

St. Therese Parish
Elementary Religious Education Ministry
“CCD”
Grades 1-8



FAMILY HANDBOOK

151 Main Street
Succasunna, NJ 07876
973-584-9444
Fax: 973-584-9492
Email: RelEdOffice@verizon.net
Parish Website: www.StThereseRoxbury.org

Office hours: Monday through Thursday, 9 AM – 3 PM
Other hours by appointment

Mrs. Lori Tumminello, Director of Religious Education
Email: RelEdOffice@verizon.net

Mrs. Kathy Murphy, Secretary
Email: Kathy_CCD@verizon.net

The religious education office is not located in the school but in the back corner of the church building. There is a mail slot in the office door that may be used to drop off forms, etc. when you attend mass, or at any other time outside of office hours when the building is open.

Religious Education/CCD class times: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 4:15-5:45 PM and 6:30-8 PM.
Please consult schedule for specific class days.

Our main phone line (973-584-9444) is also answered from the school during CCD classes for emergencies related to current classes.



Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2010-2011 religious education year!

At a child's baptism, parents make a vow to be the primary educators in the ways of faith for their children. When registering your child for religious education/CCD classes, you make a commitment to insure that your child continues to grow in faith knowledge. I praise you for your dedication to passing on your Catholic faith to your child!

When registering your child to participate in the religious education ministry at St. Therese, we assume you will be willing to take an active role in his/her faith formation. We encourage you to ask your child what they are studying in class! Look through their folders and textbooks often. Discuss the topics as a family. We also assume that you help your child develop an active prayer life, which includes regular participation in the Sunday (or Saturday vigil) worship of God: the mass.

For our part, the religious education staff will provide regularly scheduled catechetical sessions for your child to attend, lead by volunteers who have been cleared through the diocesan's Protecting God's Children program. Working in partnership with you, we will strive to introduce your child to important faith concepts, doctrine and faith practices appropriate for various age levels.

Please take a few moments to carefully read through the handbook now. Don't hesitate to call me if there is anything you would like to discuss further.

We pray for the success of this important ministry at St. Therese parish, and for the Lord's blessing on all of the St. Therese families, catechists and staff.

Wishing you grace and peace,

Lori Tumminello
Director of Religious Education

P.S. Our 1st-8th grade ministry has grown to more than 600 students, and continues to grow each year. Logistically we need the cooperation of all staff and family members if we are to have the quality ministry our children deserve. Please realize how important it is for all of us to understand and abide by this handbook. We take very seriously our responsibility to give every child what we feel they need and deserve, and because of our size, it can only be accomplished effectively within certain parameters. Please do not think of the handbook as a book of unreasonable rules, but rather as a way to ensure a safe, fair, and Christian atmosphere for all of our children.

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Parish Website

Important information regarding parish life and the religious education ministry may be found at www.StThereseRoxbury.org. Bookmark it and check it often! For information specific to the religious education ministry, click Religious Education from the left side of the home page, then CCD, gr. 1-8.

Admission Policy

The Religious Education Office serves parish children in grades one through eight and is open to all registered parishioners of St. Therese Parish.

The sacraments of First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation require a two year preparation program. Grades 3-8 are required years of continued faith education for our Confirmation program, which begins in the freshman year of high school. Families with children who have missed years of religious instruction are encouraged to contact the Director of Religious Education to discuss an appropriate way to make up the missed curriculum.

The Confirmation program is under the direction of Mr. Michael Harding, Youth Minister. Additional information is available by calling the rectory at 973-584-8271. Adult education programs are also available; please contact the parish main office for more information (973-584-8271).

We have programs in place to accommodate children with special needs. Needs vary greatly from child to child. Parents of special needs children are encouraged to call the director to discuss their child's specific needs.

Sunday Mass Attendance

Our celebration of Mass is a part of our responsibility in living a Catholic life. It is also a magnificent gift that we share with our children that demonstrates for them the rich traditions of our faith. The beautiful rhythm and flow of the mass cannot be properly taught in the classroom but rather is learned through experience. Regular and consistent attendance at Sunday mass is a part of the religious education of the children and is expected by all families.

