

**“NOTHING COMPARES TO BEING THERE”**



**PARENT / GUARDIAN HANDBOOK  
2021-2022**

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## HANDBOOK PREVIEW

This handbook contains certain policies and procedures for catechists and volunteers serving in the St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Parish PREP Program. The Program may change any of its policies and procedures, as needed, and apply them, as circumstances dictate. In the event of such a change, staff will be given prompt notification and provided with an addendum.

This handbook provides clear cut decisions and anticipates most situations that may arise. All participants should find answers to questions quickly. Staff must accept and abide by the contents of this handbook in order to serve in ministry with the PREP Program at St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother.

Communication is key to a successful program. If you have questions about a particular policy or procedure, please contact the Director of Religious Education (DRE). Please keep the following contact information on file in your cell phone for easy access at any time.

- ◆ **Office Phone: 610-268-0296**
- ◆ Fr. Anthony DiGuglielmo (pastor's) extension: **100**
- ◆ Father's email: [gransasso1988@gmail.com](mailto:gransasso1988@gmail.com)
  - ◆ Linda Riofski (DRE's) extension: **102**
  - ◆ DRE's email: [stgsmdre@gmail.com](mailto:stgsmdre@gmail.com)
    - ◆ Silvia Lawrence (secretary's) extension: **103**
    - ◆ Office email: [stgabriel@kennett.net](mailto:stgabriel@kennett.net)
    - ◆ Office FAX: 610-268-5022
- ◆ St. Gabriel Parish website: <http://stgabrielparish.org>

## PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

We, the people of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Parish in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, recognize our call; to grow as brothers and sisters in Christ; to edify the Christian family; to reflect the risen Christ; and to build a center of nourishment, community, education and service proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World to all those who would follow Him.

Baptized into Christ Jesus, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, empowered by His gifts of grace, we are unified by faith into one body, the Presence of Christ in the world today.

- ◆ Let us grow in enlightenment by participation in service and prayer.

- ✦ Let us grow in stature through worship and celebration of the Sacraments.
- ✦ Let us grow in humility by sacrificial acts and giving.
- ✦ Let us grow in Spirit by leading an exemplary life in word and deed.
- ✦ Let us grow in wisdom through reading the Word of God, in the Holy Bible and in the Sacred Tradition of the Christ's Church.

We pray to God in communion with Our Blessed Mother and with St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, to guide us on our path to show the light of Jesus Christ to all the world until we reach our heavenly home.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES**

To achieve our mission, the core principles listed below form the foundation and strength of our Religious Education Programs. Through the application of these core principles, it is our hope that we assist parents in cultivating their hearts, minds and souls, and those of their children, in order to become the person God has called and created them to be.

- ✦ To nurture and develop the dignity of the individual as a unique child of God who is created in His image and likeness and is a reflection of His goodness.
- ✦ To instill in each individual a faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and foster a committed response to His love as intentional disciples.
- ✦ To present the doctrine of the Catholic faith as both knowledge to be learned and as life to be lived.
- ✦ To live in awareness that sacramental life is central to expressing our love for God and that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith.
- ✦ To seek the Lord's infinite mercy, love, and the very gift of Himself in the Sacraments of Penance (Reconciliation) and Eucharist (Communion).
- ✦ To cultivate a reverence for God's Word and an understanding of how God uses His Word to speak to us.
- ✦ To seek the example of Mary and the Saints as they model for us how we can become the saint God has called and created each of us to be.
- ✦ To develop the individual's moral life through sound catechesis that God has called and created each of us to be.
- ✦ To develop the individual's moral life through sound catechesis that properly forms the conscience through the practical application of the Gospel message, Commandments Beatitudes, and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.
- ✦ To embrace the virtues as the key to living our daily life as Catholic Christians.

- ◆ To foster communion with God through Prayer and growth in the individual's spiritual life through the Mass, Rosary, personal prayer, and devotions that are experienced through participation in our programs.
- ◆ To realize the profound truth that God has created all things for His glory and honor and that the dignity of creation and especially the human personal need to be respected accordingly.

In addition, the Religious Education Programs assist parents in their God-given role as educators in the faith life of their children by:

- ◆ Providing religious education classes for children.
- ◆ Providing opportunities for prayer, adoration, service, liturgy, and stewardship within the program for students, parents, and families.
- ◆ Providing opportunities for families to participate in liturgies, seasonal activities, and works of mercy.
- ◆ Providing regular opportunities for families to become involved in participant assignments and projects.

### **“NOTHING COMPARES TO BEING THERE”**

The Archdiocese has asked parish programs to frequently reinforce the 2021-2022 tagline, “Nothing Compares to Being There,” in class discussions. This one way to encourage families to actively return to in-person Mass, PREP instruction, and reception of the Sacraments.

