

Parishes of St. Anthony and St. John the Evangelist

2021-2022



Religious Education and Youth Ministry Handbook

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www.stanthonyschurch.net

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

When you baptized your child in the Church, you made a promise before God and the church community that you would be your child's first teacher in the faith. The church community prayed for you that you would also be their best teacher. We truly appreciate that you have invited us to assist you in this most important responsibility. Our program is designed to provide an orderly, progressive method of imparting the basic precepts of our Catholic Faith. It is impossible for us to do that in one hour a week; much more is required.

The only way a child can truly acquire a full appreciation of the great gift that is our faith is by experiencing it at home. The way you live out your own faith commitment will have the most profound effect on your child's faith development.

We respectfully ask that you;

- attend Mass as a family,
- pray for your child's spiritual growth,
- give priority to your child's faith formation program,
- see that your child arrives on time and is prepared for class,
- attend special Advent and Lenten prayer services as a family,
- partner with your child's teacher who has volunteered to help you teach your child the Catholic faith,
- volunteer to assist in our program where you can.

Please read the remainder of the Handbook for important information about your child's Religious Education and Youth Ministry Program. Please keep it handy along with the school calendar for reference during the school year.

For your convenience, a copy of this handbook is posted to both of our websites. St. John's www.sjchurch.com and St. Anthony's www.stanthonyschurch.net

If I can be of assistance to you and your family, preferably send me an email message and I will try to reply within 48 hours. If you have a question or concern that may not be addressed in this Handbook, please call or send me an email. We are all here to help your family grow deeper in our Catholic faith. With the Holy Spirit's guidance you have my promise to do all I can for each and every family.

Weekly Service Project

Each week all students are asked to bring at least one non-perishable food item to class to help Sr. Maria Rosa's Food Pantry. Most importantly, doing so is answering Jesus' directive from Matthew's Gospel, **"Whatever you do for the least of My people, you do for Me."**

May God bless you,

Dianne Galarneau

Director of Religious Education and Youth Ministry
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Religious Education and Youth Ministry Office Hours

Office hours are Monday and Tuesday, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm; Thursday and Friday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Saturday and Sunday by appointment whenever needed. Please call the office (518-372-3381 ext. 226) to schedule any necessary appointments. Voicemail is available for your convenience. A schedule of the weekend classes, events and cancellations due to weather related conditions are available by voice mail every Friday. You may also contact the Office by email: dgalarneau@sjchurch.com

Enrollment Registration

Registration forms are available on both church websites. Please visit www.sjchurch.com or www.stanthonyschurch.net. Classes are offered on Sundays from 11:30AM – 12:30PM in St. John's parish center.

- Students transferring into our program are required to provide a Letter of Transfer from their previous program along with a copy of their Baptismal Certificate and any other sacramental records.

Communication

The primary mode of communication is via email. Please be sure to notify the Religious Education and Youth Ministry Office of any changes to your contact information especially email.

Cancellations

If it is necessary to cancel classes or events due to weather related issues a voice message will be available by calling 518-372-3381 ext. 226. Every effort will be made to determine a cancellation 3 hours prior.

Parental Involvement

It can't be said too often that education, especially Religious Education, is most effective when the parent is involved. Therefore, we offer some specific ways in which parents can fulfill their obligation as the "primary and principal educators" of their children.

- Worship with your children as a family at Mass. Participate fully in the life of our parish community.
- Children should be on time for class and attend weekly.
- Follow the Religious Education News in the bulletins.
- Ask your children about what they learned in class.
- Please introduce yourself to your child's teacher via email. Teacher email addresses will be provided at the beginning of each term. The parent-teacher partnership is a crucial component in successful faith formation.

Volunteering

Parents are most welcome, encouraged and very much needed to volunteer during the Religious Education year as hall monitors, catechists, assistants with the Christmas Pageant, service projects and retreats. This is an opportunity to model for our children our commitment in the life of our Parish. Please call the office for more information or send an email message. (518-372-3381 ext. 226) or dgalarneau@sjchurch.com. Expected response time is within 48 hours.

Our Program

The scope and sequence of our curriculum provides a complete and accurate theology distributed throughout grades 1-12. It is spiraled so that each year the young person's catechetical program is both deepened and expanded.