We celebrate a Liturgy of the Word for Young Children, grades K-2, year round at the 10:30 AM Sunday mass. The young children are dismissed to the atrium area of the church where the day's scripture readings are presented and explained to them on their level by a trained staff. The children are returned to the main body of the church before the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Participation is voluntary. Please call the religious education office for more information.

Staff

Our teaching staff (the "catechists") is made up of a wonderful group of dedicated parishioners who all volunteer their time for the very important task of planting and nurturing seeds of faith in your children. All volunteers are in compliance with the diocesan "Protecting God's Children" policies. This means that they have (1) submitted to a criminal background check, (2) have agreed to abide by the Pastoral Code of Conduct, and (3) have attended an intensive abuse awareness session. Most of them are not professional teachers. They spend countless hours preparing for each and every lesson. Many of them work full-time jobs in addition to their volunteer responsibilities with the program. In addition to the teaching staff, dozens of additional volunteers support the program in others areas of supervision and administrative work. Please keep them all in your prayers throughout the year, and ask the Holy Spirit to truly guide them in their ministry.

Parent/Guardian Responsibility of Religious Education

Parents always have been and will remain the primary religious educators for their children. Our program is designed to aide parents and guardians in the task of laying a solid faith foundation, encouraging spiritual growth, fostering discipleship. We can only support and reinforce that which is practiced at home. We can give meaning to the rituals and symbols of our Catholic Church, but only the parents/guardians can give meaning to faith in how you live and worship everyday. A large part of the success of this program depends on the staff and families working together as a team sharing a common goal: helping each and every one of the children to develop a lasting relationship with God.

Parent Advisory Board

We encourage parents and guardians to take an active role and to voice opinions regarding the direction of this ministry. General meetings are held four times during the year. Meeting dates are posted on the parish website, under the religious education section. Please join us!

Curriculum

Our curriculum for grades 1-6 is the “We Believe” series by Sadlier Publishing. Our 7th and 8th grades classes use the “We Live Our Faith” series, also by Sadlier Publishing. Both curriculums have been approved by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops. The curriculum has been carefully developed to inform, encourage and guide the students. The catechists (teachers) also have at their disposal a library of additional resources, including DVDs, storybooks and games, which may be used to reinforce the topics in the curriculum. Knowledge of basic Catholic prayers is included in the curriculum.

Grades 1 through 6 are considered foundation years. Our curriculum is geared to teaching the basics of the Catholic faith. Beginning in grade 7 and continuing in grade 8, we strive to introduce a more in-depth concentration on the role of the students as members of the Body of Christ. Part of the curriculum at this level includes a series of four mini-retreats held during their regularly scheduled class time. These large group activities are well received by the students and are a welcome change to the traditional classroom setting. Topics are varied and guest speakers from outside our parish are often brought in.

Progress reports noting your child’s achievements are provided twice yearly for students in grades 3 through 8. First semester reports are sent home with the students in January. Second semester reports are mailed home by early May.

Class Schedule

Our classes meet twice per month for 90 minutes each session, 14 sessions each year from September through April, for a total of 21 hours each year. In order to accommodate the large number of children enrolled in our program, the program is designed on an “A/B” rotating schedule. This does not, however, always mean that the classes are “every other week.” Please consult the current schedule of classes for the specific class dates your child has been assigned.

We accept all registrations on good faith that ample volunteers will come forward to lead classes. Families registered for classes without teachers in place by August 1st may be moved to another open schedule.

HOME STUDY Families experiencing severe and unavoidable conflicts preventing their child from attending on the traditional class schedule are encouraged to contact the Director to request a conference to discuss a home-study alternative.

Tuition Fees

Tuition is expected at the time of registration. Families experiencing financial difficulties are encouraged to contact the Director of Religious Education to request a need based waiver or payment plan. No child will be turned away due to financial difficulties.

2010-11 tuition fees are as follows:

Active Parishioner \$110. per year for one child (\$170. for 2 or more children)

Non-Active Parishioner \$150. per year for one child (\$250. for 2 or more children)

A Sacrament fee of \$25 per child is assessed in the second grade year in addition to the basic tuition fee for both active and non-active parishioners.