These conversations should be connected to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle, Communion, and Eucharistic Adoration. The Word of God makes Jesus physically present to us as He speaks through the priest who reads the Gospel. Jesus also speaks through the priest who acts “in persona Christi” during Reconciliation. The priest’s words are to be accepted as if Jesus were speaking directly to the penitent.

### **YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH**

Dec. 8, 2021 closes the Holy Year dedicated to the foster father of Jesus who has many titles, including Defender of the Church. Explain the how critical the role of a father is in family life. Households should reflect the holiness and activities of the Holy Family in Nazareth—love, thanksgiving, sacrifice, and prayer. Teach your classes about St. Joseph and recite prayers that call on his intervention and protection.

The Consecration to St. Joseph, by Fr. Donald Calloway (2019) has 33 days of facts and descriptions of St. Joseph’s life and dedication to Mary (as spouse), Jesus (as parent), and God (as a devout believer). There are 2 more opportunities for personal consecration this year, starting and ending:

- ◆ Sept. 30-Nov. 1, ending on All Saints Feast Day.

- ◆ Nov. 8-Dec. 10, ending on the Feast of Our Lady of Loretto

The DRE has a copy of this book in her bookcase in the office for reference.

## **CATECHIST QUALIFICATIONS AND ABILITIES**

All catechist are fully initiated, practicing Catholic who is eighteen years of age or older. They are exemplary followers of Christ with unquestionable personal integrity and moral character who are committed to presenting the authentic teachings of the Church and developing a greater personal understanding of the Catholicism. A catechist is a person of prayer who has carefully discerned the ministry of catechesis and is a disciple of Christ who can share his/her faith with student in an age appropriate manner. He/she is an effective communicator with adults and children, capable of relating to people in general and children in particular. The catechist must be capable of working collaboratively because he/she works with an aide, parents, the pastor, DRE and parish secretary.

The Archdiocese provides catechetical and faith formation opportunities on the parish and Archdiocesan levels. Volunteers will be given a copy of the Catechetical Certification Policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia which fosters professional development of spiritual, intellectual, and human formation through:

- ◆ Core courses provided by the Catechetical Institute and
- ◆ Elective credit opportunities offered by the Office for Catechetical Formation.

Any parent who homeschools their child is invited and encouraged to participate in these growth opportunities also, since you will be the catechist within your family.

Unlike parents/guardians, our catechists submit FBI and State background checks every five years to ensure the safety of our program participants. They are also trained in the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse. This is a requirement that is punishable by law if not followed. A copy of the reporting procedures are in the Appendices of this handbook.

## **REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

Families can register in the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) in person or online by going to the parish website [www. saintgabrielparish.org](http://www.saintgabrielparish.org) . Payment can be by check or paid directly on the e-Giving link on the PREP tab.

**PROGRAM FEES**

<b>REGISTRATION FEES for 2021-2022</b>					
<b>participating*</b>	<b>early discount on/before May</b>	<b>regular price June 1-July 31</b>	<b>late fee (\$50) on/after Aug. 1</b>	<b>Sacrament Fee Level 3 &amp; 7 (\$40 per child)</b>	<b>Homebound T. Ed. (\$50 @ level)</b>
<b>1 child</b>	\$225.00	\$235.00	\$285.00		
<b>2 or more children</b>	\$300.00	\$320.00	\$370.00		
<p>*A <b><u>PARTICIPATING FAMILY</u></b> IS ONE THAT IS REGISTERED WITH THE PARISH OFFICE, PARTICIPATES IN THE LIFE OF THE PARISH BY ATTENDANCE AT MASS ON SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS, AND PRACTICES FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP, INCLUDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF CHRIST IN THE PARISH THROUGH THE USE OF SUNDAY ENVELOPES SUPPLIED BY THE PARISH.</p>					
<b>non-participating* parishioner</b>	<b>early discount on/before May 31</b>	<b>regular price June 1-July 31</b>	<b>late fee (\$50) on/after Aug. 1</b>	<b>Sacrament Fee Level 3 &amp; 7 (\$40 per child)</b>	<b>Homebound T. Ed. (\$50 @ level)</b>
<b>1 child</b>	\$325.00	\$335.00	\$385.00		
<b>2 or more children</b>	\$400.00	\$420.00	\$470.00		
<p>** <b><u>PAYMENT PLANS</u></b> will be set up in 3 monthly installments due on May 1, June 1, July 1.            *** <b><u>ANY OUTSTANDING BALANCES</u></b> from the preceding year must be paid before registering for the coming year.            **** <b><u>SACRAMENTAL MATERIAL FEE</u></b> will be collected at a later date.            ***** <b><u>REGISTRATION FEES</u></b> are not refundable after payment has been received since books/materials are purchased prior to the first day of PREP.</p>					
<p><b>The Rationale for the “Fair Share Initiative:</b>            Simple justice indicates that families who do not financially support the parish ought to do their “fair Share” in subsidizing the cost of PREP instruction for their children. Th “Fair Share Commitment Policy” requires all <u>non-participating families</u> ti pay the partial “cost per pupil” expense for their first child in PREP as well as the nonparticipating family rate for the registration al all other children in the same family. We encourage all our parishioners to attend Mass regularly and contribute to the support of the parish. However, we recognize that not all will choose to do so. Even so, we require all to do their “fair share” as a minimum commitment. The minimum contribution for the school year should be proportionate to the family’s means and offered as a planned and sustained gift.</p>					

