

ASCENSION CATHOLIC CHURCH

Religious Education Program

Student/Parent Handbook

2022 – 2023



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We Serve the Community



WELCOME to the Religious Education Program (RE program) of Ascension Catholic Church. The purpose of the RE program is to share the word of God with children, youth, young adults, and adults in the Catholic faith by creating an atmosphere where the voice of the Lord can be heard, experienced, and felt. In the short time we have with young students each week, we cannot give them all that they need to be fully educated in the Catholic faith and to grow in their friendship with Jesus.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU!! Parents are the first and foremost teachers of their children and have the primary responsibility for the faith education of their children. Parents teach informally, but powerfully by example and instruction. They communicate values and attitudes by showing love for Christ and His church. Parents are encouraged to discuss class topics and inspire students to learn about their Catholic faith.

Learning about the Catholic faith is a lifelong journey, and for young children/youth it requires Mass attendance and a commitment to participating in the religious education classes. Religious education (RE) begins in kindergarten and continues through the 12th grade. Students should attend all years of RE, not just those required to receive a sacrament. Children/youth may not have a total understanding of the true beauty of receiving sacraments, if they are simply attending to receive a sacrament.



CALENDAR

Schedule

Wednesdays

Kindergarten through 6th grade

4:30pm-5:30pm 1st Session -DROP OFF: Regular drop off begins at 4:10pm. Parents should drop off students through the drive through area with a safety monitor. Students may play on the playground until 4:25pm when the 1st bell rings. The second bell rings at 4:30pm and classes begin. Students arriving after the 2nd bell are marked as tardy, 3 tardies will be counted as an absence. Please for the safety of your child, **DO NOT** drop off at the front of the church or allow them to walk across any street alone. Only teachers and aides may enter the RE building before the first bell.

PICK UP: Students must be picked up from the class room. Parents, please enter through the front door and EXIT through the back rear RE doors. (signs are posted).

Please pick up your children promptly at 5:30pm, so we can prepare for the 2nd session

Kindergarten through 6th grade

6:00pm-7:00pm 2nd Session -DROP OFF: Regular drop off begins at 5:40pm Parent, please drop off students through the drive through area with a safety monitor. Students may play on the playground until 5:55pm when the 1st bell rings. The second bell rings at 6:00pm and classes begin. Students arriving after the 2nd bell are marked as tardy, 3 tardies will be counted as an absence. Please for the safety of your child, **DO NOT** drop off at the front of the church or allow them to walk across any street alone. Only teachers and aides may enter the RE building before the first bell.

PICK UP: Students must be picked up from the class room. Parents, please enter through the front door and EXIT through the back rear RE doors. (signs are posted).

First day of class is September 14, 2022. **Parents and Students** will meet in the Church, at least one parent must attend with the student(s).

Last Day of classes will be April 19, 2023.

Classes will meet **every Wednesday** with the exception of the following dates:

November 23, 2022	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 21, 2022	Christmas Holiday
December 28, 2022	Christmas Holiday
January 4, 2023	New Year's Holiday
March 15, 2023	Spring Break



Please join us for the following special Wednesday sessions

1st Mass service for K-6 grade, RE students/Parents October 19, 2022
During regular RE session.

Praise and Thanksgiving for Students/Families November 16, 2022
4:30 Session begins at 3:45-4:20 in the Parish Hall
6:00 Session begins at 5:15-5:50 in the Parish Hall
Praise & worship & hotdogs!!

2nd Mass service for K-6th grade. RE students/Parents February 8, 2023

Ash Wednesday Mass Services @ 4:30 & 6:00pm February 22, 2023

Ash Wednesday Service on February 22, 2023 – Both the 4:30 ad 6:00pm session will attend the Ash Wednesday services with their classrooms. 6:00pm SESSION PLEASE DROP OFF STUDENTS BY 5:45pm, we will quickly take attendance and attend the Mass. Students need to be seated with their class.





5:45pm-7:00pm- Students should report directly to their classrooms, classes begin promptly at 5:45. You will notice that 5 pm youth Mass has been discontinued this year. However, Father Ramiro will celebrate several teen masses this year during the class period which will allow teens to serve while teaching them the critical importance of the Eucharist. (Teen Mass schedule below) This year teens should attend Mass with their families on all other Sundays at regularly scheduled Mass times.

First day of class is September 18, 2022. **Parents and Students** will meet in the Church, at least one parent must attend.