An active parishioner is defined as a family who actively participates in the weekly life of our parish, including attending Sunday mass on a regular basis. Families using the church offering envelopes 25 or more times in the past 12 months are charged the active fee. This decision is made by pastor and is not determined by the amount contributed, only by the frequency of attendance at mass.

We affirm those families who have been consistently participating in the weekly life of our parish. It is through your regular presence and support that St. Therese is the strong Catholic community that it is. For those families who are not participating regularly, we ask that you prayerfully consider making a renewed effort toward improvement in this area of your family's faith life in the upcoming year. Status is reviewed for every family on a yearly basis and adjustments are made to the tuition fees when necessary during Spring registration.

Criteria for active parishioner status is determined by our pastor. An active parishioner is someone who is registered in the parish and demonstrates the following participation at St. Therese:

1. **Attends Sunday Mass** on a regular basis. In Exodus 20:20, the Lord commands us to keep holy the Sabbath. Through the celebration of the Eucharist, we gather together as the people of God to thank Him, praise Him and continue to ask Him for the grace we need as individuals, families and parishioners to live His gospel in our daily lives. One could not be considered an active member of a parish and not attend mass on a regular basis.
2. **Understands and supports the outreach programs** of our parish to help one another and those in our community less fortunate than ourselves. In John's gospel 13:14, we have Jesus giving a beautiful example to His apostles of service to others by washing their feet. Support is demonstrated most beautifully by volunteering time and talent to the various social, liturgical, and educational ministries of the parish; through prayer and financial support of these activities.
3. **Contributes regularly**, through the use of their Sunday offering envelopes, to the financial well-being and Christian mission of St. Therese. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see the initial Christian community taking root and beginning to spread the gospel of Jesus. In Acts 2:44, we see many active members of the early Christian community sharing generously of their financial resources so that the work of Christ could continue. We are encouraged to do the same. Through your financial support, we can demonstrate our gratitude for the blessings and graces bestowed on us by continuing His work.

These three qualities constitute an active member of St. Therese parish; an inactive parishioner would be someone who either is simply registered or resides in the territorial boundaries of our parish and does not participate in the life of the parish as outlined above.

Tuition Refunds: There are many fees associated with administration of our religious education ministry. A portion of all tuitions paid goes toward books, classroom supplies, teacher training, computers, office equipment, etc. etc. Preparations to receive students begin in the Spring preceding the start of a school

year. Therefore, full tuition refund may not be available for student withdrawals after August 1st. Pro-rated refunds will be approved at the discretion of the pastor.

Attendance Policy

Students are required to attend a minimum 11 of the 14 scheduled CCD classes for the year. Regular attendance at class is vital for the child to progress in the program. *Absence from 3 classes during the year is considered a maximum limit.* A child who misses more than this number of classes is seriously hampered from getting a good grasp on the material.

In addition, please do keep in mind that in religious education, we are not simply imparting facts about the Catholic Church. Each class becomes a small faith community. Class discussions help the students form a Catholic conscience and relate the church teachings to their everyday lives. Your child's presence in class is a vital part of the experience, both for your child and for his or her classmates.

All work missed while absent must be made up and presented to the child's catechist (teacher). In addition, excessive absences may require the child to complete additional work assigned by the Director, and/or may require a student interview with the Director, or may result in the child having to repeat the year. Families experiencing extenuating circumstances that cause long term absences are requested to notify the religious education office at the onset of situation (ex. serious student illness or family circumstance).

We encourage families to contact the child's catechist (teacher) directly regarding absences. We do not classify absences as "excused" and "un-excused." Even if there is a "good reason" for the child to be absent, it does not change the fact that the child is missing and therefore will be marked absent.

Arrival and Departure Policies

The parking lot is a busy and dangerous place for your child to be crossing alone. Please park your vehicle in a designated spot and walk to the sidewalk in front of the entrance at both drop-off and pick-up. Please do not encourage your child to meet you at the car. The extra few moments it takes to properly park is worth it for the safety of all the children. If you have a difficult circumstance (ex. infant in the car), please notify the staff ahead of time and we will gladly plan to escort your child to your car for you.

