



Parish Religious Education Program Parent Handbook

- ◆ **Information**
- ◆ **Policies**
- ◆ **Procedures**

Blessed Trinity Catholic Church

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(904) 646-4320
prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org*

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Religious Education is the responsibility and privilege of Catholic parents and is first taught in the home by word and example. The daily witness of a parent's love of Christ and His Church leaves the most profound influence on the faith life and formation of a child. The role of the parish and of the religious education program is to support and assist parents in the catechesis of their children as well as provide parents with opportunities for adult faith formation. While parents lay the critical foundation of faith formation, the religious education program promotes growth in a larger faith community by proclaiming Christ's teachings, reinforcing Catholic values and encouraging appropriate attitudes towards worship and prayer.

The Religious Education Program is for all children who do not attend Catholic School full time. Our program is for Blessed Trinity Parish families who are registered, contributing, and worshipping members. This program is subsidized by the support of contributing parish members. We ask that every family that has a child in PREP contribute at least \$10.00 weekly to support our church.

All classes are on Wednesday evenings. First Grade - High School meet from 6:45 - 8:00 p.m. Please see "Dates to Remember" for the first day of class and other important dates.

In addition to grade level classes, sacramental preparation classes are scheduled on specific dates throughout the year. These dates and times are given out during the sacramental preparation parent meetings scheduled in September.

Thank you for your support and cooperation. We are looking forward to assisting and supporting you in evangelizing your child.



Diocesan Children & Youth Personal Safety Program

In an effort to assist parents, the primary educators of their children, in the areas of values and sexuality, the *Children & Youth Personal Safety* program was established to reinforce parent's teaching so that children are better able to recognize and resist unsafe situations and environments, especially those that could potentially result in abuse and molestation. The Diocesan program overview, lesson plans, and other program materials are available for viewing on our Diocesan website: www.dosafl.com. Click on the Safe Environment link at the lower right hand side of the page. Hard copies are available at Orientation and Registration and upon request. Parents are welcome to join the class for this lesson. The date is listed in "Dates to Remember"

Intergenerational Events

To assist parents in the nurturing of their child's faith, we will be having intergenerational events throughout the school year. This is an opportunity for parents to engage in formational activities with their children, promote their belief in our church's teachings, and to assist in cultivating households of faith. Parents are required to attend these events with their children.

Sacramental Programs

The reception of a sacrament is a very special event in Church life. In order for a child to fully appreciate the gifts of the sacraments, they are to be properly prepared through sacramental catechesis. *Parents seeking sacramental preparation for their child are to fully participate in the different components of catechesis. A child must be in his or her second consecutive year of religious education in order to be eligible for the sacraments.* It is expected that the child also continue in their religious studies after they have received sacraments.

In September, there will be parent meetings for information and registration of their children in sacramental preparation. Please see "Dates to Remember" for the dates. *It is at these meetings that your child can be enrolled in sacramental preparation.* At these meetings, the course outline will be discussed as well as the different components of sacramental preparation that parents and children are to participate in. Dates for class sessions, parent meetings and retreats will be discussed and distributed. **Additional sacramental fees** will be collected at these meetings to cover the cost of additional books, materials and retreats. **Non-attendance at these meetings will result in your child not being placed in sacramental preparation.** Regular attendance at mass by children and their parents is expected.

Catechists

All of our catechists are adult volunteers with a heart for teaching and sharing their faith with children. Without their time and commitment, we would not have a program. We are always in need of more catechists. Each person volunteering as a catechist is required to complete a background check and screening process which includes attendance at a three-hour Protecting God's Children Workshop. Catechists are asked to attend faith formation/training meetings throughout the year. The registration fee for the children of catechist's is waived.

Reporting of Child Abuse

We are **required by law** to report *any* suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Our Catechists have been instructed to observe and document any cause for concern. Possible cases have to be reported directly to the appropriate Child Care agency.

Policies and Procedures

Registration

- One registration form per student must be filled out. If you have preregistered and all the information remains current, no new form is needed. Registration fees are indicated on the registration form. ***Fees are non-refundable.***
- The registration *deadline is the fourth Wednesday of September.* No new registrations will be accepted into sacramental preparation unless you are transferring from another program. Attendance in another program will be verified.

