

*RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM*

*PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK*

*ST. GABRIEL THE ARCHANGEL*

*SADDLE RIVER, NEW JERSEY*

*J. Patricia Pula MA  
Director of Religious Education*

*September, 2022*

Covenant Agreement

I understand that in enrolling my child(ren) in the St. Gabriel the Archangel Religious Education Program, I am entering into the following covenant with the Parish: Our family has read, understands and will abide by the parameters put forth in the Parent and Child Handbook.

Signature: Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTRODUCTION** “Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.”

William Butler Yeats

The mission of St. Gabriel the Archangel’s Parish Religious Education Program is to provide an educational program in which the students come together to deepen their relationship with God, begin their mission as disciples of Jesus Christ and become open to the influence of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. It is through our Catholic traditions, family prayer, Christian example, and regular attendance at Mass that the foundation is laid for each child to live a life in the spiritual awareness of their membership in the broad universe of God’s creation.

At the time of registering children in the parish Religious Education Program, it is required that all parents and/or guardians thoroughly read this handbook, review the contents with their children, and acknowledge their understanding of the contents.

**OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Regular office hours are Monday through Friday 8:30am-4:30pm. During the summer months of June, July and August the office is closed on Friday. The Office of Religious Education can be reached on 201-825-0275. The Parish office and answering machine can be reached at 201-327-5663. Any questions pertaining to Religious Education can be directed to Maureen Straut, Parish Office Administrator, or Patricia Pula, Director of Religious Education (DRE).

**REGISTRATION**

Formal membership in the parish is required prior to enrolling in the Religious Education program. New families should register on line at [http://stgabrielr.org/p\\_reg.php](http://stgabrielr.org/p_reg.php).

Registration of all CCD students is done each year in the spring. With the exception of families who have recently moved into the parish, new registrants are not accepted during the course of the year. There is an annual contribution of \$175 for the first child, \$250 for two children, \$325 for three or more children per household to help defray the expense of the program. There is an additional \$75 fee for each student in the Sacramental Programs of First Communion and Confirmation during 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

It is the responsibility of the parents or guardians, out of consideration of the student and teacher alike, that the staff be made aware in writing at the time of registration of any special needs that a student might have whether that be social, developmental, medical or any other issues that might impact the child’s performance in class. Please bring any event that could be of a concern to the child to the attention of the teacher and the DRE so we are better able to partner with you in monitoring your child through a difficult period.

## **PROCEDURES FOR ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

It is with the supreme interest of the safety of all the children in the program that each child is required to be escorted by an adult to their respective classrooms thus insuring their safe arrival and confirming that a teacher is present to properly supervise. Children should never be left unattended in the building. Our teachers are volunteers who often need to collect their own children from school before arriving here therefore we appreciate your patience and cooperation. Please note that all doors into the building will be locked at 3:40 pm. The doors will be unlocked again at the time of dismissal.

At dismissal time, all students are to be picked up from their respective classrooms. Students are not to slip out of the building to meet parents in the parking lot. Please do text your student to announce your arrival. Only high school age children can collect a sibling. Keep in mind that observing the requirements of safe arrival and dismissal sends the message to the children that the rules apply to everyone whether they are being observed or not. A Christian conscience is caught not taught. Please be aware that the staff or teachers do not have the authority to drive your child (ren) home. Please call the Religious Education office at 201-825-0275 if you have run into difficulty and will not arrive on time.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to attend their particular class on a regular basis. A student cannot switch days of attendance in order to avoid an absence or to accommodate after-school activities. If the child is absent for what constitutes 25% of the particular program hours, the student may be asked to repeat the grade the following year. Special arrangements will be made for children with prolonged illnesses or other family situations that require pastoral consideration. Covid 19 absences will not count against a student's total. All children must wear a mask during class until further notice. A Home School model is an option for those parents who are concerned about group class attendance.

## **CALENDARS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR**

At the beginning of the year, the office provides each family with a calendar of important dates and the vacation closings for the general program as well as calendars specific to some grades and all the sacramental preparation program. **This calendar is posted on the parish website at [www.stgabrielsr.org](http://www.stgabrielsr.org).** As we have families in the program from a number of school districts, the best attempt is made to have our schedules coincide.

## **SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

In the case of cancellation due to emergency closings, please consult this webpage. The staff will make every effort to get this information out in a timely manner barring any problems with the power or cable service. Continue to check the parish website during the day for weather outlooks that could require cancelling classes.