Program fees are a necessary part of the PREP Program and help ensure that the Program can provide students and heir families with the most current and best catechetical resources for their formation needs. PREP Program enrollment fee(s) is due at the time of registration. However, being sensitive to the needs of our families, a deferred payment plan is available upon request. Anyone who cannot pay the fee in full at the time or registration or who had difficulty making payments due to hardship should contact the DRE to discuss other possible arrangements.

In the event that a student voluntarily leaves the Program during the program year, or is dismissed from the Program for any reason including, but not limited to poor attendance, a disciplinary incident, extra-curricular activities, or the possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or a weapon on parish property, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made to the family.



In addition, there may be certain material fees associated with sacramental preparation that are in addition to the PREP Program fee. These materials fees cover incidentals associated with sacramental preparation, including, but not limited to sacramental enrichment packets, retreat experiences, guest speakers, certificates, robes, etc. These fees have separate due dates which will be provided to families of sacramental candidates under separate cover.

### **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE**

Parents/guardians whose children are enrolling in Level 1-3 for the first time must provide a copy of the each child's Baptismal certificate and/or the highest level of catechesis completed. This can be done in person or by asking the original parish where the sacrament was celebrated to forward a copy to the DRE. Students in Level 4-6 must provide documentation of the celebration of Eucharist and the highest level of faith formation completed, whether at a parish or parochial school. These are needed in deciding in which levels children are assigned.

### **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION ENROLLMENT**

When a student drops from enrollment and re-enrolls a year or two later, the child is placed in the level (not necessarily the child's academic grade level) that best remediates instruction for the lost year(s) of study. The program must properly disposed the child for sacramental preparation.

- ◆ To recoup one year, the parent/guardian is asked to homeschool the child using the textbook from the preceding level while being place in the sacramental level during in-person instruction. The child will cover two years of instruction in one academic year. (If a child attended in Level 1 and returned in Level 3, the parent must homeschool the content of Level 2. If a child attended in Level 5 and returns in Level 7, the parent must homeschool the content or Level 6.)
- ◆ To recoup two years, the child will be placed in the level preceding the sacramental year and the parent/guardian is asked to homeschool the content of the other year at home. (If a child never attended PREP and enrolls in a sacramental year, the child will be placed in Level 2 or 6 and be simultaneously homeschooled with Level 1 and 5 materials.)
- ◆ Flexibility in assignments is implemented with older children who are not age-appropriate for the Level content their faith formation requires.

Additional resources that assist in the preparation for the Sacraments of Penance, First Communion, and Confirmation are located under the "PREP" and "Resources" tabs on <https://phillyocf.org/> .

Additional parent meetings and rehearsal sessions at the church will be incorporated into the 2021-2022 calendar.

Homeschool and parochial school children participate in the extra rehearsals and parent meetings required in level 3 and 7 for preparation to receive sacraments. Catechists at these levels will notify the DRE of handouts and letters disseminated to their students, so the same notifications can be shared with homeschool parents.

## **CUSTODY POLICY**

The Program will not become involved in adjudicating the rights of parents in relation to the custody of their children. Therefore, if a parent is separated, divorced, or unmarried, it is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the program director with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. These documents are requests at the time of registration.

If the agreement changes during the year, it is the responsibility of the biological parents to provide the revised documents to the DRE immediately. In the absence of such documentation the program will and must assume the parents' share of legal custody. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program-related information regarding the child.

In situations with shared legal custody, the PREP program expects the cooperation of both parents, especially in regards to sacramental preparation and celebrations.

## **THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS**

Parents/guardians have an obligation to involve their children in the life and mission of the Church. They should participate in

- ◆ The spiritual life of the parish, particularly in the Sunday Eucharist.
- ◆ The charitable works of the parish.
- ◆ The catechetical and faith formation opportunities on the parish and Archdiocesan levels.

Children in Level 4 and below are invited to participate in the Liturgy of the Word program every Sunday during the reading of the Gospel and Father's homily. All catechists and parent volunteers who escort their children have the required clearances and background checks on file in the parish office.

