

Religious Education Parent Handbook



*St. Dunstan Parish
Religious Education Program*

1150 Magnolia Avenue

Millbrae, CA 94030

(650) 697-7451

Website:

www.saintdunstanchurch.org

St. Dunstan Parish

Rev. 6/19

Administration

Pastor.....Rev. Joseph Glynn, C.S.Sp.
Associate Pastor.....Rev. Brendan Hally, C.S.Sp.
In ResidenceRev. Diarmuid Casey, C.S.Sp.
In ResidenceRev. Alwyn Furtado, C.S.Sp.
Operations Manager..... Ann Woolen

Religious Education Office

Director of Religious Education.....Sheree Leone
Administrative Assistant.....Lisa Lynch

St. Dunstan Office of Religious Education
1150 Magnolia Avenue
Millbrae, CA 94030

Phone: (650) 697-7451

Email: sdreleducation@att.net

Class Schedule

Grades 1 st —6 th	Tuesday	3:45-5:00 p.m.
Confirmation I	Tuesday	7:00-8:30 p.m.
Confirmation II	Tuesday	7:00-8:30 p.m.

Welcome ~

Dear Parent:

Thank you for registering your child in our parish program for Religious Education. This handbook is designed to provide an overview of our Religious Education Program for the children of our parish who attend public schools.

Our Elementary and Junior High programs are vital to the complete religious education of your child. However, they are not meant to be the sole source of your child's religious education. Rather, they are intended to supplement the religious formation you are already providing your child at

home, and the experience of joining with our parish community for the celebration of the Mass and Sacraments.

Consistent with this approach, this handbook describes our curriculum and administrative policies. It is our hope that it will give you an understanding of our program and encourage you to actively participate if you can. Please keep the success of our program in your prayers.

In Christ,

Sheree A. Leone

Director of Religious Education

Philosophy

The St. Dunstan Religious Education Program is structured to provide catechetical instruction on the Catholic faith to all parish children who are attending public schools.

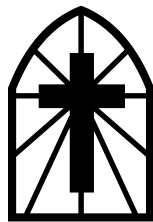
Parents, by word and example, are the primary teachers of their children and teach them from birth to adulthood. At Baptism, the parent undertakes the responsibility of providing for their child's Christian formation. The Religious Education staff is

here to assist parents in the spiritual formation and ongoing moral development of their child through a formal program of continuous religious education.

In our program, we seek to provide the catechesis and skills for each child to grow and mature in understanding, positive attitudes, and faithful practice of the Catholic faith.

Through the process of catechetical instruction, we hope to deepen the faith and sense of belonging to the Catholic Church in our children, so that they will be moved to sharing of their time and talent in the life of the Church—now and throughout their lives. We strive to assist children in committing themselves to a personal relationship with God characterized by sacramental life, a lifelong pattern of prayer, Christian service, and growth in understanding the Catholic faith. This process is achieved with the joint efforts of our parish staff, catechists, parents and students.

Committed to this active partnership between parish staff, catechists and families, we place our efforts with confidence in God's loving hands.



Catechists

We encourage parents and parishioners to become involved by volunteering as Catechists. Catechists serving in the parish need to be informed, formed and skilled, and are offered training in their ministry by the Office of Religious Education and the Archdiocese. This assures the ongoing development of those who teach the children in our schools and parishes.

These words describe the need for parish Catechists to be “informed, formed and skilled” in order to insure that their ministry is carried out as faithfully and skillfully as possible. The Director of Religious Education is committed to providing and encouraging this ongoing training.

Initial Interview: In order to determine each catechist’s skills and training needs, an initial interview is done for all new Catechists. This interview is intended to assess the candidate’s prior catechist training, experience, preference of grade level, and opportunities for training.

Training: The Director of Religious Education will inform all catechists of training opportunities and in-service workshops, as well as providing the opportunity to obtain Basic Catechist Certification. Most of our catechists have obtained this certificate or are working towards its completion. Records of completed coursework will also be kept on file in the Religious Education Office. Catechists are urged to keep their own record of courses taken and certification levels achieved.

Two general Catechist In-Service Sessions are held annually at the parish for all catechists involved in our Religious Education Programs. One meeting is held prior to the beginning of the Religious Education school year and the other is held at the completion of the school year. Participation in these in-service sessions is mandatory. Additional Catechist meetings may also be held by the Director of Religious Education.

Catechists are also encouraged to attend the California Catholic Ministry Conference sponsored by the Archdiocese of San Francisco and Diocese of San Jose. All fees for attendance at the Conference are paid by the parish.

Safe Environment: All catechists, adult classroom aides, and volunteer office staff are required to successfully complete the Archdiocese of San Francisco’s safe environment program: *Virtus*. In addition, we complete background checks for all adults working or volunteering in the Religious Education Program.

