

## ***St. Joan of Arc Family Handbook***

*The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch,  
but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ:  
only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit.*

CCC 426

***Dear Parents,***

Thank you so much for being part of our Religious Education Program here at Saint Joan of Arc. The handing on of the Faith is of vital importance to the Church and we are proud to support you in this mission. We are blessed with dedicated men, women and youth assistants, who offer themselves to the spiritual well-being and nurturing of our children. Firmly rooted in the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, our catechists share Christ with our children, help them grow in their faith and recognize their gifts for the greater glory of God.

Below you will find our new *Saint Joan of Arc Family Handbook*. There is invaluable information that will help make this coming school year a success. Please feel free to talk to our Directors of Religious Education if you have any questions or wish for clarification. You, of course, can always come to me with any questions, suggestions or concerns.

Wishing you a great year and thanking you for the great service you do by sharing your faith with your children, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Father Al*

### **St. Joan of Arc's Philosophy of Education**

With and through our Christian community, St. Joan of Arc's Religious Education Program strives to cultivate in all participants: a deep knowledge of the faith; full, conscious and active participation in liturgical life; moral formation; an attitude of prayer and contemplation, a true belonging to our Christian community and an active participation in the life and mission of the Church.

The basic philosophy is to participate with parents, the first and best teachers of the faith, in teaching their children to know, love and serve God. This is done through various educational activities which strengthen faith and give it direction so that children may grow through the various stages of faith to Christian maturity.

Faith cannot be taught in the usual sense of the word. Rather, it must be experienced and lived. Therefore, our religious education program attempts to provide experiences which create an atmosphere where students will develop their own faith. Our goals are:

1. *To acknowledge that parents are the primary educators for the religious education of their children*
2. *To cooperate with parents in providing a Christian atmosphere so that children may*
  - a. *Deepen their relationship with God through the gift of Faith*

- b. *Respond to faith through celebration, love and worship*
- c. *Grow in awareness of Christian and Catholic values and act according to those values*
- d. *Learn the doctrines and prayers of the Catholic Church*
- e. *Become familiar with Catholic traditions and Scripture*
- f. *Realize that service to others is an integral part of our faith commitment*

### **Religious Education Curriculum**

St. Joan of Arc's curriculum is directed by the leadership of our Shepherd, Bishop Ronald Gainer, our Pastor, Father Al, and the Directors of Religious Education with the Diocesan Religious Education Curriculum (which can be accessed on the diocesan website

[http://www.hbgdiocese.org/catholic-schools/religion-curriculum/.](http://www.hbgdiocese.org/catholic-schools/religion-curriculum/))

### **Office Locations and Hours**

The REP office is in the St. Joan of Arc School, next to the Principal's office (the former Development Office). This location is staffed during REP class hours (Sundays 9-11:30am and 7-8:30pm; Wednesdays 4:15 – 5:30pm). The offices of our directors and admin assistant are in the Parish Center, open M-F 8am-noon; 1-4pm.

### **Student Registration and Fee**

St. Joan of Arc's religious education program (REP) does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, age or disability. New families need to register with the parish office.

Our registration fee is \$100 for the first child, and \$110 for two children and \$125 for 3 or more children. (Catechists' children attend tuition-free in appreciation for their service.) An additional Retreat Fee is required for the First Holy Communion students and the Confirmation students and is collected during the school year. Out-of-parish families pay an additional \$20/family to attend our program. *A financial concern should not prevent your registration into our program.* If there is a difficulty, please contact the Director of Religious Education (DRE).

### **Communications**

In addition to asking your child about their lesson each Sunday, please ask for any communications that may be coming home with him/her. These may be letters from the office or classroom catechist, requests, reminders about upcoming events or changes in schedules, etc. Keep on top of all things REP via the parish website, StJoanHershey.org. A **calendar** is available online at <http://www.stjoanhershey.org/rep-calendar.html>. You can see when classes are being held there.

It is very important that we keep the lines of communication open. Keep us informed of any change in your email address or phone numbers so that catechists and the office can reach you.

### **Class Attendance**

Regular class attendance is expected of all students in our Religious Education Program. All REP students should arrive promptly with a willingness to learn and actively participate.

**Poor attendance may result in students repeating a grade and the delay of the sacraments with their peers.**

If you know that your child will miss class, **please notify the Catechist and/or DRE.** It is the parent's responsibility to inquire what materials or lessons were covered and assist the student in

catching up should a class be missed because of illness or family reasons. (See *Sacramental Program* for grades 1, 2, 7 and 8).

**Weather Cancellations** – In the event of class cancellations, notice will appear on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/SJA.REP/?fref=fb> (**please LIKE us!**) as well as on local TV stations. If schools dismiss early on a Wednesday, REP will not have class that day.