Parents/guardians may observe and participate in one PREP class a year per child. This visit must be prearranged with the DRE. Multiple visits to a classroom require all of the background clearances and checks required by the Office of Child and Youth Protection. (See the "Clearances and Certification" section.)

If in-person meetings are halted, parents become the primary catechist for their children for the remainder of the year. Grade level Scope and Sequences and lesson plans will be shared with all PREP families so instruction can continue at home. Virtual meetings may be scheduled periodically to review and assess student progress.

## **HOMESCHOOLING / FAMILY CATECHESIS**

Parents/guardians have the first responsibility of the education of their children. They have the right and the duty to choose the kind of educational environment that they determine best suits their family. Those who send their children to Catholic school do not homeschool because religious formation is integral in the daily curriculum of the private school.

Home-based catechesis is understood as the work of Catholic parents/guardians who undertake the formal religious education of their own child(ren) for any length of time and in their homes.

Parents/guardians receive student copies of textbooks to implement the Archdiocesan Scope and Sequence that is taught during in-person PREP classes. As the primary catechist, the purchase of one teacher manual(s) per level is required for adequate instruction. Complete and authentic instruction, by adhering to the guidelines for catechists as outlined by the Archdiocese and the same quality lessons, provides equity in the quality of faith formation provided on campus and in the home.

Additional PREP materials, Liturgy/Sacrament resources, prayers, midterm and final exams correlated with the recommended curricula, and more are accessed at <https://phillyocf.org/prep/> .

Parents who homeschool their children for faith formation assume the role of catechist for **only their own child(ren)**. The Archdiocese does not permit groups of children gathering in a home other than their own for home-based catechesis. The only groups permitted to meet are at the parish.

## **COOPERATIVE PLANNING**

Home-based catechesis is a cooperative and collaborative effort between the parents and parish leadership.

- ◆ Volunteer PREP catechists will cooperate with the DRE in facilitating on-going, parent training sessions because the parish community is the prime mover of curricula.
- ◆ Catechists must acknowledge parents as the first and foremost educators of their offspring by coaching homeschooling parents with grade level content.
- ◆ Meetings will be held every other month throughout the year to review the child's progress and provide curricular guidance.
- ◆ Parents will be provided a copy of the Catechetical Certification Policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia which fosters professional development an the spiritual, intellectual, and human formation through
  1. Core courses provided by the Catechetical Institute and

## 2. Elective credit opportunities offered by the Office for Catechetical Formation.

Homeschool and parochial school children participate in the extra rehearsals and parent meetings required in level 3 and 7 for preparation to receive sacraments. Catechists at these levels will notify the DRE of handouts and letters disseminated to their students, so the same notifications can be shared with homeschool parents.

The celebration of the sacraments are scheduled for:

- ◆ Reconciliation on Dec. 4, 2021 at 3PM.
- ◆ First Holy Communion on May 7, 2022 at 11AM.
- ◆ Confirmation on March 20, 2022 at 11:30AM.

Parents are expected to teach the appropriate grade level Kid Talk lesson(s) with their children and provide documentation of the date of completion. The DRE will provide the materials and date(s) for implementation.

## **ON CAMPUS PREP PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The decision to conduct in-person instruction for PREP is made by the parish, the Director of Religious Education (DRE) in consultation with the Office for Catechetical Formation and Office for Catholic Education. If the state of PA authorizes a lockdown and/or the Archdiocese mandates that in-person meetings must cease and desist, all parents will enter into a family catechetical role. If in-person meetings are halted, **parents become the primary catechist** for their children for the remainder of the year. Grade level Scope and Sequences and lesson plans will be shared with all PREP families so instruction can continue at home. Virtual meetings may be scheduled periodically to review and assess student progress.

### **2021-2022 PREP SCHEDULE**

Weekly classes are scheduled from September 13, 2021 to April 25, 2022. Breaks for Christmas and Easter holidays are built into the calendar. In addition, three snow days are anticipated. The last day of PREP is listed as April 25, but could be moved earlier for each snow day not utilized. Classes are not cancelled for federal holidays or school district professional development days. A copy of the schedule is provided at the end of the handbook in the Appendices.

### **SESSION TIMES**

The sessions are held on Mondays from 4:30-5:50 PM.

- Students are marked late (L) if they enter the classroom at 4:45 and absent (A) at 5:00.

- A child who attends class after 5:00 will be marked late (L) because he/she attended part of the class. The hall monitor and/or the DRE will update the attendance sheets for accurate data entry on the computer.
- **Make up work** may be required by the catechist so the child does not fall behind.

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

Both the catechists and aides are expected to be in the classroom by 4:20. Children are not permitted in the building until 4:20. They will wait in the great room until both adults are in the classrooms and are called to the room. Parents can drop their children off in the parking lot in front of the hall or park temporarily and walk their children to the hall/church.