Roles and Responsibilities

Pastor – The pastor is responsible for the overall spiritual well-being of the parish.

Director of Religious Education (DRE) – The DRE is responsible for the overall administration of the parish Religious Education Program as well as Sacraments for the St. Dunstan School and Parish. The DRE reports directly to the pastor. The DRE also actively participates and interacts with the Archdiocese Office of Religious Education and DRE's in the Deanery.

Catechist – The catechist is called upon to be teacher and model of the Catholic life for their students. To insure their faithful and effective ministry, catechists need to commit themselves to ongoing growth in their understanding and practice of the Catholic faith, as well as deepening their catechetical skills. They are assisted in their ministry by their parish and diocesan religious education staff and the training programs offered.

Classroom Aide – This person can be an adult or Junior High/High School student who is willing to support the catechist in the classroom. The time commitment involves presence at regularly scheduled classes. The classroom aide will be oriented to the program by the DRE and given specific general instructions about the duties involved. More specific duties will be provided by the catechist the aide is assigned to assist. Typical duties include taking attendance, preparing take home packages, assisting students needing individual attention, helping students with arts and crafts projects, individual review of prayers, small group discussions, etc.

Room Parents – We extend an opportunity for parents to assist their child's class in the roll of room parent. General duties include organizing class party refreshments, helping with special projects in the classroom and assisting with receptions in the program.

General Policies

Parish Religious Education – Religious Education in the Catholic Church is done either through attending a Catholic School or by attending the parish religious education program. St. Dunstan School of Religious Education offers faith formation classes from Grade 1 through Grade 8. Through this, we prepare the children of our parish to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. All children in either St. Dunstan School or St. Dunstan School of Religious Education receive their sacraments together.

While all sacrament programs involve a two-year process, the St. Dunstan School of Religious Education offers ongoing faith development from Grade 1 through Grade 8. We recommend that every attempt is made by families to provide their child with continuous religious education.

Commitment – It is expected that your child will be at all classes barring illness or other personal reason. We do expect that you and your child will make the program a priority. The role of the parent is critical by attending weekly liturgy with your child on a regular basis and in overseeing your child's attendance at religious education class. Students in a sacrament class have their attendance monitored. In the event there are more than 2 absences from a sacrament class, the DRE at her discretion, will arrange for meeting with the DRE and catechist to discuss the situation and possible re-evaluation of the child's participation in the program as well as a meeting with the parent.

The religious education office reviews attendance records monthly and evaluates the child's progress with the catechist. If a child is absent for 5 consecutive classes, we will automatically withdraw the child from the program.

Special Sacrament Program – We recognize that some children may have missed significant time in religious education formation or may be coming to the program without having received the sacraments typical of that child's age group (i.e. Baptism, First Reconciliation or First Communion). Children who have missed a significant amount of faith formation will be evaluated by the DRE and catechist to determine if additional and supplemental work is needed to bring the child up to the grade level they are enrolled in.

Students, who are behind in receiving their sacraments, will be required to complete a two-year curriculum determined on a case-by-case basis as various factors impact each situation. In general, the student will be placed in their actual grade level and over the course of the two years, be provided with supplemental faith formation information to be completed at home with the parent's supervision. The Office of Religious Education will also oversee the development through assessments with the child. Once a child completes the required course work in the Special Sacrament Program, they will receive their Sacraments either during the Easter Vigil Mass or a Mass on Easter Sunday (determined by the pastor).

Home Schooling – For special circumstances (with the approval of the DRE and/ or the pastor) parents may have to home school their child. Special circumstances *do not* include sports, music, dance or similar school or extra-curricular activity conflicts. The DRE shall initially determine whether or not the circumstances presented qualify to allow the allowance for home schooling. Home schooling

cannot exceed one year or take place in the two-year mandatory sacrament preparation process.

When children are home schooled, one parent and the child will meet regularly with the DRE to ascertain and monitor the child's progress and insure that the child is keeping up with the class work.

Children who are home schooled are not eligible to participate in the parish athletics program.

Special Needs Policy – Children with special learning needs or disabilities are welcome and included in our programs. The DRE will meet with the parent to ascertain what accommodations are needed. We will maintain communication with the parent in the event we are unable to accommodate the child and discuss alternatives.

Confidentiality – It is important that strict confidentiality be maintained at all times. Catechists are not permitted to discuss students and student situations outside of the program. The Office of Religious Education keeps all situations confidential.

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents – Both parents have the right of access to a child's religious education progress reports and achievement information unless one parent produces a legal (court certified) document to the contrary. Upon receipt of such a document, it will be attached to the child's record and all teachers to whom the child is assigned will be informed of all special directions. A progress report and certificate of completion will be provided to the non-custodial parent upon request—which must be in writing. Changes in the child's normal drop off or pick up routine must be approved by the custodial parent/guardian. Once received by the Religious Education Office, catechists will be notified of these changes. No child will be dismissed from the program to the non-custodial parent without the written consent of the custodial parent/guardian or a court order.