Each year of the program provides young people with:

- a growing experience of and a reverence for the Sacred Scriptures,
- a faithful presentation of the Church's teachings,
- encouragement to make a lived response to the faith presented,
- a meaningful participation in the communal, sacramental, and liturgical life of the Church, especially the Mass,
- prayer experiences,
- an appreciation both for the lives of the saints and of Catholics today who are valiantly trying to transform our world,
- a stimulation of their religious imaginations so they learn to think more critically and are better prepared to proclaim and live their faith,
- a religious literacy that will support an enthusiasm for growing up Catholic in today's world.

Home Study

The option for home study is available in all grade levels with the responsibility of returning the completed textbook to the Religious Education and Youth Ministry Office. At that time the student will be eligible to move on to the next grade level.

The Albany Diocese permitted at-home sacramental preparation during the COVID-19 pandemic for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. We will continue to offer that option unless directed otherwise. If the family opts for at-home sacramental preparation periodic progress assessments will be made by phone. Students will have additional responsibilities such as service and retreat participation.

Attendance and Absences

In addition to family responsibilities and work obligations our volunteer teachers work very hard to prepare class lessons following the textbook sequence; many spending upwards of three to four hours preparing a one-hour lesson. Please do all you can to arrive on time. If absences present a concern the home study option is available for your convenience. For parents who select in-person faith formation, please note that **written permission from the parent is required if your child will be leaving the parish center with anyone other than you and also if you will be picking up your child early from class.**

Sacraments

First Reconciliation (Confession)

Our students will receive the Sacrament of First Reconciliation in Grade 2. The date will be communicated separately when determined each year. In celebration of this blessing there will be a reception in our parish center gymnasium immediately following the ceremony which is hosted by the women of our Rosary Society. There will be distinct emphasis placed on preparing for this sacrament prior to the introduction of lessons for First Eucharist (Communion).

- Additionally, Father Carlino will present a Sacramental Parent Meeting for all parents to attend. He will offer two dates requesting each family to select one date that is most convenient

First Eucharist (Communion)

Our students will receive the Sacrament of First Eucharist (Communion) on the Saturday before Mother's Day during Mass at St. John's church. There will be three rehearsals held during the week prior to the sacrament which all children must attend. In celebration of this special day of receiving Jesus for the first time the women of our Rosary Society will host a reception in St. John's parish center immediately following the ceremony.

- Prior to the sacrament, the children will participate in a Bread Baking Retreat with Sr. Maria Rosa at St. Anthony's church hall.

Confirmation

Students attending a public or private high school or a home school setting are eligible to prepare for Confirmation after they have completed the prior year of faith formation within a parish catechetical program. Students attending a Catholic high school must attend parish preparation sessions for the sacrament and also must have attended a Catholic school during the previous year. In celebration of this sacrament there will be a reception in our parish gymnasium immediately following the ceremony which is hosted by the women of our Rosary Society.

- ***What is Confirmation?*** Confirmation is the Third and Final Sacrament of Initiation that is closely connected to Baptism and Eucharist, even though it is often celebrated years later. It "perfects baptismal grace" and incorporates us more firmly into Christ and strengthens our bond with the whole Church and the mission of Christ. At Confirmation, one is strengthened in the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us live more fully as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- ***What are the pre-requisites to entering Confirmation preparation?*** An individual must be baptized and received the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, minimally in Grade 10 or 15 years old to enter Confirmation preparation. S/he must have attended a faith formation program for at least one year prior to entering Confirmation preparation and be willing and able to participate fully in the immediate preparation for Confirmation.
- ***What does Confirmation preparation entail?*** Before preparation sessions begin there is an orientation meeting for candidates and parents so that everyone is aware of the details and responsibilities assuring readiness to enter the process. There will be a series of gatherings for catechesis on the sacrament, prayer and worship experiences during Advent and Lent, a retreat, and a class service project.
- ***What is a retreat and why is it necessary?*** To "retreat" means to step away. A Confirmation retreat is just that ---a time to step away from our everyday activity and spend some concentrated time to reflect on our relationship with Jesus Christ and what that means for our life. Our day-long retreat will be held at St. John's parish center on a Saturday beginning mid-morning and culminating with Mass at 4:00PM in St. John's church. It will involve large group activities, small group process, media and music, talks by peers or adults, and prayer experiences. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is required prior to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. Anytime a person is taking a major step in their faith journey, having some time apart to prayerfully discern what that means for their life is an important and necessary activity. The retreat experience is mandatory. If a candidate does not attend the retreat for any reason they must attend a Confirmation retreat with another church in the Albany diocese before being confirmed.