Everyone must wear their masks when entering the church or hall and keep it on throughout the lesson. Once outside after dismissal, parents and children may remove their masks.

Level 1—St. John Neumann Room

Level 4 and 5—Church Narthex

Level 2—Ven. Wm. Atkinson Room

Level 6—St. Katherine Drexel Room

Level 3—Church office

Level 7—Bl. Pierre Giorgio Frassati Room

At dismissal, parents/guardians will sign the class level clipboards on the table in the hall vestibule and move into the great room. Then, the adults will stand along the kitchen wall and wait for their children’s classes to arrive. Adherence to the dismissal procedures listed below allow all students to exit the buildings in a safe, orderly and timely manner.

- ◆ Parents/guardians are NOT to approach the classes as they line up along the walls of the great room; students will go to their parents after the child gets permission to leave from the adults.
- ◆ Substitute adult drivers should be prepared to show an ID to the catechist to verify he/she is the person designated on the parent note for pick-up.
- ◆ Families will exit through one of the side doors, either by the kitchen or the loft staircase, to return to the front parking lot. Children and adults may remove their masks once outside.

## **SUBSTITUTE ADULTS AT PICKUP**

A **safe environment** for children must be maintained at all times. All notes regarding alternate transportation plans will be filed in the DRE’s office with copies of custody agreements and court orders. The parish is liable if a child is released to a non-custodial parent, someone with a restraining order, or a person who does not reside in that child’s household.

- ◆ Each teacher will be given a copy of the Parent Permission/Waiver form to carefully review at dismissal each week.

- ◆ One copy of the Parent Permission/Waiver form is required for each family participating in the PREP program.
- ◆ Separate notes regarding substitute transportation and drivers that are handed to catechists at start of class, must be forwarded to the hall monitor or DRE at the end of the session.
- ◆ Any child who participates in a **carpool** must provide their teacher with a written, parent note that names all adults who have permission to take their child(ren) out of the Hall for any reason, if not already included on the Parent Permission/Waiver Form.

**Unauthorized adults** (which includes parents and guardians) are not permitted to enter the PREP buildings at dismissal time for the safety of our students and staff. Copies of court documents that verify this restriction should be on file in the DRE's office at the time of registration and/or when court agreements are amended.

### **TRANSPORTING PUPILS**

It is not the duty or obligation of a catechist or volunteer to provide transportation to or from the program for students other than one's own family. Any adult who drives a child who is does not reside with his/her own family does so **at their own peril** and their **auto insurance is solely applicable**.

## **CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

The Office of Catechetical Formation lists resource, including the Scope and Sequence of specific core concepts to be taught at each grade level. Additional PREP materials, Liturgy/Sacrament resources, prayers, midterm and final exams correlated with the recommended curricula, and more are accessed at <https://phillyocf.org/prep/> .

### **SCOPE AND SEQUENCE CHARTS**

Catechists are responsible for teaching the content of the diocesan Scope and Sequence over the course of the academic year. The presentation of material, core content, and objectives is dictated by the Scope and Sequence, and not the textbook. It is appropriate to jump all around the textbook when teaching the key concepts; the catechist does not need to go page by page or follow the order of the Table of Contents. Some activities and sections of the textbook recommended by the publisher may be skipped over because they are deemed non-essential if they do not pertain to the Scope and Sequence.

A Scope and Sequence of core concepts and prayers for Levels 1-8 can be accessed at <https://phillyocf.org/religion-guidelines/> . Our series may introduce key topics and

vocabulary in semesters that are different than what is recommended by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Some concepts may not be included in the series but need to be discussed anyway. Other concepts may be omitted from the book, if they are not designated by the Archdiocese.

- ◆ Levels 2 uses the Our Sunday Visitor series, “Christ in Alive”.
- ◆ Level 3 prepares for Reconciliation and First Communion using the “Encounter with Christ” series by Our Sunday Visitor.
- ◆ All other levels (1-7) use the Sophia Institute Publisher series, “Spirit of Truth”.

## **FORMAL ASSESSMENTS**

To assure the validity of PREP instruction, testing of all the children is required. The Archdiocesan midterm and final exams for Levels 1-6, in English and Spanish, serve as formal assessments to determine mastery of required content. They are located at <https://phillyocf.org/assessment-study-guides/> .

These online tests are documents that may be modified to cover the materials that was taught in class and to accommodate the learning needs of student with disabilities. Students and parents must be notified at least one week in advance of upcoming assessment so they have time to prepare together.

## **CLASSWORK AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS**

Assignments are to be correlated with the Archdiocesan Scope and Sequence for your grade level. Non-graded, informal activities are not to fill up time in class. They help the catechist determine the direction of the lesson in real time and assess which child has not mastered the covered material.