### **Mass Attendance**

Sunday Liturgy is the Source and Summit of our Catholic Faith. It is the place where, within our faith community, we are fed by both the Word of God and the Bread of Life; strengthening us in Christ's love so that we may go into our homes, schools, work place and community spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. Participation in Sunday Liturgy is *vital* to our Catholic faith formation, and therefore families are expected to attend Mass regularly.

### **Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures**

St. Joan of Arc's REP staff and volunteers prepare a quality program of Religious formation presented in an atmosphere of respect and Christian Community.

We expect all students to listen attentively and be prepared to participate fully in REP classes. Proper conduct and respect of others: adults, students, and property are expected at all times of all students. We expect all participants to behave in a manner exemplifying members of the Body of Christ. We affirm the value of every individual, inherently deserving respect as a child of God; therefore any form of harassment (physical, psychological, sexual, or verbal) or threats of violence are prohibited.

Use and/or possession of any illegal drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, weapons (novelty or real) is forbidden. Suspension from the program will result immediately if this policy is violated.

Corporal Punishment is not in keeping with the philosophy of this program and is not used.

Because a disruptive student may have a negative impact on other students and prevent them from benefiting from the program, when a student becomes disruptive, these general disciplinary guidelines will be followed:

- 1<sup>st</sup> A warning by the Catechist that the student's behavior is not in line with the classroom rules.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> The Catechist will discuss the inappropriate behavior with the student after class.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> The DRE will discuss the situation with the student and contact the student's parents.
- 4<sup>th</sup> The DRE and/or Pastor will meet with the student and parents to discuss options.

### **Cell Phones**

Cell phones are not permitted at REP (unless a catechist requests). There is a phone in the office for emergencies. Cell phones are an unnecessary distraction; please keep them at home.

### **Emergency Care of Students**

All Students must have a Medical Emergency Authorization signed as part of their registration to keep on file in the REP office authorizing emergency care if a student would become seriously ill or injured while attending REP classes. Every attempt will be made to notify parents if there is an accident or illness. In the case of minor accidents or injuries, personnel will administer basic first aid.

We request that parents administer necessary medication to your child before or after religious education activities. If this is not possible, parents must meet with the DRE to arrange distribution of medication in accordance with diocesan policy.

Catechists follow the Universal Precautions set by the Center for Disease Control for handling spilled blood and body fluids to insure proper cleaning and disinfection.

### **Diocesan Youth Protection Program**

St. Joan of Arc employees, catechists and volunteers are required to be in full compliance under the Diocesan Youth Protection Program which includes obtaining appropriate clearance checks and take the diocesan online training. The Diocesan Youth Protection Program also includes parent letters and Safe Environment Lessons in grades 1 and 5. (View the lessons and online training at <http://www.hbgdiocese.org/safeyouth/safe-environment-program> ).

### **Drop Off and Dismissal**

Parents are asked to take their elementary school child directly to the school cafeteria for REP classes. If you arrive before an adult is present, please stay with your child until one arrives.

Students in kindergarten through 3rd grade must be picked up at their classroom at dismissal time and signed out. (If your child is restricted as to who may pick him/her up, please notify the DRE and file the necessary paperwork in the REP office.)

The children's safety is our primary concern. Please advise your children to be extremely cautious in the parking lot if you are having older students meet you outside of the building.

### **Sacramental Programs**

Students preparing to receive the Sacraments are required to participate in REP classes for two consecutive years prior to reception of the Sacrament; **first and second grades** for First Holy Communion and **grades seven and eight** for Confirmation. Both Sacramental Programs include special formational activities to help prepare the student and their family for the reception of the Sacrament. A retreat fee is collected to cover additional expenses. Children who have missed their sacraments in those traditional grades may be enrolled and will be tutored to prepare them until ready.

*Weekly class attendance is **extremely important**. More than 4 unexcused absences is a cause for concern regarding the student's level of preparation and may lead to a delay of the sacrament.* Communication with the catechist and making up any missed work will be considered when evaluating the student's ability to receive the sacrament in the desired year. Mandatory Parent Meetings are held to prepare parents for their child's First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

### **Volunteering**

We depend on parents and other adult parishioners getting involved to make our program function, be it in the classroom or on special projects. Please choose how you can help. If you can bake or serve at parties or meetings, **We Need You!** If you can help in the office or a classroom as an aide, **We Need You!** We need hall monitors to keep a watchful eye during class periods, and on and on! If your child is in our program, find some way to lend a hand, regularly or as needed. See Marcie or Earl to sign up!

### **Special Learning Needs**

Special learning needs (those with an IEP, etc.) should be identified on the registration form or by contacting the DRE. A Special Needs class meets on Sunday mornings immediately following REP classes.