## **DISCIPLINE**

In order to grow in Christian maturity, children must learn to respect the dignity of all persons. The teachers are instructed that any student who is disruptive is to be sent to the Director's office and the teacher will notify the parents as to the nature of the problem. If the occasion arises that a student is sent out of class a second time, the DRE will call the parents for a telephone consultation. If there is an occasion to send the student to the office for a third time, the student and parents will be asked to meet with the pastor and DRE to discuss the matter. After this meeting, any student who cannot conduct himself or herself in a cooperative manner could be asked to return the following year and repeat the grade.

## **BULLYING**

As Christians, every student in the program is expected to treat each other with civility and respect. Any act of harassment or bullying, which has the effect of insulting or demeaning a student or a group of students will not be tolerated and will be handled as seen fit by the DRE in consultation with the Pastor.

## **DRESS CODE AND GENERAL RULES**

All students are to attend class respectfully dressed as the Religious Education classes are an extension of the church and classes may be relocated to the church for special programs at any time. Clothing or accessories such as those depicting violence, profanity and/or are, suggestive, offensive or too revealing, advocate illegal or unhealthy behavior are not permitted. Hats of any kind should not be worn inside the building. The ultimate decision as to appropriateness of dress rests with the DRE.

**If your child has a cellphone, it is preferable that the phone be left at home. If the phone comes into the building, it is to be turned off during class. Any child who receives or sends a telephone call or text message will be asked to surrender the telephone to the teacher until the end of class.**

**All sporting goods such as but not limited to basketballs, lacrosse sticks, footballs and the like shall be given to a staff member during the time the students are in the building.**

**food and drink are not permitted in the classrooms in consideration of allergies.**

## **THE SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS**

“The sacraments...celebrate the coming of the Spirit at special moments in the life of the community of faith and its members and express the Church’s faith and interaction with Christ. The Church celebrates the mysteries of God’s presence through word, bread, wine, water, oil and the actions of the ordained ministers and the people.” (*National Catechetical Directory #114*)

The sacraments are celebrations of the parish faith community and involve both Catholic school and public school students in a coordinated and unified fashion. In recognition of the blessing of parents as the primary catechists of their children, it is mandated that the preparation for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation actively involve parents in the process. Parent meetings are mandatory and at least one parent or guardian must be present at the required meetings although all adults significant to the child’s faith formation are welcome. Regular Sunday Mass attendance is a requirement for sacramental preparation throughout the entire period of preparation. The Archdiocesan policy remains in effect regarding eligibility of reception of the sacraments. Only children of registered St. Gabriel’s families will be enrolled in our sacramental preparation programs. The Archdiocese prohibits transferring between local parishes for the reception of the sacraments.

### **FIRST RECONCILIATION**

The celebration of First Reconciliation takes place prior to the reception of First Eucharist. Generally, this preparation takes place during the child’s second year of religious education. There is an introductory meeting for both parent and child early in the fall. The children make their First Reconciliation during class time in the spring.

### **FIRST EUCHARIST**

During this year of preparation, we remind the parents that it is of utmost importance that the children attend weekly Sunday Mass. Children receive First Eucharist with the instruction, encouragement, and support of their parents, teachers, and the entire parish community. The children must have completed the First Reconciliation program satisfactorily in order to make their First Communion. The preparation includes a mandatory mini-retreat for the children. As with reconciliation, the parents are given the appropriate materials to work with the child in the weeks prior to the sacrament. If the parents, DRE or Pastor should decide that the child is not ready for reception of the sacrament, it may be postponed until a later date. Scripture Scholars is an important part of this year of preparation. The program requires that the students write weekly submissions regarding faith facts they learned during their weekend worship as members of the assembled parish. This program is discussed at greater detail at the parent meeting.

## CONFIRMATION

The catechetical program includes experiences of Christian communal life through regular Sunday worship, class attendance, service projects, a retreat day, and parish liturgies. The purpose of the program is to help the young person to understand in a personal way one's spiritual relationship with self, others, and God. Confirmation is a sacrament of personal choice and the candidate must be able to express a willingness to be involved in the communal aspects of the program and have the personal desire to freely request the Sacrament of Confirmation and give his/her reasons for doing so. All students who register for the sacrament must have been enrolled in the parish for sixth grade unless they are new to the area. During the two-years of preparation the students are required to complete five phases of the program satisfactorily to be recommended to the bishop for reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation:

First, the student is to attend weekly Sunday Mass. The discussion of the gospel and homily are an integral part of the program. When a family does not participate on a regular basis in the liturgy, the message received by the teen is that Confirmation is a cultural event much like graduation rather than a personal commitment to faith, belief in Jesus Christ and the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Second, regular class attendance is mandatory. When a candidate arrives a half hour late or leaves a half hour early, the attendance record will indicate partial attendance. Let us be brave and reach an understanding with all of our coaches, directors, dance teachers and tutors that faith formation is integral to the development of our children. Body and soul need to be present. Class attendance also requires active participation and cooperative classroom behavior.

