



Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Community
Religious Education Program
Parent Handbook

Mission Statement:

The Santa Maria de la Paz Religious Education program provides continuing religious education and sacramental preparation for children from kindergarten through high school. This program assists, directs, and helps parents, the primary educators, with ongoing education in their children's faith formation.

About Our Program

The program we use helps the growth and nourishment of faith and provide a continual formation in spiritual enrichment and Gospel teachings. The foundation of our program is the six fundamental tasks of catechesis, taken from the General and National Directories for Catechesis:

- Promote knowledge of the faith
- Promote knowledge of the meaning of the liturgy and sacraments
- Promote moral formation in Jesus Christ
- Teach how to pray with Christ
- Prepare the Christian to live in community and participate in the life and mission of the Church
- Promote a missionary spirit that prepares the Christian to be present as Christians in society

These six tasks constitute a unified whole; together with normal evangelical efforts of the parish, they are the sum total of the SMDLP religious education program's goals.

Religious Education Personnel

Fr. Daniel Balizan, Pastor: Fr. Daniel is *ex-officio* the chief administrative officer of the Religious Education program. He sets the policies of the Religious Education program in collaboration with the Director of Religious Education and according to the norms of the Archdiocese and all other relevant magisterial authority.

Sister Mary Gianna, DLJC, Director of Evangelization and Family Catechesis: Sister Mary Gianna is the delegate of the pastor and responsible for enacting the mission and running the operations of the Religious Education program. You can contact her in the following ways:

Sister Mary Gianna, DLJC

Office: (505) 629-4212

Fax: (505) 473-1602

familylife@smdlp.org

11 College Ave, Santa Fe, NM 87508-9225

Catechist: Our volunteer catechists teach the doctrine of the faith to the children.

Announcements

Parents should consult the weekly Sunday Bulletin for general information regarding the Religious Education Program. Although written communication reflecting changes in the program calendar or special up-coming events will be sent home with the students, the Sunday Bulletin does provide another means of communicating information about the program and should be checked regularly.

Admissions

Admission is open to all children whose parent/s or guardian is Catholic. The family must be registered at the parish, or an additional fee will be charged. You are welcome to register at the parish office during the week. If you do not register, you may not be able to attend religious education at SMDLP. Additionally, if you are not a member of our parish but wish your child to receive sacramental preparation at SMDLP, you will need to obtain a letter of permission from the pastor of the church at which you are registered.

Proof of legal guardianship/adoption or written permission must be obtained if you are not the parent of the child that is being enrolled. Each class will be limited to 15 students. All classes are filled on a first come, first served basis. If the class is full, you will be contacted by the DRE.

Registration

In order to register a student, the following is required:

- Completed registration form (see parish website for a copy or obtain from parish office)
- If applicable, proof of Legal Guardianship/Adoption or written permission from the parent
- Registration forms will not be taken without payment or payment plan.

Registration Fees

Non-Sacramental Year

- \$35.00
- \$40.00 after Sep 10th

Sacramental Preparation Year - Reconciliation, Eucharist or Baptism

- \$60.00
- \$65.00 after Sep 10
- \$25.00 is child attends Santo Nino

Non-Parishioner

- \$25.00 additional fee if not registered at SMDLP

This cost goes primarily toward covering the materials and operational expenses incurred in running a religious education program. Our catechists are volunteers and are not compensated for their work except through the grace of God.

Attendance

Children need to understand the value of commitment if they are to begin to truly learn and grow in their faith as children of God. As responsible Catholic parents, it is important to prioritize – which means that faith must come first! It must be more important than sports, parties, and time with friends. This is an essential value which must be passed on to our children.

- Please make sure your child is on time and in attendance on a regular basis to classes. Students are permitted three excused absences per year, this includes illness and family emergencies. If the student is more than 15 minutes late, it will be marked as an absence. Students who miss too many classes will be dismissed from the program and need to repeat the year.
- We will NOT dismiss children early for sports activities or other non-related church activities. Please do not request that we place your child's religious education second to a sports activity or other non-related church activity.

Weather Delays/Cancelations

Weather emergencies do occur. If Mass is still scheduled, so are classes. We follow Santa Fe Community College closures for Tuesday evening classes. Cancelations of religious education classes are rare. However, please use your own judgement on travel conditions.

Drop off and Dismissal

- A parent, guardian or other permitted adult must sign in and sign out their child. This includes dropping them off and picking them at the door of the classroom which the child is assigned.
- An adult is anyone over the age of 18.
- If an adult other than a parent is picking the child up, please let the teacher know.
- No child will be allowed to wait in the parking lot for his/her parents.
- No child will be allowed to sign themselves in or out.
- **Please note: because the church grounds are not secure for children without supervision, any children remaining after classes have ended will be taken to a designated space by the Director of Family Catechesis.**

First Communion Preparation

In order to make first Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist, the following is required:

- The family must be registered at SMDLP or have a letter from their pastor to receive the sacraments here.
- Preparation for First Holy Communion is a two-year process as directed by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. They may begin classes in the 2nd grade.
- If your child has complete the first year of preparation at another parish, an affidavit from the pastor, director of religious education, or catechetical leader will be necessary to enroll them in the sacramental program.