A variety of instructional activities and assessments are encourage and used to reteach and assist pupils. This variety addresses the learning styles of all learners—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Younger children have a 15-20 minute attention span, so changing activities multiple times during a lesson is recommended. It is appropriate that at least two different activities be built into the upper level instruction to address different learning styles each period:

- ◆ Lecture and class discussion.
- ◆ Silent reading and written responses.
- ◆ Games.
- ◆ Role play or demonstration of skills.
- ◆ Worksheets or quizzes from the textbook.
- ◆ Timelines.

- ◆ Drawings, murals, and flow charts.
- ◆ Projects, with parent engagement.

## **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS**

Pupils should carry their textbook home and bring it back to class each week. This ensures that the appropriate materials are available to parents in the event of inclement weather or government regulated lockdowns.

While homework is not mandatory. Homework is primarily to encourage family catechesis and discussions in the home. It also reinforces key concepts that will be assessed on formal assessments.

Homework may be in any form: study guides, textbook pages, activity sheets, written assignments, games, interviews, identify sacramentals in the home, etc.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

The diocese does not require written progress reports are issued to parents at the end of each semester. It is a decision left up to the parish. Due to rising cases of COVID-19 and the uncertainty that a complete year of instruction can be held on campus, progress reports will NOT be required in the 2021-2022 PREP year. In case of a lockdown, or regulations prohibit groups gathering in small spaces, instruction will rely on family catechesis to ensure that pupils complete all content.

## **KID TALK LESSONS**

In the second semester, after volunteers have established a rapport with their pupils, the Kid Talk curricula will be taught. This is an arm of the mandated Safe Environment program which requires one 15-30 minute lesson be dedicated to talks prescribed by the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

The dates of a preferred and alternate night for implementing these lessons will be announced in January. Catechists and homeschool parents will receive the necessary lesson plans to teach the identical lesson per PREP level. Documentation of compliance will be forwarded to the Office of Catechetical Formation. This involves some data collection on the dates of the lesson and the number of participating pupils.

The lessons for all levels are posted on the PREP link on the Archdiocesan website at <https://childyouthprotection.org/docs/Kid-Talk-English%20Complete-Binder.pdf>

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**



All students in the parish have the right to participate in the rites of the Sacraments and to receive equal access to catechetical formation with their typical peers. This includes students with disabilities.

When a child with special needs is registered for instruction, the DRE and parents/guardians will determine the best setting for faith formation. One of three options exists:

- ◆ The first option is in-person instruction on campus with accommodations.
- ◆ The second option is hybrid instruction that encourages family catechesis. This involves the enrollment of the student in PREP virtually, with the parent/guardian receiving in-person or virtual coaching from the teacher or DRE on upcoming lessons. The purpose of this extra support enables the family to reinforce the catechist's instruction during class and throughout the week.
- ◆ The third option is homeschool, or family catechesis, with in-person or virtual coaching from the teacher or DRE on upcoming lessons. In this instance, the parent/guardian instructs the child from home. The child's attention span may require multiple, short sessions throughout the week, rather than a single 80 minute class.

Accommodations to instruction will meet the needs of students with IEPs and/or behavioral plans in their general education classes. Collaboration with public education teachers and parents will identify the changes need for the child to be successful in the PREP setting.

### **CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD**

Children in level 4 and below are invited to participate in a pullout Liturgy of the Word and age-appropriate lesson on the Gospel at the 9:30 Mass every other week. Attending Mass teaches children how to give God the homage that is due Him and actively learn to imitate the life of Jesus.

### **STUDENT ABSENCE**

Regular and consistent attendance in the PREP program is essential in helping student master knowledge of their faith. Attendance is one of several key factors considered when determining student eligibility for promotion. Poor attendance can negatively impact a student's ability to attain proficient mastery of his faith and core content for his level.

Students who are absent 6 or more times during the year may be dismissed from the program and required to:

- ◆ Parents are encouraged to send a written note, email, or phone call to the catechist or parish office about their child's upcoming absence or past absence.

- ◆ The DRE will document the reason for these absences for accurate record keeping. Excused and unexcused absences effect end-of-year decision to promote and verify a child's completion of the program.

### **EXTENDED ABSENCES DUE TO ILLNESS**

An extended absence due to illness is defined as an absence that spans two or more consecutive weeks. Parents should be in regular contact with the DRE during an extended absence so that we may work in partnership to ensure that missed assignments and class work are completed during the extended absence and to keep the students' formation and instruction up to date. Parents are responsible for completing missed assignments and class work with their child.

Extended absences will not result in dismissal from the program so long as the following conditions are met:

- ◆ All work is completed.
- ◆ The extended absence does not affect the student's mastery of the required material.