Third, over the course of these two years, it is required that the students complete 20 hours of service that is to be of a Christian outreach nature. The project should have the candidate use personal time to touch the lives of others who are less fortunate than they are. The candidates may work in groups. If a candidate chooses to work directly with their sponsor, ten hours of service is considered as satisfying this obligation.

Fourth, a retreat day is an integral part of the program, during which the candidates have an opportunity to reflect on the step that they are preparing to take. *Any student who cannot make a retreat must report the need for non-attendance to the DRE in advance and will have to complete an approved retreat program. There are **no** early dismissals.*

Fifth, at some point during the preparation year each student meets with the Pastor to discuss his/her understanding of the responsibilities of an individual who is fully initiated into the Catholic faith. Class attendance, knowledge of the Catholic Faith and completion of a service project are all taken into consideration. A decision whether or not to recommend the candidate to the Bishop for Confirmation rests with the Pastor.

## **Policy Regarding Epinephrine Pre-filled Auto-injectors in Catechetical Class Settings**

**Parishes may choose from the following options when a child may require the administration of epinephrine with a pre-filled auto-injector.**

**Option A – Medical Professional or “Designee” present during Religious Education Classes:** A medical professional (e.g. nurse, trained EMT, doctor) or a “designee” must be present during catechetical classes in order to administer the epinephrine with a pre-filled auto-injector should it be required. [See requirements for “designees” below.] The medical professional or “designee” must fulfill the requirement of the Child Protection Policy, undergo the background check and attend Protecting God’s Children as required by the policy. If the parish is able to obtain the services of such medical professional or “designee” to be present during classes either on a paid or volunteer basis, then the parent/guardian must complete the “**Epinephrine Administration Form – Option A**” and return it to the Parish Religious Education Office. This form must be renewed on a yearly basis. *(See attached form.)*

*Designee: A designee is someone who the Parish Catechetical Leader has selected or approved to be present during catechetical classes in order to administer the epinephrine with a pre-filled auto-injector should it be required. The designee must be trained and certified for this purpose by an organization accredited to provide such certification. This certification must be kept current and documentation of this certification for each designee must be kept on file by the Parish Catechetical Leader.*

**OR**

**Option B – Self Administration of Epinephrine with a Pre-filled Auto-injector:** In the event that a child/adolescent has the competencies necessary to carry and self-administer the epinephrine with a pre-filled auto-injector the parent/guardian must complete the “**Epinephrine Administration Form – Option B**” and return it to the Parish Religious Education Office. The parent/guardian must also provide the necessary documentation from their child’s physician. *(See attached forms.)* A medical professional or “designee” must be present during catechetical sessions in order to ensure that the necessary steps are taken following the self-administration of the epinephrine and to provide other assistance if needed. This form must be renewed on a yearly basis. *(See attached form.)*

**OR**

**Option C – Parent/Guardian present during Religious Education Classes:** A parent/guardian of the child, or a “designee” appointed by the parent/guardian, must be present in the building during the class period to administer the epinephrine with a pre-filled auto-injector should it be necessary. Such a parent/guardian must fulfill the requirement of the Child Protection Policy, undergo the background check and attend Protecting God’s Children as required by the policy.

A “designee” selected by the parent/guardian must be approved by the Parish Catechetical Leader and must meet the requirements for “designees” as outlined in Option A above. The parent/guardian must complete the **“Epinephrine Administration Form – Option C”** and return it to the Parish Religious Education Office. This form must be renewed on a yearly basis. *(See attached form.)*

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**Also Note with respect to the emergency administration of epinephrine:**

- Option A: The parents/guardians understand that they must provide the pre-filled auto-injector containing epinephrine. Parents may send the medication at each session or leave the medication with the Parish Catechetical Leader for the duration of the catechetical year. If the parents/guardians leave the medication for the duration of the program year, they understand that they are responsible for replacing the medication when it expires or when otherwise necessary. They agree to pick up any unused medication at the end of the school year, when the medication becomes outdated, or when the medication is no longer necessary, whichever comes first. The student’s prescribed epinephrine shall be placed in a secure but unlocked location easily accessible by the medical professional, designee or parent/guardian to ensure prompt availability in the event of an allergic emergency at the parish program or related activity.
- Option B: The parents/guardians understand that they must provide the pre-filled auto-injector containing epinephrine as outlined in Option A above. The student may carry the prescribed epinephrine in a secure manner that is also easily accessible by the medical professional, designee or parent/guardian to ensure prompt availability in the event of an allergic emergency at the parish program or related activity.
- Option C: In cases where the parents/guardians, or a “designee” selected by the parents/guardians, are on premises to administer the epinephrine, they understand that they are responsible for bringing the pre-filled auto-injector with them to every session and take it home with them after every session. In cases where the parents/guardians, or a “designee” selected by the parents/guardians, are on premises to administer the epinephrine, they understand that they are responsible for having the pre-filled auto-injector containing epinephrine on their person at all times while present at program sessions.
- Should the administration of the epinephrine be required, emergency ambulance services must be called immediately via 911 and the patient must be transported to the hospital emergency room for further treatment once the epinephrine has been administered. This treatment and course of action cannot be refused by the patient nor by the parents/guardians of the patient. This requirement applies even if the student’s symptoms appear to have resolved.

