

# St. Matthew the Apostle Catholic Church

Parish School of Religion  
FAMILY HANDBOOK

Revised August 2018

# Welcome to St. Matthew Parish School of Religion!

*PSR supports families by providing formal classes, religious training and sacramental preparation in addition to the catechesis given within the home.*

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Mailing address:**

St. Matthew the Apostle Catholic Church  
Parish School of Religion  
795-A Havens Corners Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230  
614-471-2067  
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### **Office Hours:**

Monday – Thursday: 9am-5pm

## Parish School of Religion Staff (PSR)

### **Middle School Youth Ministry/ Confirmation**

Erin Upp  
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### **PSR Coordinator**

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### **Administrative Assistant**

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### **Sunday school Coordinator**

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### **Administrative Assistant**

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## COMMUNICATION

For the most up-to-date information, please download the Remind app. Most communication between the Parish School of Religion office will be handled through this notification system. Personal and confidential information will be received and sent via email. The PSR website will still be used when necessary. Please be sure a current email address is on file and that you check your emails and Remind notifications frequently. You can access the PSR website at [www.stmatthew.net](http://www.stmatthew.net).

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

### **DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS POLICY 4110.0**

Every volunteer in a program or ministry for children and youth, and every volunteer for other parish programs or ministries who have been delegated care, custody, or control of children and youth, regardless of their level of contact with children and youth, is required to complete a civilian criminal background check and participate in a *Protecting God's Children* training session. Duration of service does not mitigate compliance with this policy.

### **ST. MATTHEW SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROCEDURES**

St. Matthew Parish is committed to the safety and well-being of all children. Every adult volunteer in the PSR or any other ministry involving children must comply with the following procedures **before beginning volunteer service**: complete a Protecting God's Children workshop, fill out a parish volunteer application form, and be fingerprinted for a background check.

### **HARASSMENT POLICY** (*Summarized from Diocese of Columbus Policy 4116.15*)

Harassment can take many forms. Harassment can occur at any parish activity, and/or can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at programs sponsored by the parish at other locations. It does not include compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability or other protected characteristics.

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

There are many opportunities for becoming involved in our catechetical program, such as:

- Catechist, catechist aide, or substitute
- Office help on Sunday evenings
- Sacramental retreats
- Coordinating catechist appreciation throughout the year
- Setting up and taking down chairs for meetings
- Registration table for parent meetings
- Hall monitor
- Preparing materials at home for classroom use
- Leader or assistant for Vacation Bible School, Camp KRIC
- Special project help

**Volunteering in a classroom is a wonderful way to renew your own faith, stay connected to what your student is learning, be a part of stewardship in the parish and receive tuition discounts.**

**Please consider this opportunity to help in The Parish School of Religion.**

## **VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Volunteer Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth of St. Matthew the Apostle Church and School.

### **As a volunteer, I will:**

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Sign in on the designated sheet at the beginning of each session in which I volunteer.
- Inform the coordinator for my program about any scheduled absences, so a sub can be contacted in a timely manner.
- Only meet with students in approved classrooms or areas.
- Make note of clearly marked school areas that students are not allowed to enter, designated with signs as “Staff only” or “Children allowed to enter with adult supervision”.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspected abuse or inappropriate behavior to the pastor, pastoral associate, or appropriate supervisor. Suspected abuse is to be reported to the local Child Protection Services agency and the Columbus Diocese. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

### **As a volunteer, I will not:**

- Use my cell phone or other portable electronics during class time.
- Place myself in situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while volunteering.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations).
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and/or youth.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Volunteers are aware they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position. Therefore, they will sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power. Physical, sexual, or romantic relationships between an adult volunteer and a minor are unethical, unlawful and are prohibited.

### **What you can expect from the Parish School of Religion as a volunteer:**

- Be treated with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- To receive verification of my volunteer hours for school and/or parish service fulfillment.
- To receive communication about the program and my responsibilities in a timely manner

## PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION STAFF

The Parish School of Religion is staffed by volunteers ranging from high school-aged to senior citizens. They show tremendous dedication and PSR would not exist without them. We need to have two adults in every classroom at all times. Parents are encouraged to become catechists, classroom aides, or personal aides for students with special needs.

**ALL PSR STAFF** must be Catholic, attend Mass regularly and follow the laws of the church in their daily lives. They must also be committed to preparing and following the established religious curriculum and lesson plans. All staff will adhere to the Volunteer Code of Conduct.

## PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION STAFF TUITION DISCOUNTS FOR ADULT VOLUNTEERS

Full time catechists, co-catechists: Free	Full time aides: 50% off
Part time catechists: 50% off	Part time aides: 25% off

Part time is defined as being present at PSR classes less than 70% of the time

## STIPENDS

Catechists, co-catechists, and aides receive a stipend according to the level of diocesan certification attained. They are paid for each class for which they are present that has students in attendance. Stipends are not awarded for meetings or training sessions, though certification class fees are paid by the PSR.

Aides with no Certification: \$3 per class	Basic Certification: \$7 per class
Catechists with no Certification: \$4 per class	Advanced Certification: \$10 per class
Introductory Certification: \$5 per class	

## ATTENDANCE POLICIES

All school age students starting in 1<sup>st</sup> grade must be enrolled and attending PSR through Confirmation. Students registering after 1<sup>st</sup> grade will be handled on a case by case basis with the PSR Coordinator and the Pastor.

**Scheduled Classes** Arriving on time and staying for the entire class is mandatory in order to minimize disruptions and to maintain an atmosphere of respect for the catechists and other students. This can only be accomplished if parents do not allow other activities, including sports, to take priority over religious education. Perfect attendance at PSR is encouraged and expected. Each lesson builds upon the previous lesson in a developed sequence. Absences interfere with the students' education.

**Mass Attendance** is required on Sundays. We as parents and educators cannot expect our children to retain what is taught in the home or in class unless this is a priority. Children learn best when following examples of adults in their lives. Let us bring them to Jesus each and every Sunday by our family participation at Mass.

## Mass Intention Booklets

Your student will receive a Mass intention booklet with their name on each card in the booklet. When you attend Mass at St. Matthew your student should have filled in an intention (Act of Love or Prayer) for the week. An example of Act of love or prayer would be; doing their chores without being reminded, praying for a sick relative, helping a sibling with a task, saying grace before a meal (if not already doing) etc. Have your child drop the intention card in the collection basket at the offertory time. Remind your child to complete their intention during the week. If you regularly attend another parish please contact the PSR Coordinator.

## REPORTING ABSENCES

Please call the PSR office (614-471-2067) **no later than 3:00pm on Sunday** to report your child's absence. Students are required to make up missed assignments. Excessive absences will be addressed with your child's catechist and the coordinator. Failure to comply with attendance policies may result in the delay of a sacrament.

## SNOW DAYS AND OTHER CLASS CANCELLATIONS

Notice regarding class cancellation will be made first on the Remind App and home page of the PSR website. It may be announced on local radio and television. Preschool teachers will contact the parents of their students by phone. When there is a Level 2 snow emergency in effect, classes are automatically cancelled.

## PSR TUITION & PAYMENT

Sunday School	\$175
PSR 1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> grade	\$180
PSR 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> (Confirmation)	\$200
Late registration fee per family (after 7/31/18)	\$20
Family cap of	\$390
Faith at Home (not an option for 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> or Confirmation)	\$40

Fees include:

- Use of text
- New American Bible for 6<sup>th</sup> graders
- All supplies: paper, pencils, arts & crafts materials
- Student workbooks and special handouts
- Multi-media
- Guest speaker fees and non-parish clergy fees
- Special service projects
- Teacher stipends
- Office expenses
- Building operating co

***No registered parish family will be turned away because of an inability to pay fees. In the event of financial difficulty, please contact the PSR office. Scholarships are available, appropriate paperwork to be completed. All information is considered confidential and will not be shared.***

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL POLICIES

The parking lot at St. Matthew is a very busy place on Sunday evenings. It is **MOST IMPORTANT** that parents and students be very vigilant while driving, parking, and walking in the parking lot. Please do not drop off your students earlier than 5:50pm. Please note that all students 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade **MUST** be picked up from their classroom.

Carpooling is encouraged, but please fill out a carpool permission slip that notifies us of who has permission to pick your child.

## DROP OFF PROCEDURES:

1. Park and walk children to the doors of the building or to their classrooms.
2. Drop children off at the designated doors of the building.
3. Classes begin at 6:00pm. If attending the 5:00pm Mass, please bring your children to the school after the closing hymn.
  - a. Students not attending the 5:00pm Mass should arrive no earlier than 5:50pm without prior arrangements.