### **FIRST AID KIT**

The Church and Hall have first aid kits for use as needed. If a child is in need of more intensive medical treatment beyond bandages, the DRE will be contact immediately so parents/guardians and any emergency vehicles can be summonsed, as needed.

## **PROPER SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS**

As a general rule, maintaining a safe environment for our students is a standard of ordinary care that any adult would owe a child. The younger the child, the greater the standard of care that must be exercised. Procedures may vary slightly if extra volunteers are available to assist with supervision.

**AT NO TIME** may participants be left unattended or placed in the hallway unsupervised! Ask for assistance if a child needs to be removed from class to make up a test or for disciplinary action.

### **NO FOOD POLICY**

The program has adopted a NO FOOD policy. Snacks and food items of any kind are not permitted during program hours. This includes the chewing of gum and the distribution of candy as a reward or in celebration of holidays. Many children are sensitive to one or more

particular foods, including dairy, eggs, wheat, and nuts. These allergies could result in convulsions or restricted breathing if cookies, cupcakes, and other snacks are ingested.

The ONLY exception that will be made is for a medical necessity, such as to accommodate a diabetic child or child with low blood glucose. A written doctor's note will be required of families to obtain this exception.

Students are permitted to bring a thermos or bottle of water to class.

## **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

The program acknowledges that students may carry cell phones or other electronic devices, such as iPods, iPads, mp3 players, etc., as lifeline communication tools. However, to avoid distraction during class, these devices must be turned off and stored in book bags, purses, or coat pockets. Children may not play with them in class, otherwise, the catechist has the right to confiscate the device for the remainder of the class period.

Parents who visit your room should not use their phones during class because their presence is approved in advance by the DRE for observing instruction.

## **INAPPROPRIATE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION**

The following list defines forms of communication that are unacceptable for any adult to use with children in ministry. All communications must be from adult to adult. Cell Phone

- ◆ Texting
- ◆ Instant Messaging
- ◆ Twitter
- ◆ Facebook
- ◆ Skype
- ◆ Emails using a personal email account
- ◆ Any social media site
- ◆ Chat rooms
- ◆ FaceTime
- ◆ Personal Zoom accounts

Use of such methods not only **violate the program policies** and place the volunteer/catechist at greater risk for accusations of inappropriate behavior by students or their families.

Catechists and volunteers should NOT accept "friend" requests or invitations for social networking websites from students.

Parents may give their emails to the catechist to facilitate communication and makeup work.

## **COVID SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

The St. Gabriel PREP program adheres to the guidance of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia regarding in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 academic year. This plan keeps the protection and safety of our parish children, most of whom are not vaccinated, foremost by mitigating exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

- ◆ **Waiver**: Each student must have a signed and dated Archdiocesan Covid-19 waiver on file. If a parent/guardian refuses to sign the waiver, the family is offered a home-based catechetical plan.
- ◆ **Masks**: All adults, teens, and children are to be masked before, during an in-person instruction session, and at dismissal until safely outdoors.
- ◆ **Social Distancing**: Desks and seating will be three feet apart. Classes will be closed to registration once capacity seating is reached.
- ◆ **Classroom or Instructional Space**:
  - **Environment**: Rooms are well-ventilated, to the greatest extent possible, to circulate fresh air.
  - **Seating Charts**: It is important for COVID-19 tracing if someone tests positive and was present at PREP.
- ◆ **Educational and Hygienic Supplies**: The parish (or families) will provide hand sanitizer and tissues; educational materials such as crayons, markers, scissors, paper products, etc. should not be shared.
- ◆ **Cleaning and Sanitizing Shared Space**: Rooms, bathrooms, high traffic areas and any shared space will be cleaned and sanitized after each PREP session.
- ◆ **Monitoring Student Health**: Parents/guardians should monitor their child's health and not send a sick child to PREP. A written message or phone call to the catechist or parish office should explain the reason for the absence.
- ◆ **Tracing and Reporting**: If a student or an adult volunteer tests positive for COVID-19 or a variant, immediately contact the local County/City Department of Health for guidance. (Chester County)
- ◆ **Gatherings**: Large spaces, such as the church, chapel, and the Hall great room may be used for multi-level meetings or gatherings. All participants are expected to wear masks.
- ◆ **Copying handouts for class**: Any handouts to be copied can be dropped off in the parish office, well in-advance of the date needed. Inform the DRE or secretary of the number of copies and date needed.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Catechists will receive an email from the parish if roads are unsafe for volunteers and parents to travel to/from PREP.

Catechists will personally contact the parents of each student to notify them of the change for PREP and convey the topics and/or pages parents/guardians are expected to discuss with their children at home before the next session.