Last Day of classes will be April 23, 2023

Classes will meet **every Sunday** with the exception of the following dates:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| October 2, 2022 | Fall Festival Weekend |
| November 20, 2022 | Thanksgiving Holiday |
| November 27, 2022 | Thanksgiving Holiday |
| December 18, 2022 | Christmas Holiday |
| December 25, 2022 | Christmas Holiday |
| January 1, 2023 | New Year's Holiday |
| February 12, 2023 | Super Bowl Sunday |
| March 12, 2023 | Spring Break |
| March 19, 2023 | Spring Break |



Please join us for the following special Sunday Youth sessions

Ascension Family Fall Festival

October 2, 2022

Youth Mass

October 30, 2022

Youth Mass

February 5, 2023

Youth Mass

March 5, 2023



Policies and Procedures

ATTENDANCE Regular attendance in class is essential for any measure of success in a religious education program. Weekly attendance enables students to grow in the knowledge of their Catholic faith, develop a sense of belonging to the parish community, and through regular prayer develop a relationship with God. Since class time is only 1 hour each week, we ask that students only be absent in the case of an emergency. Parents should call the office or send an email to the DRE if an absence is required. Students preparing for **First Communion or Confirmation** are **required to have no more than 3 absences each year**. **It is very important that students arrive and depart on time.**

STUDENT ENVELOPES- Students in sacramental preparation years, which are 2nd year First Communion receive church envelopes. These envelopes must be used by the students as they attend Mass each weekend. You and your child can decide if you would like to give a money donation, prayer request or they can write a gift or talent they gave to someone that week. All donations received through the children's collections go directly to the RE program and is greatly appreciated.

CHANGE OF PHONE NUMBER OR ADDRESS Please notify the Religious Education office of any changes of address, phone number(s), or email address. It is important to keep the Religious Education database current in case of any emergencies and to better serve you.

STUDENT SAFETY AND HEALTH **After arriving on church grounds, students are not permitted to leave the Church premises except with their parent or guardian.** Parents need to ensure students understand and follow these guidelines. Students should be dropped off in the drive through area between the RE building and the church. **Please drive slowly and carefully in the parking areas on RE nights.**

Text Notifications for Parents/Students- Text Messages using the Diocesan-Evangelus program is used to send parents and students information regarding meetings, emergencies, and class cancellations. Please keep your cell number up to date in order to receive these important notifications.

BAD WEATHER If BISD schools dismiss early or close on a Wednesday due to inclement weather or other reasons, RE classes on Wednesday will also be cancelled. This does not include any BISD early release or staff development days. Sunday sessions will be notified of closures by text message.

SPECIAL NEEDS-Parents should notify the DRE in writing regarding medical conditions, allergies, or special needs of their child or any legal restrictions for child pick up that are in effect.

STUDENT PHOTOS Classroom teachers/Youth Director or DRE will be taking photos of RE students from time to time to be used in a classroom, RE projects, or bulletin announcements. **If you do not want your child's picture taken, posted, or used** in a religious education display in the Religious Education Building, parish hall, or Church bulletin, please email the DRE at desquivel@ascen.org.

Visitors A student may not bring friends to class who are not enrolled in our program unless approved by the DRE or Youth Director.

CLASSROOM RULES

Discipline Policy

Catechists are volunteers who are giving their time and effort for the benefit of the students. They have very limited time in which to teach their lesson. They are not expected to deal with students who do not plan to cooperate.

The learning environment is sacred. Teacher or Aides will ask any student who is disrupting the learning environment to stop any disrespectful or inappropriate behavior. If this is not effective the student will be brought to the Religious Education Office. The Director will attempt to resolve and determine a solution with the student, to resolve any problems that may exist. If further disruptions occur, the parents will be called. A conference with parents and/or Pastor may be requested at that time. It is the responsibility of the parents to correct any discipline problem, if the child is to remain in the program.

Cell phone Policy

Cell phones are to remain on silent or turned off and out of sight during religious education classes, youth Masses, adoration, and other religious education events unless otherwise directed by an RE teacher or a youth leader.

If inappropriate uses of cell phone continue, the parents, student, and director of religious education or youth coordinator will meet to determine how or if the child/youth will continue in class.



Weapons

Weapons of any kind are strictly forbidden on church property or at off-site event sponsored by Ascension Parish. For the purpose of this policy a weapon is defined to be a gun, knife, or any other article, which could be used to cause injury. Any student found with an offensive weapon will be asked to leave the Religious Education Program. Parents and/or law enforcement authorities may be notified.