Arrival and Dismissal

The traffic situation on Wednesday evenings is heavy and ***our classes take place during the dark during the Fall and Winter. Visibility is severely compromised.*** The following procedures are **for your child's safety** as well as the safety of others.

• Arrival

- Carpool drop-off *will begin at 6:35 p.m. Do not leave children unattended. Do not drop off your children off until you see that there is an adult supervising them.* Students are to be dropped off in the carpool line. Crossing through the cars is extremely dangerous.
- Students **are not** to enter the school building without the supervision of their grade level Catechist or other adult.
- Parents are to accompany any student to their classroom if they arrive tardy.

• Dismissal

- First grade through High School classes finish at 8:00 p.m. *Please wait by the signs next to the rectory until students begin coming out of the building,* then move forward into the carpool area. Carpool dismissal will begin when all the classes have come out of the School building. Students will be released only to vehicles in the carpool line.
- *To expedite the process* please display an 8 x 11 sign with your child(ren)'s name and grade level clearly written on it.
- **Parents are not to park in the parking lot in front of the school and walk up to pick up their children.** If you must walk up to pick up your children, please park in the parking lot across from the playground indicated on the carpool map.
- Any student not going home with a parent or guardian must notify the office in writing.

Adult Faith Formation

Adult Faith formation is an ongoing, lifelong process, and an essential component of the catechesis of children. Opportunities will be offered throughout the school year through intergenerational events where parents attend with their children, as well as sessions specifically for adults. Every Wednesday evenings, after mass, the priests will explore the readings for the following Sunday and discuss them. Look for information about different formational opportunities in the bulletin.

Assessments

Grade level assessments are given out at the beginning and end of the school year and are accumulative from one grade level to the next. Although material is covered and reviewed in the classroom, practice and review at home is essential for the passing of each grade level's objectives.

Attendance

- “Catechesis is intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action” (GDC, 30). Therefore, **attendance at weekly Mass and Holy Days of Obligation is expected.** Participation in the liturgical celebrations supports religious education. Mass attendance for those in sacramental preparation is verified through the use of the parishioner envelope system.
- *Students who do not regularly attend religious education cannot fulfill the required objectives for each grade level or sacramental preparation class.* Students have to attend at least 80% of the class sessions for each school year. Anything below this will effect participation in sacramental preparation.
- Regular, prompt attendance is essential for the effectiveness of our parish faith formation programs. The curriculum is designed to foster ongoing learning that may be diminished by absences.
- When it is necessary for a student to be absent, parents/guardians are asked to call the Parish Office at 646-4320 or email, prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org, and give the reason for the absence. Missed lessons may be expected to be completed at home.
- Since faith formation is an ongoing, lifelong process for all Christians, parental participation in parent meetings, adult formation opportunities, and intergenerational events is expected.

Cell Phones and Electronics

Cell phones and electronics are not conducive to learning and are disruptive to the mission of providing your child with a Religious Education. Cell phones and any other electronic equipment have to be put away and out of sight once we begin preparing for opening prayer. If the student does not put these away, the catechist or Director of Religious Education will ask for them and they will be placed in the Office of Religious Education until the end of the evening. Students may go to the Office at the end of the evening to claim their equipment. Repeated offenses will result in a parent being notified.

Closings

In the event of inclement weather, Blessed Trinity will cancel Religious Education classes when Duval County Schools cancel classes. When this is necessary, every attempt will be made to contact parents/guardians prior to the scheduled class **by email**. Please make sure we have an accurate email address.

Code of Conduct

- The time we spend with your children in religious education is limited. In fairness to our Catechists and students, appropriate behavior is expected from all students at all times. This includes (but is not limited to):
 - Showing respect for adults and other students
 - Respecting the rights and property of others
 - Using appropriate language
 - Following classroom rules
 - Demonstrating reverent behavior in church and during other devotional activities
- Persistent behavioral problems may result in the following:
 - Student sent to the Office to discuss the situation with the Director.
 - A letter sent to parents.
 - A conference between the Director, Catechist, student, and parent.
 - Parents being called to pick up their child from PREP *immediately*.

