



ST. JAMES RELIGIOUS EDUCATION GRADES 1-6

Our Religious Education Program is doctrinally based, and follows the belief that parents are the first and primary educators of their children. As parents you have a unique role in the religious formation of your child. The Church views this role of parents as both a privilege and a responsibility. It is within your family that your child has first come to faith. It is within your family that your child will continue to live out faith and witness the daily example of Catholic believers. We, at St. James, are committed to assisting as parents guide their child's faith life and journey together to a greater understanding of our Catholic heritage.

The texts used in our religious education program are from the RCL *Be My Disciples* series, which is in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and incorporates the Learned Outcomes expected by our Diocese.

In the first year of religious formation, the children are introduced to our Catholic faith through Bible stories, related videos and arts/crafts activities. Gradually the children learn the prayers necessary to enter grade two which consists of sacramental preparation for First Penance and First Eucharist. (Our Diocese expects that a child is to have participated in parish or Catholic School religious education classes for at least one year before he/she begins direct preparation for the Sacraments of Penance/Eucharist.) Grades three through six continue to teach and review all of the basics of our faith. Special lessons are included on Saints, Feasts, Seasons, the Mass and those prayers and celebrations special to our Catholic heritage.

Religious Education classes for grades one through six are held Sundays from 10:40am to 11:20 am in St. James School. Classes meet from mid September to early/mid May with some weekends off that correspond to public school holidays. Recognizing how one year builds upon another, parents should note the importance of consistent and sequential attendance of their children in our Religious Education classes.

Sunday classes are dismissed in time for families to attend 11:30 Mass if desired. **Classes are in no way intended to replace Mass and children are expected to attend a weekend Mass in addition to attendance at Religious Education.**

Sacramental preparation for all children, whether attending public or Catholic schools, takes place within this parish Religious Education program.

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BASIC OVERVIEW OF GRADES 1-6

Our St. James Religious Education Program uses the *Be My Disciples* series published by RCL. These texts incorporate the spiral approach into its presentation of the Catholic faith. For Catholics the foundational “issues, principles, and values” that we want to hand on are our Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the observation of our liturgical year. *Be My Disciples* incorporates all three in what we might call a triple-spiral approach.

- **Doctrine.** Children in grades 1-6 are introduced in developmentally appropriate ways to the core concepts of Catholic Tradition through doctrine chapters each week. The four units of the *Be My Disciples* student books are organized according to the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*- creed, liturgy, morality, and prayer. As the children grow, they revisit and expand their knowledge as new information is presented about these topics in succeeding grades.
- **Scripture.** Scripture stories and passages weave through all these doctrine chapters. In addition, the children are invited to explore in depth at least six foundational Scripture stories each year. They learn in simple terms the context, style, and intent of the Scripture writers. By the inclusion of these chapters children are being prepared for a lifetime of prayerful reflection on the Word of God.
- **Liturgical Year.** Our children in religious education have the opportunity throughout the year to celebrate seasonal celebrations in the classroom. These two-paged lessons are easily incorporated into weekly lessons as an extension of the closing prayer.

Our Religious Education Program has a team of volunteer catechists (teachers), aides, and substitutes who are committed to sharing their faith and their gifts with the children of our parish. All adult volunteers are *Virtus* certified and are also encouraged to enrich their own faith formation by attending basic and advanced Catechetical training. Our adult catechists are joined in the classrooms by both adult aides and by Junior High / Confirmation students who are fulfilling their Christian obligation of serving others. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated team and are always open to welcoming new members to our Religious Education family.