Substance Abuse Policy

The use or possession of illegal drugs or illegal mood-altering substances, alcoholic beverage, drug-related paraphernalia, or the abuse of prescription or over the counter drugs by any student on parish property or while attending or participating in any religious education program sponsored activity is forbidden. Violation of this policy may result in dismissal from the Religious Education Program. Parents and/or law enforcement will be called if any student is found to be in possession or selling drugs on parish property or events and will be removed from the Religious Education program.

Student Withdrawal From the Religious Education Program

The education of a student is a partnership between the parents and the Religious Education program. The Church considers the parents to be the primary catechists of their children. Just as the parent has the right to withdraw a child if desired, the Religious Education Program reserves the right to withdraw a student, if the Pastor or the Director of Religious Education determines that the student has violated the agreed to policies.



Ethics and Integrity in Ministry for Children/Youth

All ministry volunteers and leaders are required to maintain compliance with the Diocese of Austin Ethics and Integrity (EIM) policies. EIM compliance consists of five components: (i) the submission of an EIM application for ministry prior to beginning any service in ministry, (ii) authorization for the diocese to run an initial background check and rerun background checks at least every three years (and more often as needed); (iii) participation in an EIM workshop within the first 60 days of ministry and at least once every three years; (iv) adherence to the Diocese of Austin Policies on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry; and (v) classification in the diocesan EIM database as authorized to engage in ministry.

The Diocese of Austin requires every parish and Catholic school to schedule *Called to Protect for Youth* (CTPY) and *Called for Protect for Children* (CTPC) workshops each year for students in the religious education program.

K-5th grade *Called to Protect for Children* (CTPC): is a safety education and abuse prevention program for Kindergarten through fifth grade students. CTPC is required to be taught annually by the religious education teacher using the CTPC curriculum and activity pages. Students in each grade complete three simple, developmentally appropriate lessons each year; the topics build sequentially. Information is provided during class sessions and are approximately 20 minutes.

6th grade and 9th grade will attend *Called to Protect for Youth* (CTPY) it is a three-hour safety education and abuse prevention workshop for sixth and ninth grade students. The workshop will be given during regularly scheduled class time. . If you would like more information or would like to review the material that will be discussed, please contact Deborah Esquivel at desquivel@ascen.org. **Please see attachment 1 at the back of this handbook for more information from the Diocese of Austin regarding these programs or by visiting the Ethics and Integrity page at the austindiocese.org.**

FIRST COMMUNION/FIRST RECONCILIATION

– Important Information for Parents



First Communion is one of the holiest and most important occasions in a Roman Catholic person's life. It is the first time that a person receives the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, which is the eating of consecrated bread and drinking of consecrated wine. As Catholics we truly believe these to be the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Most Catholic children receive their First Communion when they are 7 or 8 years old, as this is considered the age children are able to reason and understand.

For anyone to receive communion, that person must be without mortal sin and in a state of grace. Traditionally, young Catholic children will make their first confession, also called the Sacrament of Reconciliation, prior to receiving their First Communion. At confession, the child will tell his or her sins and misdeeds to a priest, the priest will then assign a penance. The penance usually is several prayers to be recited immediately after leaving the confessional. The Priest will then grant absolution (forgiveness). Confession is a sacrament and should be practiced as often as possible.

Students **may** receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion in the 2nd grade, if they were enrolled and actively attended religious education classes in the 1st grade or after attending the 1st year of Sacrament Preparation. All students are required to attend 2 years of preparation in order to receive their First Communion. The teachers and staff ask for parents' support in preparing students to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation (Confession) and Eucharist (Communion). Parents should help children learn and recite their prayers daily. **Students will be tested to see if they are ready and understand the sacrament they are preparing to receive. They must be able to recite the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and the Act of Contrition prior receiving their First Holy Communion. Students who are unable to pass the exam and cannot recite the basic Catholic prayers may be delayed in receiving their First Holy Communion.**