- **What about the service project?”?** Service is an essential component of Christian discipleship. By the time a person enters preparation for Confirmation, s/he should have had many opportunities and experiences of serving others – both in the parish and in the wider community. The idea of accumulating a certain number of “service hours” in order to be confirmed is discouraged for a number of reasons, it gives the appearance of merely “fulfilling a requirement” in order to “earn” Confirmation. Service hours were often done as a task to be completed rather than an experience where one can experience Jesus’ directive from Matthew’s Gospel, **“Whatever you do for the least of My people, you do for Me.”**
- **Selecting a Saint’s name for Confirmation.** When the Rite of Confirmation was revised after the Second Vatican Council, there was a renewed emphasis on the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation. The practice of choosing a saint’s name has been a time-honored tradition in our program. In the Bible, the giving of a “new name” signified a change of status or an inner conversion. So the practice of choosing the name of a saint signified a candidate’s intention to model the holiness of this person and become more Christ-like. Candidates will choose the name of a saint whose holiness they admire and want to emulate. Research and a written report will be necessary.
- **If my child goes to a Catholic high school, why does s/he have to go to the parish for Confirmation preparation?** The parish is the place where we live our sacramental lives, so it is the logical place to prepare for the sacraments. A Catholic high school provides your child with a faith-based education. But no Catholic high school in our diocese provides preparation for the sacraments --- it is not their responsibility to do that. Our diocesan policy states that there is one preparation program for Confirmation in the parish for young people to grow in formation with students who attend a Catholic school, public or private school or in a home school situation. If your child has been in the Catholic school, s/he does not have to attend the faith formation program in younger grades, but must enroll in the immediate preparation for Confirmation.
- **Selecting a Confirmation sponsor?** A person is eligible to be a sponsor for a Confirmation candidate if s/he is:
 - ✓ a Catholic who has been fully initiated (baptized, confirmed and received Eucharist),
 - ✓ lives a life in harmony with the Catholic faith,
 - ✓ attends weekly Mass and participates in the sacramental life of the Church,
 - ✓ is neither the father nor the mother of the candidate (or someone in the parental role),
 - ✓ the sponsor role is very specific – s/he is a representative of the Catholic community and pledges to support the faith journey of the candidate in the Catholic community. This is why a person who is not a Catholic (even though s/he has had a positive influence through faith and witness), is not eligible to have this role,
 - ✓ the sponsor will be required to provide a Letter of Eligibility from their Pastor affirming they are a practicing member in a Catholic parish,
 - ✓ if the sponsor meets all the above criteria, they may be a relative, but not a parent (or not someone who acts in the parental role – for example, a stepparent or a grandparent raising the candidate),
 - ✓ the sponsor does not have to be the same gender as the candidate. Even though the minimum age of the sponsor can be 16, it is advisable that s/he be someone with more life experience who can act as a faith guide, not a peer,
 - ✓ if the candidate’s baptismal godparent meets the criteria for sponsor, s/he is actually the ideal sponsor, since Baptism and Confirmation are closely related sacraments.

- **Why does my child have to wait until the later years of high school to be confirmed in our diocese, while some other dioceses confirm at younger ages?** It is true that the minimum age for candidacy for Confirmation varies throughout the country. Each diocesan bishop has been given permission by the Vatican to choose a minimum age. In our diocese, Bishop Scharfenberger has chosen older adolescence, with the minimum being age 15.
- **Can my child with special needs be confirmed?** Absolutely. Any person who has been baptized has a right to Confirmation. A person with developmental disabilities or special needs is no exception. It is important to meet with the pastor or the director to help us know your child's needs and abilities. We will arrange for any adaptations that need to be made in the preparation.
- **How strongly should I insist my child be confirmed?** At baptism, parents promise to guide their children in faith and bring them up to practice the faith. You have every right to expect that they will participate in faith formation so they can have a basis on which to make decisions about their own faith journey as they mature. It is always our hope that our children embrace the faith by choosing to be confirmed and continue their journey of discipleship with the Catholic community. We can encourage, guide and be models of faith ourselves. The Sacrament of Confirmation is a gift, and one must be open to receive it. If you sense there is something blocking that in your child, it is best to discuss this with your pastor.