Communication

We will make every effort to keep you informed about the activities of the various programs through email, letters from the office, notes from the catechists, Open House, our parish bulletin, and the parish website (www.btccjax.org). Please ask your child for any papers he may have received from the office or his/her catechist. ***Please note: email and the parish bulletin are our primary means of communication.***

Dress Code

Each student has the responsibility to dress appropriately for Religious Education. Dress for Religious Education is casual but ***must be appropriate for a Christian environment.***

- Shoes are required at all times. However, bedroom shoes, slippers, and heelys are not permitted.
- Shirts are required at all times. Halter-tops, tank tops, backless tops, see through or mesh garments, tops with thin or no straps, or tops that show midriff or expose the body are prohibited.
- Garments traditionally designed as undergarments may not be worn as outer garments.
- T-shirts/sweatshirts with alcohol, tobacco or sexual overtones are not acceptable, nor is clothing exposing any part of under garments.
- The waistband of shorts, slacks, skirts, shall fit at the waist. Underwear, midriff and backs should not be exposed
- Shorts must be at least mid-thigh in length.

Language

Students are expected to use respectful language when speaking to each other and to adults. Any type of swearing or profanity, either verbal or written, will not be tolerated.

Medical

Parents will be contacted immediately in the event of a medical emergency. Religious Education Staff and catechists do not dispense or administer any medication to young people unless *special circumstances* warrant an exception. In this case, a dated note with written instructions from a provider and permission are required from the parent/guardian. Parents are asked to leave an emergency number, such as a cell phone where they may be contacted immediately, on the student's registration form.

Schedules

Schedules of dates and times for all Religious Formation Programs will be given to families during Parent Orientation in August. Additional copies will be available after that by request by emailing prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org or at the parish website www.btccjax.org under Religious Education.

School Property

It is important that the students respect the property of others. While the students are in the classrooms, they will be using the desks of the daily school children. ***Nothing in the desk is to be touched.*** Religious Education students are supplied with pencils, crayons, etc., so there is no need to borrow or use anything that does not belong to them. Students are also not to write, color, or glue on or in the desks or chairs. Paper will be supplied when needed. Appropriate instructions of using crafts supplies are always given.

Sacramental Preparation

The sacraments are gifts given to us by Christ Himself. It is in the reception of sacraments that we experience the most profound of encounters with God. In order for a student to understand and appreciate the mystery of the gifts of the sacraments, students are to be properly prepared for their reception.

- A child must be in his/her *second consecutive year of religious education* to be eligible for sacramental preparation.
- Baptismal certificates must be provided to the Religious Education Office upon enrollment in Reconciliation, First Eucharist, or Confirmation sacramental preparation programs unless they are already on file in the Parish or Religious Education offices.
- Students who have acquired the age of reason and have not been baptized into the Catholic faith will be required to attend Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for children, as well as attend weekly grade level religious education class with their peers.
- Children who are home schooled “are to fully participate in the Parish based program for sacramental catechesis.”¹ These families are expected to use the text and any other catechetical resources used in the parish based program.
- Parents are to attend meetings, workshops, and retreats that are related to the sacramental preparation of their children.

Service Hours

Seventh graders and above are expected to complete and document 20 community service hours per year. Those preparing for Confirmation must have documented a total of 40 service hours in a two year period.

Special Needs

If your child has special medical or learning needs, such as allergies, ADD, etc. please note them on the Religious Education Registration Form in the appropriate section, and bring them to the attention of the DRE. This will enable us to provide a better learning environment for all participants.

Visitors

Students are not to bring a friend to a Religious Education class due to limited space and supplies. Please contact the office at 646-4320 or prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org before inviting a friend to participate in a Religious Education class. All Adult visitors have to be cleared through the office. Any adult wishing to visit a classroom more than once in a calendar year must be fingerprinted, background checked, and screened as a covered volunteer according to Diocesan policy.

Volunteers

We are always in need of volunteers to participate as catechists, catechist’s aides, substitute catechists, office support, and special project helpers and coordinators. If you are interested, please contact the office by email at prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions please feel free to contact the Religious Education Staff at any time by phone at 646-4320 or by email at prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org.

