) if you need to make other arrangements.

St. Thomas Becket Parish - The preferred method of payment is through GiveCentral. You may also pay by cash or check in full or installments in either Religious Education office. Please contact Renata Sosin (rsosin@stbmp.org) if you need to make other arrangements.

First Communion Fees

- St. Emily Religious Education \$60.00 (Includes photography)
- St. Thomas Becket Religious Education \$50.00 (Does not include photography)
- St Emily School \$40.00

Confirmation Fees:

- Religious Education \$75.00
- St Emily School \$50.00

Accommodation for Special Needs

Parents are responsible for advising the Religious Education Office about all special needs, allergy, health and medical concerns, and physical and/or learning disabilities that pertain to their children, especially if there is a need for specialized individual attention. This information will be shared with the child's catechist or aide for the benefit of the assisting in class room management.

If there is an IEP for the student, please give a copy to the Religious Education Office so that we can use the same approaches and strategies that the child is familiar with during the school day.

Our goal is to mainstream, as much as possible, any child with special learning needs. This is dependent upon our ability to recruit catechists and aides who can work individually with a student, if that is necessary.

If a child cannot be mainstreamed successfully, we will work with the family to ensure that an appropriate setting is found to educate the child in the faith and prepare him or her for the sacraments.

Medication

Except in extraordinary circumstances which must be approved by the DRE, the Religious Education program or personnel will not maintain, supervise the taking of, or administer medication.

Parents are responsible for advising the DRE if their child carries an inhaler, epi-pen or other life-saving medication that they may need during class sessions; for making sure the child has the necessary supplies; that the child is trained in proper usage, and able to administer the medication as necessary; most importantly, parents are responsible for seeing that children's information is updated regularly.

Food and Beverages

Due to health and allergy concerns for our students and the students who are here during the day, children are not allowed to bring any food or beverage into the classrooms, with the exception of a water bottle during warmer weather

The building is 'nut free.' However, parents of children who have severe nut or peanut allergies are responsible to come to sanitize the desk and chair that will be used by their child.

Snacks are discouraged. They cannot be served in the classroom. See this [safe snack list](#) for choices.

Safety and Discipline

All the catechists and other volunteers and employees who have contact with children have undergone a security and background check. In addition, each one has participated in *Virtus* training, an initiative of the Archdiocese which is in compliance with "Protecting God's Children." *Virtus* educates those who work with children about preventing child abuse. They have also all completed training at Mandated Reporters with the Department of Child and Family Services.

Good relationships are based on mutual respect. As Christians, respectful behavior is expected from everyone involved in the program.

Students shall contribute to the learning experience by cooperating with the classroom rules, as explained by the catechist. These rules are:

- I. Respect yourself, others, and property.
- II. Contribute to the learning environment.
- III. Follow program and classroom procedures.

The first time a negative incident occurs in class, the catechist will speak with the student in an attempt to find an acceptable resolution.

If there is a second occurrence, the student will be excused from class to go to the DRE's office and discussion will lead to a resolution of the problem. Parents will be notified.

If there is a third occurrence, the student will be excused from class and may only return under parental supervision until s/he develops the necessary self-control to participate fully in the program.

Students are expected to show proper respect for parish and personal property. If a student is found to have intentionally taken, damaged, or destroyed any parish or personal property, that student and parents will be responsible for the repair or replacement of the items.

Children are not allowed free access to the building unsupervised by adults. This policy is for your child's safety and building security.

Cell Phones, iPods, Or Other Electronic Devices

Cell phones and iPods must be turned off before entering the building. Catechists have the option of collecting all cell phones at the beginning of class and returning them at dismissal. If a student attempts to use their cell phone to talk or text during class time, the phone will be confiscated and held in the RE Office until a parent comes to claim it.

In some cases, educational technology used in a lesson employs student devices. Students may use their devices under these conditions.

Dress Code

Proper attire promotes a respectful atmosphere and is a reflection of our own self-image. Students may be in church at any time during RE, so they should dress with proper reverence for worship space and appropriately for current weather conditions.

Specific items of apparel NOT allowed:

Girls - short shorts, cami's, tops that are strapless or that expose cleavage or bare midriffs.
Boys - may not wear low-rider pants with exposed shorts, hats or hoods while indoors.

Clothing that depicts gang-related insignias, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, or offensive language is strictly prohibited. Though rare, if clothing is deemed inappropriate, parents may be called to bring a change of clothing for their child.

Inappropriate Items

Students are not to bring toys, games, dolls, stuffed animals, magazines, trading cards, etc.

Anything that could be used to harm or threaten another person, including "toy" weapons, will be confiscated and parents notified.

Alcohol, cigarettes, or any illegal substances are prohibited.

We reserve the right to inspect personal property when there is reasonable belief that a student is violating the policies of St. Emily / St. Thomas Becket Religious Education Program

Custody of Children

The St. Emily / St. Thomas Becket Religious Education Program presumes that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorced or separated. Unless informed otherwise and in writing and with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have unqualified access to the child, we will permit either parent to have access to the child while at St. Emily Parish and will release the child from the site to either parent.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

St. Emily / St. Thomas Becket Religious Education Program admits students of any sex, race, color or national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students in this religious education program.

St. Emily / St. Thomas Becket Religious Education Program does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its policies, supplementary programs or any other program-based function.

St. Emily / St. Thomas Becket Religious Education Program, insofar as is reasonable, will make accessible its catechetical programs to persons with disabilities. The parish will assist with alternate options for catechesis should a person be unable to participate in the regular program of catechesis.

Access to Records

Custodial parents can request the student's record by notifying the Director by phone or in writing. Please give us one week's notice.

We respect the rights of non-custodial parents with regard to religious education records and program related information. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the program administrator will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the religious education records and other religious education program-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program administrator with a certified copy of the court order.

Emergency Closing Information

If the decision to cancel class is made, we immediately notify the Emergency Closing Center (ECC) www.emergencyclosings.com and post it on the Religious Education web site. We will also send an email to all families.

If the weather seems to warrant cancelling, it is suggested that families check before they set out for class.

Families can receive automatic e-mails directly from the ECC by going to their website and signing up for this free service. You may also tune in to any of the following TV/Radio station: CBS, NBC, ABC, WGN, FOX, CLTV News, WGN Radio 720 or WBBM News Radio 78.

Volunteers

This program can only achieve success through the dedication and commitment of generous and willing volunteers. Many volunteers are needed each year in many different positions in order to make the program work well. We rely heavily on the parents of children in the program, but also look to all parishioners, young and old, who love children and love sharing their faith. All volunteers are encouraged to fulfill at least one full year commitment.

Religious Education Advisory Board

Purpose And Mission

This Board was formed to support the Religious Education Program and serve as an advisory group to the Director of Religious Education in matters pertaining to the current and future operation of the program, especially in the areas of structure, curriculum, finance, enrollment, and parent involvement. The Board's Mission is:

- To be a visible sign of leadership within the parish community
- To promote awareness of the Religious Education Program in the parishes.
- To encourage collaboration between the Religious Education Program and all parish ministries
- To facilitate communication and encourage cooperation between public schools and the Religious Education Program
- To welcome parents and help nurture a sense of belonging to the parish community
- To be informed about the present and future needs of the Religious Education program

If you would be interested in joining the Board, please speak to the Director.