

Parish Catechetical Handbook for Families



Our Savior Catholic Parish
1801 Cody Road S
Mobile, Alabama 36695
(251) 633-6762 ext. 206
re@oursaviorparish.org

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to our parish catechetical program. The purpose of this program is to follow Christ's call "to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world and to hand his message on to successive generations by professing, living and celebrating the faith..." (*National Directory for Catechesis* #15)

In our parish, the pastor, working with parents and those in catechetical ministry, plans and carries out this catechetical mission. This handbook has been designed to provide general information, dates, and requirements for participation in the parish program. The parish reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified, in writing, if changes are made to any procedure or information contained in this handbook. We hope this serves to enhance communication, and provide a clear presentation of expectations and responsibilities of students and their families. In the long run, we hope it makes family life easier!

In the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the U.S. Bishops remind us that it is in the parish that the faithful are "energized to carry out Christ's mission." It is here that the "spiritual, moral and material support for the regular and continuing catechetical development of the parishioners" is provided. (*NDC*, #60)

We thank you for your support and cooperation, and look forward to working together with you this year. It is in working together that we are the Body of Christ and carry out His mission.

May the Lord bless our efforts,

Rev. David J. Tokarz, Pastor

Janet Murray, Parish Catechetical Leader

Mission Statement

The catechetical program of Our Savior Parish in Mobile, Alabama, strives to help participants and their families develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and to live out their Catholic faith in ways that draw others to Christ and the Church through catechesis, sacramental preparation, liturgy, and service.

Objectives of our Parish Catechetical Program*

- ❖ To present a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith, that integrates knowledge of the faith with living the faith
- ❖ To center on initiation into the life of the Triune God
- ❖ To be appropriate to the age level, maturity, circumstances, language and ethnic background of each participant
- ❖ To involve all members of the parish community, particularly the parents
- ❖ To focus on the symbols, rituals, and prayers of the Church
- ❖ To enable the believers to live out their faith in their everyday life

* from the *National Directory for Catechesis*, 2005

The parish catechetical 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 catechetical program. Where possible, our parish program strives to make accommodation for children and youth with disabilities.

Additional Programs

Adult Faith Formation

Our parish sees parents/guardians as having an important role in their children's faith development. We welcome your involvement in the program as a volunteer and/or catechist. We depend on your assistance in helping your children learn their prayers and participate in the parish catechetical program and other enriching activities of parish life. Equally important is your commitment to enriching your own faith life. The parish bulletin lists the dates and times when adult faith formation opportunities are offered. Watch for **Bible Studies** that Fr. David presents at various times. Take advantage of **Food for Body and Soul** for those 21 and older. Be sure to check the bulletin for the dates and times.

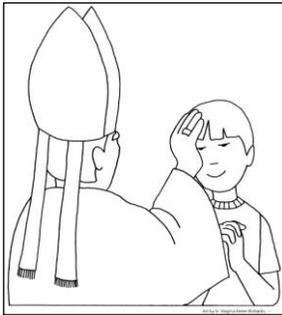
Sacramental Preparation Guidelines

Baptism

Pre-baptism classes are designed to assist parents with nurturing their faith as they welcome a new member into their family. If you are expecting a child or have recently had a child and want to prepare for baptism, please call Amy Walsh (605-8870) to schedule a preparation session.

First Reconciliation & First Eucharist

Children in second grade who have attended a year of catechetical instructions are eligible to celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. This preparation takes place within the parish catechetical program.



Confirmation

The sacrament of Confirmation is offered for students in Grades 11±. To be eligible for this sacrament the student must: (1) either be enrolled in our parish catechetical program or a Catholic High School; (2) have regularly attended class for at least two years prior to reception of the sacrament; and (3) participate in Confirmation preparation activities and attend Mass weekly.

Parish Programs for Children and Youth

Kindergarten through Grade 8

The *Finding God* series is used in Grades K through 6. This series focuses on specific faith themes and is in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The text includes age-appropriate activities and prayers for memorization. Learning the faith begins at home and our program is designed to assist parents in their role as the primary educator of their child. Classes meet Sundays from 9:45-10:45 a.m. in the Activities Building.

High School

These students meet Sundays from 9:45 – 10:45 a.m. in the Activities Building. The 9th through 12th graders meet together.

Parish Catechetical Policies

Attendance Policy

Students and parents should make every effort to attend the catechetical sessions and/or parent meetings offered at the parish. Students who miss more than 6 sessions per year may not advance to the next grade level of catechesis without permission of the director. Students with special circumstances preventing them from attending weekly catechetical sessions will be handled on an individual basis.

Arrival and Dismissal

Please bring your child to class on time (preferably 5 minutes before the start of class), and pick up your child at dismissal time. Children up through 4th grade remain in their classroom until picked up by the custodial parents (or their designee who has been identified to the PCL).

Communication

Since the catechist has the most direct contact with your child, parents should discuss any classroom issues with the catechist first. If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, parents should speak with the PCL. If still unresolved, the issue may be brought to the pastor.

Group communications are done by email. Please make sure your computer will accept emails from re@oursaviorparish.org.

Emergency Class Cancellation

In an emergency situation such as extreme weather, catechetical classes will be canceled. Check your email for notifications. If you are uneasy about your child attending a session due to weather, keep him or her home.

Fire Safety and Disaster Preparation

Procedures for fire or disaster evacuation are posted in each room. Each catechist will instruct the class on their evacuation procedures, and conduct at least one drill per year.

Health Concerns

Health information is collected on the Registration Form. Catechists and other personnel are not allowed to dispense or administer medication to students. Parents/guardians will be called should a student become sick during class. Please do not send sick or contagious students to class.

Student Behavior and Expectations

- Students are expected to show respect to their teachers and classmates. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
- The Archdiocese of Mobile has a detailed, required **Field Trip Policy** that is used for all trips, service projects, retreats, etc.

- Students attending parish catechetical sessions are expected to regularly attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days, and to celebrate the sacraments.

Sexual and other types of harassment

Harassment, racial slurs, fighting, smoking, drugs, or other inappropriate (or gang - related) conduct among students will not be tolerated. Violations of this rule will warrant immediate notification of parents/guardians of the child involved, and may warrant suspension or even dismissal from the program.

Weapons

In the unlikely event a student is suspected of possessing a weapon or drugs while on parish premises or as a participant in a parish program, the Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) or Youth Ministry Leader (YML) will immediately notify the parents of the child. The proper civil authorities may be notified.

General Expectations

Before a student will be permitted to participate in the catechetical program a parent or guardian must sign the Handbook Compliance stating that they have read these rules and policies, and that they agree to be governed by them.

Child & Adolescent Protection Policy

In a pastoral effort to respond to a need for the protection of children, the Archdiocese requires a catechesis be given to children and youth in all grades of Parish Programs and Catholic Schools. This yearly catechesis is done during Respect Life month in October. An email will be sent to each family, notifying parents of the date of the classes. All priests, deacons, school administrators, teachers, youth ministers, parish catechists, support personnel, coaches, and other volunteers having “substantial contact” with children are required to attend training provided by the Archdiocese in the prevention and recognition of all forms of abuse against children. All persons who work with children in the Archdiocese of Mobile will be required to have background checks. Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse, and we will also follow all Archdiocesan policies on such matters. If you have questions, feel free to contact the Archdiocesan Office of Child Protection.

Phone: (251) 434-1559