Building Safety Policy

COVID-19 Safety and Protection Policy The current level of community transmission of COVID-19 in Schenectady County is high. The following protocols apply at this level of transmission.

- 3' social distance
- Prior to building entry facemasks are required by all at all times regardless of vaccination status
- Cleaning and disinfection before and after each room use
- One person per restroom – sanitized after use

Entrance and Exit from the parish center will be through the rear parking lot door only.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION FOR ADULTS

- ✓ Teachers arrive in class 10 minutes prior to student arrival.
- ✓ All staff, teachers, parents and students must be masked while in the parish center and maintain a 3' social distance.
- ✓ Parents may wait in the cafeteria for their children at the designated seating area.
- ✓ For dismissal parents are asked to meet their children in the gym where they will be assembled by grade.
- ✓ Parent and child exit through rear parking lot door.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION REGARDING STUDENTS

Grades 1, 2, and 3

- Parent and student enter through rear parking lot entrance.
- Proceed to cafeteria monitor. If the teacher has arrived the student may proceed to their classroom. If the teacher has not arrived, students will wait in the cafeteria. Hall monitors will be available to escort young children to the 2nd floor.
- At dismissal – teachers will bring students to the gym where they will be assembled by grade with teacher.
- Students in grades 1, 2 and 3 will use the stairway from the cafeteria exclusively.

Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7

- Parent and student enter through rear parking lot entrance.
- Proceed to cafeteria monitor. Student will be directed to their classroom. If the teacher has not arrived, students will wait in the cafeteria. Hall monitors will be available to direct students to their classrooms.
- Students will use the main lobby stairway.
- At dismissal - teachers bring students into gym where they will be assembled by grade with teacher.

Grade 8 and Confirmation

- Parent and student enter through rear parking lot entrance.
- Proceed to cafeteria monitor. Student will be directed to use **first floor hallway to Room 6 for Grade 8 and Room 5 for Confirmation**.
- Dismissal - teachers will bring students into the gym where they will be assembled by grade with teacher.

Grades 9 and 10

- Parent and student enter through rear parking lot entrance.
- Proceed to cafeteria monitor. **Student will be directed to exit cafeteria, immediately turning left to Room 8.**
- Students will be dismissed to the gym.
- **A written note must be provided if the parent prefers student to exit building and meet the parent in the parking lot.**
- **A written permission is also required if student will be leaving the building with anyone other than a parent.**

Food and Drink

- At this time we ask that teachers and students not bring food or drinks into the classrooms.
- Adults waiting for their children in the cafeteria may bring a beverage in a disposable cup.

Parents' Guide For Prayers At Each Grade Level

Our students will be expected to know their prayers at specific grade levels. Please pray daily with your children.

First Grade

Children should be familiar with hearing their parents pray with them:

- Sign of the Cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be to the Father

Second Grade

- Children should know the prayers from First Grade
- Plus Act of Contrition
- Grace Before Meals

Third Grade

- Same as Grades 1 and 2,
- Plus knowledge of the Apostle's Creed

Fourth Grade

- Same as Grades 1, 2 and 3,

- Plus knowledge of the 10 Commandments

Fifth Grade

- Same as Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4,
- Plus knowledge of the Seven Sacraments and the Rosary

Sixth Grade

- Same as Grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5,
- Plus Stations of the Cross

Seventh Grade

- Review of all prayers at previous levels
- Plus knowledge of the Beatitudes

Eighth Grade

- Review of all prayers at previous levels
- Plus knowledge of the Beatitudes, Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Ninth and Tenth Grade

- Review of all prayers at previous levels
- Renewal of Baptismal Promises
- Recitation of the Rosary

Confirmation

- Candidates for this sacrament must be knowledgeable of all prayers in preparation for their Third and Final Sacrament of Initiation.

Calendars for 2021-2022

The calendars for Grades 1 – 10 and Confirmation are available on both church websites. Please frequently visit www.sjchurch.com for St. John's and www.stanthonyschurch.net for St. Anthony's updated information and parish news.

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