- If your child attends Santo Nino Regional Catholic School that will receive instruction at school. There will be other scheduled events that the child and parent will need to attend.
- A **recently issued baptismal certificate** (within the last 6 months)
- Attending Mass every Sunday and holy days of obligation
- The parent(s) of a child preparing for First Holy Communion is required to attend an Adult Religious Education series with Fr. Daniel. Without this, the child will not be able to receive First Communion. The parent(s) is to learn with their child and be able to answer questions about our Catholic Faith.
- Students are permitted three excused absences per year, this includes illness and family emergencies. Students who miss too many classes will be dismissed from the program and need to repeat the year. We will NOT dismiss children early for sports activities or other non-related church activities. Please do not place your child's religious education second to a sports activity or other non-related church activity.

Homeschooling

Since the Church teaches that parents are the primary educators of their child(ren), any parent who wishes to homeschool their child(ren) are encouraged to do so. The religious education office will provide you information and resources. Textbooks are available for the regular class fee. Other requirements for homeschooling can be found on the Archdiocese website:

<http://www.archdiocesasantafe.org/Offices/ReligiousEd/HomeRelPolicy.html>

Discipline

Our program strives to emphasize God's love. However, we expect all students to behave in a respectful and appropriate manner. Respect for classmates, teachers, staff, clergy, and church property are a top priority. Our catechists are volunteers and should not be expected to deal with disrespectful, uncooperative, and/or disruptive students. We ask parents to do their part to explain to their children the importance religious education plays in their lives. We cannot provide religious education and formation without the cooperation and support of parents.

Students using obscene language, physically harming others, displaying disrespect to classmates, teachers, staff, clergy, or property, will be sent from their class to the Director of Religious Education and parents will be called immediately to pick up their child and be dismissed from the program.

Definition of Sexual Harassment/Sexual Violence

Any intentional brushing against, patting, pinching of another's body; suggestive or obscene letters, notes, invitations, comments; derogatory slurs, jokes, epithets; unwanted physical contact or blocking movements; leering with sexual overtones; or the display of sexually suggestive objects, posters, cartoons, or visual aids.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence are unlawful and grounds for immediate dismissal from the Religious Education program.

Protection of Children and Youth

In accordance with Archdiocesan policy and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Directives, a training session for both adults and children must be held. The Abuse Awareness Workshop is a workshop designed for church employees and volunteers to assist them in preventing, spotting, and reporting potential child abuse.

The children and youth session teaches children to be safe, protect themselves and communicate potential dangers regarding abuse. Parents will be able to determine whether or not they want their child(ren) to attend the session. If a parent chooses not to allow their child(ren) to attend the training session then a letter must be filed with the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. The sessions will be held in October during the normal religious education session. Any students whose parents do not opt out need to take this session.

Any adult who wishes to volunteer within the Religious Education program must take the Virtus training sponsored by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. If you need to attend a workshop, please contact the Director of Religious Education or call the Archdiocesan office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 550-831-8142.

Student Safety

In the case of a missing child:

1. Contact the DRE and make a brief yet thorough check of the church grounds.
2. Call parents or anyone else on the pickup list to see if they have the child.
3. If the first two steps fail in locating the child, immediately call the police and inform them of the situation.
4. Always fill out an incident report and turn it in to the Director of Religious Education.

In the case of a child collapsing during religious education:

1. The classroom catechist immediately attends to the student, offering first aid where possible and informing the DRE.
2. If the injury or condition appears life threatening, the Director will make a 911 call.
3. After paramedics have arrived and attended to the child, an incident report will be filled out.

In the case of a child bringing a weapon to class:

1. Authorities will be notified if the threat is deemed serious enough.
2. The student may be suspended or expelled from the program.

Conferences

Parents who would like a conference with either the catechist or the Director of Family Catechesis should contact the Director to obtain an appointment. **Parents should refrain from attempting to conference with a catechist unannounced or during class hours.** It is program policy that concerns are to be discussed first with the catechist of the child. If your concern is not addressed or not to your satisfaction, please contact the Director. It is inappropriate to discuss problems with someone who is not authorized to provide a solution.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is required in our program. There are Adult Religious Education sessions made available, on Tuesday nights with Fr. Daniel. As the primary educators of your children, it is necessary to always be growing in your faith! Continuing education and formation are ways to do so. Parents are welcome to attend more than one session if they are interested.

Homework

When homework is assigned, it is intended to reinforce ideas learned or to extend and deepen knowledge. It is also a valuable practice in the development of responsibility and the exercise of initiative. Parents should regularly observe their child as he/she does his/her homework and be actively involved with any questions the child might have.

Other areas of Parent Participation:

- ***Participation in Parish Activities***

Parents and students are encouraged to participate in all parish activities and programs. This is a part of the ongoing formation parents need to instill in their children emphasizing our closeness as a community of God's people.

- ***Prayer***

As the primary educators of the children, parents are to ensure that their children know and are memorizing prayers relevant to his or her grade level.

- ***Worship***

Attendance: Parents are encouraged to set a good example by regularly attending Sunday mass with their children as well as all Holy Days of Obligation. Where possible, attendance at other prayer services and masses is encouraged.

- ***Confessions***

It is the responsibility of the students and parents to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly. The parish holds confessions on Saturdays starting at 3:30pm.

The Director has the right to amend this handbook for just cause. If amendments are made, parents will be given timely notification.