Please do not drop your children off more than 10 minutes before the scheduled class time. We have no provisions for supervision. Students arriving before the start of class may be asked to wait in the entranceway.

Please plan carefully to allow sufficient time for your child to be on time for class. We have such limited time with the children. Children arriving late miss out on a portion of the lesson and also cause a disruption to the rest of the class.

Please be on time to pick up your children.

Early Dismissal Requests: A note from the parent/guardian is required for any early dismissal request. At the requested time, the parent/guardian must come into the school office to sign the child out. To optimize the time the child spends in the lesson, the child will be called down to the office when the parent/guardian arrives at the office.

Please give careful consideration before requesting an early dismissal for your child. While we try to be as accommodating as possible to the busy schedule of today's families, early dismissals cause a disruption and affect the lesson of the entire class. Excessive requests for early dismissals may prevent your child from advancing to the next grade level.

We are authorized to release children to parents/legal guardians only. If you will be carpooling with another family, please send a written notice giving this permission, or note same on your annual registration form.

Building Security During Class Times

St. Therese is a large and active parish. Our facilities are limited and many ministries share the facilities on the same afternoon/evening. Your child's safety while with us for religious education is a serious concern for us. The front entrance doors to the school building are locked once classes begin. Cameras are located throughout the building which can all be viewed from the office.

Anyone needing to enter the building once classes have begun should ring the buzzer on the left side of the doors, which rings in the office. Sometimes we are called away from the office to assist momentarily elsewhere in the building. If no one comes to the door after you ring the buzzer, please wait a minute and ring it again.

Student Behavior

In addition to our policies on the behavior of all adults who volunteer in the religious education program, we must also maintain a safe environment program among the children in our programs. The following behavior code, issued by the Diocese of Paterson, will support that safe environment. All children and staff are expected to abide by this code.

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CATHOLIC PROGRAMS Behavior Codes for Children and Young People

“Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, thy whole mind and thy whole soul. Thou shall love neighbor as thyself for the love of God.”

We are called to honor and respect ourselves as part of the Body of Christ. We are also called to honor and respect one another as brothers and sisters in God's family. So it is that we will maintain the following regulations to ensure a safe environment for all parish and religious education programs.

1. Use of the Internet, computer, and video materials must fall strictly within the guidelines of the parish or religious education program.
2. Hand-held electronic devices including but not limited to cell phones, ipods, palm pilots, mp3 players, portable compact disc players, tape recorders, etc., should not be in use during any part of the parish or religious education program.
3. There will be zero tolerance for disrespect, violent, or abusive behavior of any type. Bullying in particular will not be tolerated.
4. There will be zero tolerance of harassment of any kind, including, but not limited to, verbal harassment, gender bias, threats, sexual harassment, or foul language.
5. There will be zero tolerance for substance abuse of any kind, including, but not limited to, drugs, inhalants, alcohol, and tobacco.

The consequences for the forgoing behavior will be immediate. Parents will be called to remove their child. At the discretion of the Director of Religious Education local law enforcement will be notified. The Director will assess the incident and may then decide that the child will not be re-admitted to the program until that child has been evaluated by an appropriate health care professional and a letter is provided to the director stating that the child is not a danger to him/herself or others.

Dress Code

Please know that it is not our objective to make a student or parent feel uncomfortable. We understand that what a young person is wearing is less important than their participation in our sessions. But we are also obligated to create an appropriate learning environment for all of our religious education participants. Modesty is something we want to emphasize in all aspects of our sharing the Good News. Modesty is a virtue that we are called to practice in the way we treat ourselves and others, in the way we speak about others and to others, as well as the way we dress and present ourselves. Modesty in dress shows our respect for ourselves and for one another. The following guidelines closely follow the dress codes in place at the public schools.