**If none of the above options are possible**, the family may opt to home school the child according to the Home School Policy that is outlined in the Catechetical Administration Manual.

**The parish catechetical program ensures all program parents/guardians are aware of the policy when the parents/guardians sign and acknowledge receipt of the parent handbook. In cases where the parish needs to implement this policy, the parents/guardians of the child who is prescribed epinephrine to be administered via a pre-filled auto-injector must also sign**



**the appropriate form (for Option A, Option B or Option C) in addition to the parent/guardian handbook acknowledgment.**

- a. The parents or guardians of the student consent in writing to the administration of the epinephrine via a pre-filled auto-injector mechanism according to the option selected (Option A, B or C).
- b. It is the parents/guardians responsibility to inform the parish catechetical leader at the time of registration that they have a child who is prescribed epinephrine to be administered via a pre-filled auto-injector. Parents must also inform the parish catechetical leader if their child is prescribed epinephrine at any point during the year.
- c. The PCL informs the parents or guardians of the student in writing that the parish and its employees and agents shall have no liability as a result of any injury arising from the administration of the epinephrine to the student.
- d. By signing the appropriate form (Option A, B or C), the parents or guardians of the student sign a statement acknowledging their understanding that the parish and its employees and agents shall have no liability as a result of any injury arising from the administration of the epinephrine via a pre-filled auto-injector mechanism to the student and that the parents or guardians shall indemnify and hold harmless the parish and its employees or agents against any claims arising out of the administration of the epinephrine via a pre-filled auto-injector mechanism to the student.
- e. The permission is effective for the program year for which it is granted but must be renewed for each subsequent program year upon fulfillment of the requirements of paragraphs (a) through (d) above.

## **DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

The Archdiocese of Newark continues to use digital tools as needed to serve the young people and families of (INSERT PARISH & TOWN HERE).

Parish program facilitators may choose to deliver virtual programming and content for its participants, through online platforms in addition to in-person programming. Additionally, in the event that circumstances warrant a temporary pause of in-person faith formation classes, parish program facilitators will notify families of alternate virtual programming. The program(s) will use software, tools and applications provided by third-parties that participants, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and/or staff will access via the internet and use for purposes of communication, programming, and potential content creation. These platforms may include but are not limited to: Google Classroom, GoToMeeting, Webex, and Zoom.

To enroll in any of these programs, you must provide your consent and release for your child to participate in these online applications for distance-based, virtual program purposes. Please be aware that each application collects different information about its users and has its own privacy terms and conditions to which members must adhere and which parish or diocese cannot control or assume responsibility. Please review these carefully before registering your child.

Our commitment to keeping the children and youth we serve safe is always our number one priority. To that end, we will actively monitor participant activity of children while engaged in our digital learning platforms. It is parents' responsibility to monitor their child's internet usage as a whole, including their use of any internet sites that are outside of our digital learning platforms. All online activities contemplated hereunder must also comply with the Archdiocese of Newark Safe Environment Protocols and must also follow any use requirements developed by the Archdiocese of Newark and/or the Department for the Protection of the Faithful.

## **CONCLUSION**

These are precious and quickly passing years of formation for our children. We are enveloped in a culture that does little to promote development of character and morals but rather one of excess and experiences far beyond their years. When we work together to remind them that God cares about them, we open them to believe that they matter -- very much. The teachers at St. Gabriel's dedicate their time preparing lessons that will engage the children and draw them closer together as fellow disciples in the pursuit of deepening their understanding of the message of Jesus Christ and enrich the faith that you are fostering in your home. We welcome your support and encourage you to also volunteer in this rewarding vocation.

My Lord, you have committed some work to me  
That you have not committed to another.  
I am a link in a chain  
A bond of connection between people.  
I will trust you wherever I am.  
I believe You know all things and do nothing in vain.  
Though friends may be taken away,  
Though I feel lost and alone,  
Though my spirits sink and my future is hidden from me  
Still I will trust You.  
I ask not so much that I see your plan for me  
But that I serve You as You choose.  
I have a mission.

Amen

Adapted from John Henry Cardinal Newman