## PICK UP PROCEDURES: **PARENTS MUST**

1. Park in a designated parking spot.
2. Walk into the school building, using the Noble Center doors or the front doors of the school
3. Meet your children at their classroom doors.
  - a. *Please fill out a carpool permission slip (return to office), as well as work with your students' Catechist or Aides if you have multiple children in the program to be picked up*

Hall Monitors will be stationed at the Noble center doors and the front doors of the school from 5:50 to 6:20 and from 7:15 to 7:40 PM. Students that arrive after 6:10 need to pick up a pass to be admitted to class. Noble Center and the front doors of the school will be locked during class time. All students will be dismissed by their classroom teachers at 7:30pm.

**No student of any age may cross into the parking lot without a parent. No student may enter the parking lot at the corner of Havens Corners and Helmbright without a parent!** Parents may park in that lot, but must walk to the front doors of the school or the Noble Center and pick up children at their classrooms.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

*The program for the St. Matthew Parish School of Religion is designed to impart knowledge of Catholicism, to develop faith and closeness to God, to encourage students to serve others, and to emphasize the need for Christian behaviors and attitudes in daily life.*

The curriculum and approved text for religion classes is provided in the goals and objectives outlined by the Diocese of Columbus Department of Education Graded Course of Study. Students at each grade level receive instruction appropriate to their age level in the following areas:

- Revelation and Scripture
- The Christian Message
- Prayer
- Sacraments and Liturgy
- Morality
- Human Growth and Development

Students have opportunities to pray and to plan and participate in prayer services and paraliturgies. Reconciliation services are scheduled twice a year for those students and parents who have received the sacrament.

### PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN

Preschool and kindergarten meet on Sundays from 9:45 – 11:00 a.m. in St. Matthew School.

Children who are 3, 4, or 5 years old by September 1 are eligible for preschool, and children who are 5 or 6 years old by September 1 are eligible for kindergarten.

### ELEMENTARY

First through Seventh grade classes are held on Sundays from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. in St. Matthew School.

### CONFIRMATION

Classes are held on Sunday nights from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. in the Library of St. Matthew School.

### AT- HOME LESSONS

Throughout the school year, there will be several At-Home Lessons. These lessons allow parents to have a more direct role in their children's' religious education and are a simple way to spend time together as a family while learning a little more about your Catholic Faith through activities. At-home lessons are scheduled on three day weekends. *At-Home Lessons are not optional, they are scheduled as part of our curriculum.*

### FAMILY NIGHTS

We have four family nights scheduled each year. These nights are designed to involve all family members in fun, prayer and learning. These nights are not optional, they are a scheduled part of our curriculum and should be viewed as a way for families to spend time together, open up a dialogue about their Catholic faith and focus on their discipleship mission as a family. **Please note that parent/guardian attendance is required.**

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

The parish celebrates the sacraments of Reconciliation, in December of the second grade year and Eucharist during the second half of the second grade. Students in eighth grade through high school receive the sacrament of Confirmation, usually in the early spring. Specific information is given out each year at the Sacramental Preparation Parent Meetings.

### **RECONCILIATION**

Preparation is offered to second graders who have completed their first grade year of Religious Education at St. Matthew PSR or who have transferred from a parochial school or another PSR. Parent involvement includes assignments with their child and attendance at a parent sacramental preparation meeting. First Reconciliation is celebrated in December at a special service on a Saturday morning. Parents are encouraged to receive this sacrament along with their child.

### **FIRST COMMUNION**

Two consecutive years of preparation is required for the Sacrament of First Communion. Preparation is offered to second graders who have completed their first grade year of Religious Education at St. Matthew PSR or who have transferred from a parochial school or another PSR. Attendance will be monitored, only 3 excused absences are allowed during the school year. Make up work will be assigned for missed classes. Failure to comply may result in the delay of the sacrament.

Parents will attend sacramental preparation meetings and a family First Communion retreat. They are required to complete At-Home Lessons with their children. Four First Communion Masses are held in the spring at regular parish weekend Masses.

### **CONFIRMATION**

Two consecutive years of preparation is required for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Classes are offered to all eighth graders who have successfully completed their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year of PSR and to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who have successfully completed their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year of PSR or a Catholic school.

Attendance will be monitored regularly and excessive absenteeism will be addressed by the Catechist and Youth Minister. Make up work will be assigned. Failure to comply may result in the delay of the sacrament.

In the first year of preparation, Grade 7/8, students are required to attend class regularly, complete the parish's 60 Questions Worksheet, and pass a test on those 60 Questions with a score of 70% or higher. They will have ample opportunity to study and can take the tests as many times as necessary to pass.

In the second year of preparation, Confirmation Class, Confirmandi are required to attend class regularly, will complete a portfolio documenting their discipleship throughout the year and attend the confirmation retreats.