- No shirts showing midriffs or stomachs
- No thin (spaghetti style) straps (3 finger rule for width)
- No low cut shirts (including low scoop necks)
- Pants are not to be worn so low that undergarments are exposed
- No short skirts (finger tip rule)
- No “sneaker skates”
- No cleats
- No clothing with suggestive or inappropriate slogans, phrases, pictures, etc.
- No sweatshirt hoods are to be pulled up over the head during class
- All hats, including ball caps, are to be removed when entering the building

If a student arrives with inappropriate dress, the parent/guardian will be called and the student will be sent home.

Cell Phones

Texting during class times is a growing problem and one of great concern to the staff. All students are required to have their cell phones turned off and put away before they enter the building for class, and are to stay that way until they are outside the building after dismissal. Cell phone usage (including texting) during class is disrespectful and will not be tolerated. Any cell phone that is not properly put away out of sight and touch will be confiscated by the staff and returned at dismissal. The ninety minutes of class is not an unreasonable amount of time to expect the children to do without phone calls and texting. Our office phone line (973-584-9444) is answered during class times so that parents/guardians can always reach us in the event of an emergency.

Food in the Classroom

Severe food allergies are a growing occurrence within our student body. Many of our students have serious and life-threatening food allergies and we do not have a nurse in the building during CCD classes, nor is our staff trained to administer medical attention other than an occasional band-aid. Therefore, no food or drink is allowed in the hallways or classrooms at any time. Please have your child finish any snacks before entering the building. Water fountains are located in the hallways for children who require a drink during classes.

Parents (and students!) sometimes approach us with requests for a classroom holiday party. Please understand that we do not have the time luxury that your child’s public school has. We see the children for just 14 classes all year long and, though we love parties too, we cannot take time away from our studies for classroom parties.

Students coming to class hungry is a growing concern in today’s hectic society. We understand that your family is likely to be coming to CCD class directly from school or another activity. Please

consider a small snack on the car ride over. Hungry children do not focus well in the classroom setting. A cheese stick or small package of goldfish in the car is a great way to “tide them over.”

Emergency Closing Policy

We follow the Roxbury Public School District for our weather related closings. On a given day, if:
Roxbury Public Schools close due to weather conditions = no CCD classes
Roxbury Public Schools dismiss early due to weather conditions = no CCD classes
Roxbury Public Schools stay open but after school activities are cancelled = no CCD classes

When CCD classes are cancelled, an alert will be posted on the parish website. If in doubt, call the office at 973-584-9444 before you leave your house. A message will be left on the answering machine.

Sacramental Guidelines

The sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion are normally received in the second year of religious instruction. Two years of formal preparation are required prior to the reception of the sacraments. Children with learning difficulties may require extra help and/or time. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to contact the Director of Religious Education to request special allowances for their child.

All second grade candidates and their families are expected to take part in the formal Enrollment Ceremony, held in the Fall of each year. At this time the candidates and their families will give public witness of their intention in regard to the reception of these sacraments.

Parent/guardian is required to attend one preparation meeting for each sacrament that their child is preparing to receive. (This is a diocesan requirement and not up to individual parishes.)

Regular attendance at Sunday liturgy (mass) is expected by all families.

Each child must be able to demonstrate readiness for each sacrament, as detailed below.

Reconciliation Readiness

1. The child must have an initial knowledge of
 - a. the person of Jesus
 - b. the Gospel message of forgiveness
 - c. sin and its effects
 - d. understanding and experience of sorrow, forgiveness, and conversion
2. The child freely desires to receive the sacrament.
3. The child must exhibit that personal prayer is a part of his/her life through knowledge of the basic prayers: The Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, The Glory Be (all taught in first grade), and the Act of Sorrow (taught in second grade).

Communion Readiness

A child according to his/her capacity:

1. Has celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to First Communion
2. Participates actively and consciously in Sunday Liturgy on a regular basis
3. Understands that (a) the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine and (b) that the Eucharist is the commemoration of Christ’s last meal with his disciples before he died, and a memorial of his sacrifice for our salvation

4. Understands that by sharing in this special meal, we become brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ on earth

** Detailed Sacramental Policies and Guidelines of the Diocese of Paterson is available online at www.StThereseRoxbury.org home page under Parish/Sacraments.