In case of inclement weather, catechists should suggest the pages in the student textbook and/or topics that the parents/guardians will discuss at home, prior to the next class session.

## **CANCELLATION ON THE IN-PERSON PROGRAM**

If in-person sessions are halted due to a lockdown mandated by the state of PA and/or the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the DRE will ensure that parents/guardians receive the appropriate grade level Scope and Sequences and lesson plans so instruction can continue in their homes. Virtual meetings may be scheduled periodically to review and assess student progress.

“Family catechesis” in the home will replace in-person instruction on campus. PREP is not “cancelled” for the evening; only the location of the instruction has changed.

A post on the parish website will also be available for parents to check for notifications throughout the day. Go to [www.saintgabrielparish.org](http://www.saintgabrielparish.org).

## **POLITICAL LITERATURE AND FUND RAISERS**

No one is permitted to distribute any personal or political handouts/letters without the prior approval of the program coordinator. This includes, but is not limited to, material relating to personal or religious causes.

No one is permitted to sell or solicit products for fundraisers or personal gain without prior approval from the program coordinator.

## **DISCIPLINE AND PARENT NOTIFICATION**

Each student is expected to give and receive the respect and reverence which bespeaks Gospel values. Similarly, all volunteers are expected to give and receive respect to their pupils in classroom interactions.

The program has **NO TOLERANCE** for student or staff behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals. These behaviors should not be tolerated, including but not limited to:

- ◆ Ongoing acts of obstinacy.

- ◆ Improper language.
- ◆ Fighting.
- ◆ Physical, emotional or psychological intimidation.
- ◆ Bullying.
- ◆ Vandalism.
- ◆ Demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment.

Catechists will contact parents about inappropriate behavior so they can address the issue with their child. Parents/guardians will be asked for techniques that they find to be effective at home and in school.

- ◆ The catechist will notify the DRE when misbehavior has become a pattern.
- ◆ If a student is found to be in repeated violation of these rules it may be grounds for dismissal from the program.
- ◆ If a student is found to be in violation of the rules against harassment (sexual or other forms), vandalism, any form of intimidation, or contraband, it may be grounds for immediate dismissal from the program even on the first offense.
- ◆ The appropriate legal authorities will be notified, if warranted.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

While some measure of confidentiality between catechists and students is needed to establish an open and trusting relationship in the classroom, catechists must inform students of the limits to confidentiality.

- ◆ Catechists are legally obligated to reveal information obtained in confidence if such information will prevent the direct or indirect harm of a student or others. Such information should be revealed immediately to the program director, who will then notify the parents/guardians, and proper authorities if necessary.
- ◆ Divulging or withholding information revealed in confidence that leads to the direct or indirect harm of an individual will make the catechist liable and subject to possible lawsuit. For this reason, **catechists who utilize participant journaling as part of their catechetical instruction are obligated to read what the students write.** Students should be informed of this at the time of the assignment. If the catechist cannot read the assignment in a timely manner, then the assignment should not be made.
- ◆ The catechist is obligated to contact the ChildLine immediately to report any suspicions, notify the program director of the incident, and file a written report within 72 hours, and in that order. (See the section entitled “Mandated Reporter” below.)

## **COMMUNICATION AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Communication should be made **ONLY** to those persons who have a legitimate right to know.

Parents and catechists are encouraged to keep open lines of communication. They may mutually exchange contact information, as long as the child does not have access to it.

If a parent desires to speak with a catechist, arrangements should be made to meet with the parent prior to the start of class or immediately following the class. The program coordinator should be informed of such arrangements, once they are made with a parent. The program coordinator may be present for the meeting.

If a catechist or aide has a need to speak with a parent, every effort should be made to do so prior to or after class. The program coordinator should be informed of the desire for and nature of such a meeting prior to arrangements being made by the catechist. The program coordinator may be present for the meeting.

Catechists and volunteers should not contact parents or students via any methods listed under the section "Inappropriate Methods of Communication" below.

## **MANDATED REPORTER**

Pennsylvania State Law defines a mandated reporter as any person who comes into direct contact with children in the course of his or her employment, occupation, or professional practice. These individuals, who include PREP catechists and volunteers, must make a report. The goal is to protect the child..

## **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

A child is defined as any individual under the age of 18. The requirement to report abuse applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by clergy, church officials, parish employees or volunteers. Child abuse, under the new Child Protective Services Law, is defined under five categories:

- ◆ Bodily Injury
  - ◆ Sexual Abuse or Exploitation
  - ◆ Creating the likelihood of bodily or sexual abuse or exploitation
  - ◆ Serious Mental Injury
  - ◆ Serious Physical Neglect
- ◆ A Mandated Reporter brochure is found in the Appendices in the back of the handbook.

## **APPENDICES**

The following documents are for your convenience.