Candidates may be required to confer with one of our clergy or staff members prior to Confirmation

The Bishop confers Confirmation at a special Mass.



## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

### **FAITH FORMATION AT HOME (FAITH AT HOME OPTION) NON SACRAMENTAL PREP YEARS**

You, as parent, are the primary faith educator in your son/daughter's life. By teaching your child at home, you are fulfilling the promises you made at his/her baptism: to provide an active, life-long faith environment for your child and to foster this child's spiritual development and growth.

Through the Faith at Home program, you become the dynamic evangelizer of your child by attending informational meetings spaced throughout the year which offer support and creative ideas, attending sacrament preparation parent meetings, and receiving a grade-appropriate textbook for your child. You have access to all of the resources in the PSR Office as well as support and help with lesson planning as needed. You and your child are invited and encouraged to attend various special events with the Sunday evening classes.

*Faith At Home is not offered for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 7/8<sup>th</sup> grade or Confirmation Students.*

### **RCIA (RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS WITH ADAPTATIONS FOR CHILDREN)**

Families with elementary school aged children who have not received the sacraments of Baptism and/or First Eucharist participate in the RCIA process. Sessions are on Tuesdays from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the Undercroft of St. Matthew Church. At least one parent is required to attend the corresponding adult RCIA sessions, which are held at the same time. Students in RCIA will receive the appropriate sacraments at the Easter Vigil.

If you have questions regarding which program, RCIA or PSR, is appropriate for your children, please contact the PSR Coordinator for specific guidelines.

### **STUDENTS WITH IEP'S, 504 PLANS, OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

In 1995, the U.S. Catholic bishops issued Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities. "By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling. Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them. Specific guidelines are then offered for each of the seven sacraments." (pg. 11, Opening Doors of Welcome and Justice to Parishioners with Disabilities, A Parish Resource Guide). If your child has special needs or accommodations, please see his/her catechist and the PSR Coordinator.

## EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS (SIGN OFF PAGE, TURN IN TO PSR OFFICE)

- **Parents are to:**
  - Follow drop off and pick up procedures for the safety of all students.
  - Participate, with student, in the life of worship at the parish by attending Sunday Mass each week, keeping holy the Lord's Day and attending Holy Days of obligation.
  - Participate in the weekly mass offertory through contribution envelopes or electronic contribution. Students will get to participate with their Mass Intention booklets.
  - Volunteer in some capacity within the PSR program.
  - Attend all Family Nights and parent meetings, particularly those for sacrament preparation.
  - Complete all at-home lessons with your child.
  - Bring children to class each week. As no student is allowed into a classroom without a catechist present, please do not drop children off earlier than 15 minutes before class time. The importance of consistent attendance cannot be stressed enough. Students will only be allowed 3 excused absences in sacramental preparation years. Sports is not considered an excused absence.
  - If parents want to attend class with their student they must go through Protecting God's Children and a BCI check. This is to insure the safety of all our students.
- **Students are:**
  - Upon arrival, are to proceed to their classrooms promptly and quietly. Students need to stay for the entire class time, unless prior arrangements are made.
  - Expected to be courteous to others, to speak and act in a Christian manner, and to follow classroom rules and respect St. Matthew property. Damage to or defacing of property will be the financial responsibility of the persons involved and his/her parents or guardians.
  - To complete all assignments on time, bring textbook and other materials to class each week, as indicated by catechists. Lost books or materials will be the students' responsibility to replace. Parents need to assist children with make-up work as needed.
  - To turn cell phones off during class and are not permitted to bring any other electronic devices. If a student uses a phone/device during class, the catechist will remove it from the child's possession and hold it until the end of class.
  - Not allowed to enter areas clearly marked with signs "Staff only" or "Students allowed only with adult supervision".
  - Not to be chewing gum at any time during PSR.
  - Not to be in possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or weapons of any kind.

### DISCIPLINE

- Disruptive and unruly behavior will not be tolerated. There will be no running in the hallways or in classrooms or on school grounds.
- The catechist in the classroom handles ordinary discipline problems as they occur.
- When a student's behavior disrupts the class, the catechist has the option to obtain assistance outside the classroom.
- In general, the first disruption will result in a discussion with the PSR Coordinator, the catechist and the child. The second disruption will also involve the student's parent(s)/guardian(s). The third disruption will involve a formal meeting between the Pastor, PSR Coordinator, the catechist, and the parents/guardians.

**I have received a copy of the Expectations for Parents/Students and I will discuss with my children.**

<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Child's Name</b>	<b>Child's Name</b>
<b>Child's Name</b>	<b>Child's Name</b>