¹ Catholic Bishops of Florida, *Sacramental Policies and Guidelines for Those Who Home School*,
March 6, 2000

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

For the safety of all the children in the program, we ask that you adhere to the carpool arrival and dismissal policy. Please review the carpool route on the other side. To minimize the traffic on Beach Boulevard, please form a loop in the church parking lot as indicated. Entering the carpool line from Antioch is not permitted. **For Fire and Rescue purposes, carpool waiting will begin by the designated signs close to the rectory. Do not pull up to the front of the school until you see children coming out of the school building.**

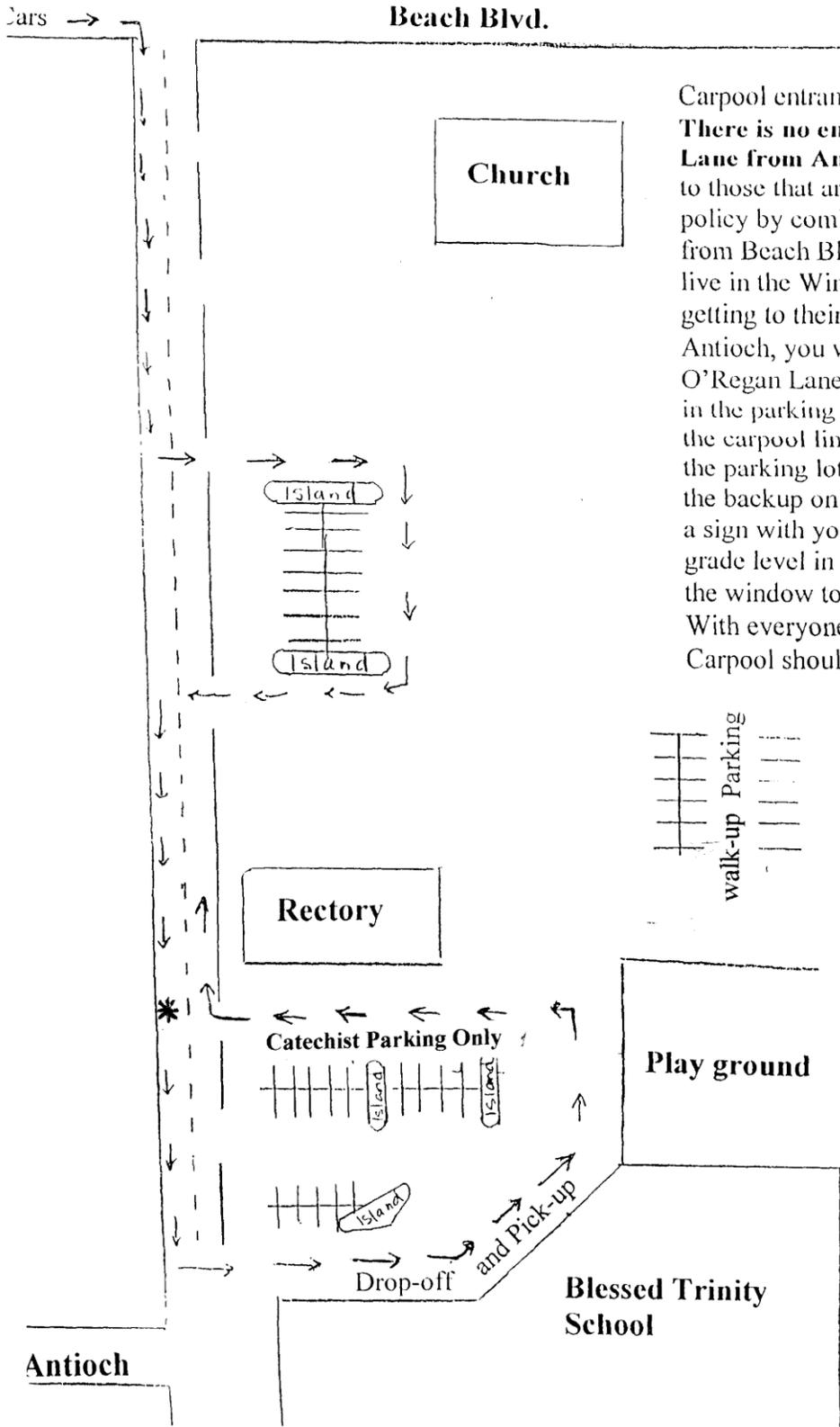
To expedite the carpool pick-up process, please have a sign with your child's name and grade large enough to be read from a distance. Please advise your children to watch for your car. *Crossing between the cars is not permitted.* Please make every effort to have the passenger side door(s) available for your child to get in and out of the car. Walking to and from the driver's side is unsafe and time consuming.