- 1. Students and their families are expected to attend Mass every weekend** as part of living their faith, as this is the central part of our Catholic Faith. Students preparing to receive their First Communion will be assigned their own donation envelopes that they should bring with them to Mass each weekend.
- 2. Parents must provide the student's official Baptismal Certificate** if he/she was not baptized at Ascension. **The certificate is due in the office by December 16, 2022**, please bring the original certificate to the Religious Education Office to be copied during business hours. If you do not have the baptismal certificate, you will need to contact the church of baptism NOW as it may take time to receive the certificate from the church of record. **Your child cannot receive their first communion without a baptismal certificate. If your child was baptized here at Ascension, you do not need to bring in a certificate.**
- 3. Three excused absences will be allowed.** Student who are absent more than three times risk not being prepared to pass the test and may be delayed in receiving the sacrament of First Holy Communion. They may also be required to complete extra assignments. Parents must call the DRE when the student will not be attending a weekly RE session.
- 4. There is a mandatory parent meeting and at least one parent MUST attend. The date for the parent meeting is Wednesday, January 25, 2023 during your child's regular class session.** Please drop off your child in their classroom and come directly over to the church. **This meeting is very important, and will cover information that is needed for your child to be prepared for their First Holy Communion.**
- 5. Father Ramiro and Father Jim will be hosting a Parent and Student retreat on Saturday, February 18, 2023 from 9am-Noon.** All students preparing to receive sacraments this school year and at least one parent must attend.
- 6. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) will be celebrated on Saturday, March 25, 2023 at 10:00 am** in the church. There will be 2-3 priest available to hear confessions.
- 7. First Holy Communion will be celebrated on Saturday, April 29, 2023 at 10:00 am.** Students must arrive no later than 9:30 am in the parish hall.
- 8. Children do not need a sponsor for the Sacrament of Eucharist (First Communion).**



CONFIRMATION – Important Information for Parents

*Through the Confirmation sacrament, the candidate receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit that was given to us at Baptism. This is the same Spirit that filled the Apostles with the zeal and courage needed to be public witnesses to Christ. Confirmation celebrates God's presence in our lives as the Holy Spirit continues to guide, strengthen, and empower us to live and witness the Good News of Jesus Christ. Christians on the day of their Confirmation become public witnesses to Christ and his saving works. Confirmation is a sign of God's love and presence in our lives. It gives us sanctifying grace (the free gift of God's love). **Confirmation establishes the beginning of a life of full participation and responsibility in the Church.***

1. The Diocese of Austin requires a minimum of two years of formal religious education in a parish program before a candidate may be presented for the Sacrament of Confirmation. **Students must pass a final exam and be able to recite the Basic Catholic prayers, The Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and the Act of Contrition, to be considered ready to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Students who are unable to pass the exam and/or cannot recite the basic Catholic prayers may be delayed in receiving the sacrament of Confirmation.**
2. Candidates and their families are expected to attend Mass every weekend as part of living their faith. We are obligated as Catholic Christians to attend Sunday Mass. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Faith, in the blessed Eucharist is the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself. (CCC 1324)
3. **Three excused absences will be allowed.** Student who are absent more than three times risk being delayed in receiving the sacrament of Confirmation and may not be able to pass the final exam. Parents must call the DRE when the student will not be attending a weekly RE session.
4. Parents need to provide the student's official **Baptismal Certificate** if he/she was not baptized at Ascension. **The certificate is due by December 16, 2022.** You may bring the original to the Religious Education Office during business hours to be copied. Please begin to locate/request the baptismal certificate **NOW** as it may take some time to receive the certificate from the church of record. **Your child cannot receive the sacrament of Confirmation without a baptismal certificate. If your child was baptized here at Ascension, you do not need to bring in the certificate.**
5. **CONFIRMATION RETREAT** All second year Confirmation students **MUST** attend the confirmation retreat. The Confirmation retreat is scheduled for **Saturday, April 1, 2023 from 8:30am until 6:00pm** here in the Ascension parish hall. If a student cannot make the retreat scheduled here at Ascension, the parent must locate another Confirmation retreat scheduled within the Diocese of Austin. Parents must provide proof of attendance to the Director of Religious Education or Youth Director.
6. Students will need **ONE** sponsor for the Sacrament of Confirmation. A Sponsor must be actively attending Mass, have received the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation. If the sponsor is married, he/she must be in a marriage recognized by the Church as valid. **IF unmarried, they must be living a fully single life.** Sponsor forms are available online, in the office and will be provided to each student.
8. **CONFIRMATION MASS-** The confirmation Mass has not yet been determined by the Diocese of Austin. Parents will be notified as soon as the date is confirmed. All students and sponsors will meet in the parish hall 30 minutes prior to the start of Mass. There will be a reception after the Mass in the Parish hall.
9. **REHEARSAL** Candidates and sponsors (or their proxies) must attend the Confirmation rehearsal, which will be the Thursday evening prior to the date of the Confirmation Mass.

