



# *Parish Religious Education Program Parent Handbook*

- ◆ **Information**
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## *Blessed Trinity Catholic Church*

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Jacksonville, Florida 32246  
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[prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org](mailto: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 Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) 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](http://www.dosafl.com). Click on the Safe Environment link and then the Safe Environment Program link from the drop down menu for these materials. 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"

## **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. First Eucharist is for children in second grade and older that have been baptized. Confirmation is for students in eighth grade and above that have been baptized and have received First Communion.

**In September, there will be parent meetings for information and registration of their children in sacramental preparation** for First Reconciliation/First Eucharist and Confirmation. 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.

**In October,** there will be a parent meeting for those children who are age 7 and older and have not been baptized, as well as for those students in seventh grade and above who have not received First Communion. These students will be participating in the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult) preparation classes adapted for Children.

## **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 catechists 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.***
- A *Student Dismissal Form* and a *Parent Acknowledgment Form* must accompany the registration form. Only one form per family is required.
- 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

- For your child's safety, all students must be escorted to and from their classrooms. The students have to be signed in and out of PREP by a parent or guardian for each class meeting.
- Drop-offs at the door **are not** allowed.
- Each family must fill out a *Student Dismissal Form* upon registering their child(ren) for PREP.
- Only High School students with a valid driver's license will have permission to leave the building unescorted and to pick up a sibling from a classroom if their name is on the release form. A copy of the student's Driver's license attached to the form is required.
- **Please do not park in front of the school or in any unmarked parking space when dropping off or picking up children. There are plenty of parking spots in the church parking lot.**
- Three late arrivals = 1 absence.
- **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. The doors will be reopened for dismissal pick-up.

### 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](mailto: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 and adult formation opportunities is expected.

## 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.

## 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](http://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

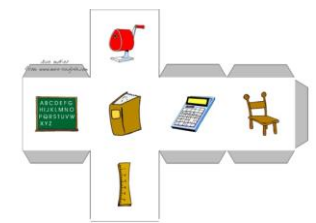
Parents will be contacted immediately in the event of a medical emergency. Religious Education Staff and catechists do not dispense or administer any medication to young people unless *special circumstances* warrant an exception. In this case, a dated note with written instructions from a provider and 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](mailto:prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org) or at the parish website [www.btccjax.org](http://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. First Eucharist is for second grade and above. Confirmation is for students in eighth grade and above.
- 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:prep@blessedtrinitycatholicschool.org).

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



## 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	50 #2 pencils
3rd grade	one ream of copy paper
4th grade	one ream of copy paper
5th grade	one box of Clorox wipes
6th grade	2 bottles of <b>glue-all</b> (school and washable glue do not work on our projects)
7th grade	five 70 page spiral notebooks
8th grade	ten – 2 pocket pronged folders
High School	1 package of pens