Parents are not allowed to wait inside of the building or outside of the classrooms to pick-up their children. Children will not be released early. Once class begins, doors are secured.

If for seriously urgent reasons, you must walk your child to the car, you may do so by parking in the area directly across from the school playground. Access to the school parking lot will be blocked off once drop-off is complete. The only area you will be permitted to walk through is the area next to the playground leading to the area designated for walk-up pick-up. Pedestrian traffic in the carpool area is extremely unsafe.

This procedure will require patience, especially the first few weeks. Please be considerate of your speed and be alert to the fact that there are children around. Please keep in mind that this procedure has been implemented for the safety of your children.





Carpool entrance will be off Beach Blvd. **There is no entrance into the carpool Lane from Antioch.** Besides being unfair to those that are complying with the carpool policy by coming onto O'Regan Lane from Beach Blvd, it also keeps those that live in the Windy Hill neighborhood from getting to their homes. If you enter from Antioch, you will need to drive north on O'Regan Lane until you can turn around in the parking lot and get into the end of the carpool line. Please form a loop in the parking lot as indicated to minimize the backup on Beach Blvd. Please have a sign with your child(ren)'s name and grade level in the front passenger side of the window to expedite the process. With everyone's cooperation and patience, Carpool should run smoothly and quickly.

***For Fire and Rescue purposes carpool waiting will begin by the designated signs close to the rectory. Do not pull up to the front of the school until you see children coming out of the school building.**

Stewardship and Service Projects

The word of God speaks to us to be filled with gratitude for the gifts that we are given. This gratitude can be demonstrated by sharing these gifts by giving of our time, talent, and treasure to others. Involving children in Stewardship also offers other advantages:

- 1. It builds self-esteem.*
- 2. It gives strategies for embracing a message that runs counter-culture to the self-absorption of our materialistic and individualistic society.*
- 3. It teaches that stewardship is not an activity but an attitude that can lead to personal fulfillment, happiness, and salvation.*

Experts say that children form their attitude about sharing between the ages of six and ten. They will either develop an entitlement attitude – “The world owes me; I don’t have enough;” or a stewardship attitude – “I have been blessed. I am happy to share.” As Catholic Christians and parents, our goal should be towards cultivating the stewardship attitude

Throughout the school year, PREP has different opportunities to help children respond to the blessings they have been given by God. The following are some service projects that help our church and those less fortunate than us. As the need arises, others may be added throughout the school year.

Non-Perishable Food Drive for St. Vincent de Paul Parish Pantry (Advent)

Our Parish food pantry is always in need of non-perishable items. We collect items through PREP to assist with the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. However, the need is constant. Each week the bulletin highlights what particular items are needed at that particular time.

Personal Grooming Items for St. Vincent de Paul and Catholic Charities (Lent)

St. Vincent de Paul and Catholic Charities serve a wide variety of people through their ministries and programs. They come in contact with many people who have little to their names or who have suffered tragic losses. Sometimes things we take for granted, are big deals to those that do without. To assist these programs, we will be collecting personal care items. Each child is to bring in one (or more) of these items assigned by grade level.

Personal Grooming Kit

Shampoo/Conditioner (First Grade)
Hair Brushes/Combs (Second Grade)
Soap (Third Grade)
Toothbrushes (Fourth Grade)

Toothpaste (Fifth Grade)
Shaving Cream (Sixth Grade)
Disposable Safety Razors (Seventh Grade)
Deodorant (men/women) (Eighth Grade)
Hand/Body Lotion (High School)

Supplies Request

Welcome to a new year of Religious Education. Our Catechists are looking forward to teaching your child about our Catholic faith.

To help offset the cost of supplies, we ask that each student bring in one of the following according to grade level. **Please bring these items on the first day of class.** These will be divided among the different grade level classrooms according to need.

1st Grade	six glue sticks
2nd grade	one ream of copy paper
3rd grade	10 each 2 pocket pronged folders
4th grade	six glue sticks
5th grade	one container of Clorox wipes
6th grade	one package of paper towels
7th grade	Last names A – M: quart size zipper bags Last names N – Z: gallon size zipper bags
8th grade	five 70 page spiral notebooks
High School	1 package of pens