CONFIRMATION IS NOT A CATHOLIC GRADUATION. IT IS A PART OF OUR FAITH JOURNEY AND A NEW BEGINNING IN OUR CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP. Students should continue their religious education by attending RE classes in 11th and 12th grades.



CURRICULUM

Each student will be given a textbook which will be kept in the classroom during the year and sent home on the last day of class. Below is a brief explanation of what each grade level covers.

Kindergarten: God Loves Us

The textbook *God Loves Us* teaches children that God loves them and that they are to love God and each other. This book presents simple faith concepts including silence, reverence for the Bible, being sorry, celebration, and God as creator. Children are introduced to five prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Grace before Meals, and Prayer to the Guardian Angel.

Grade 1: God Is Good

The textbook *God Is Good* presents God, Jesus, and the Church in their goodness. The lessons lay the foundation for spiritual growth by enhancing children's knowledge of the Faith. This level teaches concepts such as love, salvation, and the Trinity. Children practice basic prayers including the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Prayer to the Guardian Angel.

Grade 2: God Cares For Us

The textbook *God Cares for Us* prepares children for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist and emphasizes the structure and meaning of the Mass. Children learn to respond to God's call to give themselves in love to God and to others. This level introduces them to the Church, to Mary, and to Morning and Evening Prayers, Act of Contrition, and meal prayers.

Grade 3: We Believe

The textbook *We Believe* presents primary truths that Catholics believe and express in the Apostles' Creed. Children are called to the faith community and learn how Jesus is present to us in the Mass. This level introduces Bible stories and the concepts of vocation, healing, and response to God. Prayers include Morning and Evening Prayers; Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love; Apostles' Creed; Rosary; Act of Contrition and Hail, Holy Queen.

Grade 4: God Guides Us

The textbook *God Guides Us* presents the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes as guides for living. Children learn that, as followers of Jesus, we must know these teachings and live them. Lessons focus on kinds of prayer, the Bible, reconciliation, and the communion of saints. Prayers include Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love; Prayer to the Holy Spirit; and Stations of the Cross.

Grade 5: We Worship

The textbook *We Worship* teaches celebration and worship in the Eucharistic Liturgy. Eucharist is presented as a gift from God through which we share divine life. Lessons introduce liturgical prayer and guide children to respond to God's presence through prayer and loving service to others. The text also focuses on the sacramental system and the paschal mystery. Prayers include Peace Prayer, Vocation Prayer, prayers of the Mass and Psalms.

Grade 6: Finding God The book features Catholic content shared in a rich context with beautiful images, thoughtful prayers, and engaging activities and experiences that draw children in to fully learn, experience, and express their faith. Fact-filled biographies of saints open every unit and reflect the unit theme. Sessions open and close with faith conversations that directly relate to a child's own life. Multiple opportunities to pray in a variety of ways are included in every session. Clear connections to the Mass and Scripture are integrated into the program and in special liturgical sessions.

Grade 7 & 8 : Life Teens Edge is Catholic middle school youth ministry program. It provides a place for youth to find solid Catholic community, to get answers to their questions about faith, and, most importantly to experience Jesus in a profound and personal way. Edge resources speak to the physical, psychological, cognitive, relational and spiritual development of middle school youth.

Grade 9 (Confirmation Year 1) and Grade 10 (Confirmation Year 2) The main curriculum for these grade levels is *Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation*. *Chosen* is a twenty-four lesson program that prepares your student both intellectually and spiritually to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and to become lifelong disciples of Christ. *Chosen* seeks to win over the hearts of teens at a critical time in their lives and keeps them firmly planted within the faith community of the Church. It features effective and engaging material conveyed through videos, student workbook activities, and classroom interactions.

Grades 11 & 12: Peer Ministry- As Confirmed young adults, these students will seek to put their faith in action by mentoring, sponsoring community events, and hosting and serving at youth mass. They will continue their religious education through resources including open discussions, videos, and will participate in group discussions and retreats.

**Parents and Legal Guardians:
Enrollment of your child in the Religious Education Program at
Ascension Catholic Church
indicates that you and your child
agree to abide by the policies, procedures, rules, and other
guidelines contained in this Handbook.**