Notice of Non-Discrimination Policy – The St. Dunstan School of Religious Education admits students of any sex, race, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to program participants. We do not discriminate based on sex, race, national and ethnic origin in the administration of our programs or the recruitment of our Catechists.

Child Abuse Policy – Child abuse includes, but is not limited to the following:

- engaging in a sexual activity with a child

- denial of proper or necessary substance, education, medical care, or other care necessary for the child's health
- use of restraint procedure on a child that causes injury or pain
- administration of prescription drugs or medication without the ongoing supervision of a licensed physician
- providing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances
- commission of any act, other than by accidental means that threatens or results in any injury or death to the child

The Parish Religious Education Director is required by law and the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Policy to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Catechists who suspect or observe child abuse must report the matter in confidence to the Director of Religious Education immediately.

All of our program volunteers as well as paid staff have completed the Safe Environment Program as well as have had a background check including fingerprinting.

Substance Abuse Policy—Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, or selling any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property or at a parish sponsored event will immediately be suspended from the program.

Religious Education Procedures

Arrival/Dismissal – We expect students to be on time for class each week. A schedule of dates and times is distributed during our first class and is available on our parish website: www.saintdunstanchurch.org.

Arrival: Parents may drop off their children by either through our carpool line or parking in designated parking spaces and walking them to the school. Please refrain from dropping off your child earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of class as there is no supervision outside prior to 3:30 p.m., nor do we allow students in the classrooms without a catechist present. In the event of inclement weather, students will be permitted to go directly to their classrooms.

Prior to the bell ringing, students will be instructed to line up outside the school entrance doors or their classroom doors (for those that open up to the parking lot).

Confirmation students can enter the school from the parish center and go directly to their classrooms.

Dismissal: Students whose classrooms open to the parking lot will be dismissed from their classrooms (Grades 1st-3rd) and the remaining classrooms will exit to the parking lot from the upper school entrance doors.

Parents may wait for their students outside the school entrance doors or the 1st-3rd classroom doors. We remind parents to either park in a designated parking space or use the carpool line.

First Grade Dismissal: Parents or their designated pick-up adult must sign their child out from the First Grade classroom. No student will be dismissed to an unauthorized person or child (without permission first cleared by the DRE). Parents or their designated pick-up **adult** must sign the student out from the classroom. This procedure is in place for the well being of our students.

Carpool Line: All families must enter the church parking lot from Broadway and exit to Magnolia Avenue. **Cars will not be allowed to enter from Magnolia Avenue.** Please follow the directions of our traffic monitors and please watch for students and parents who may be crossing through the traffic line from the parking area. Students should be walked to the classroom doors by an adult. Do not stop

and leave your car unattended in the carpool line. No cars should cross into the coned off area—this is where our students and parents gather prior to and after classes. If you need to park, please use the parking area and park in a designated space.

Attendance – As stated earlier, it is expected that your child will be at all classes barring illness or other personal reason. We do expect that you and your child will make the program a priority. In the event your child cannot attend a scheduled class, we ask that you notify the Religious Education Office by email (sdreleducation@att.net) or phone (650) 697-7451 to let us know that your child will be absent. Please let us know who will be absent, what grade level they are in and the reason for the absence. Students may be required to make-up any missed assignments at the discretion of the catechist.

Our attendance records are monitored on a regular basis and excessive absenteeism may result in a discussion with the DRE to discuss the situation as well as a resolution including possible removal from the program.

Late Arrival/Early Dismissal: In the event your child arrives late to class, they must report to the Religious Education Office where a volunteer will escort them to class. If your child must be dismissed early, please notify the Religious Education Office by email (sdreleducation@att.net) or phone (650) 697-7451 and let us know who needs to be dismissed early and the reason for the early dismissal. In addition, please provide the catechist with a written note that your child will need to be dismissed early including the reason. You or your authorized pick-up adult will need to come to the Religious Education Office to pick up your child. No child will be dismissed directly from the class. This procedure is in place for the safety of all our students.

Lateness and irregular attendance interfere greatly with the student's progress and is disruptive to both the catechist and the rest of the class. Please make attendance at religious education classes a priority.

Late Pick-Up: We understand that some parents may get caught in traffic and arrive late to pick-up their child from faith formation class. However, please note that our Office closes at 5:15 p.m. and has no accommodations for children whose parents are late. In the event you will be late, please contact the Religious Education Office by phone (650) 697-7451 and let us know approximately how late you will be. You must come into the Religious Education Office to pick up your child. Habitual lateness will result in a fine (\$2.00 a minute/per child payable at the time of pick up in cash) and/or a discussion with the DRE about a resolution to the problem including removal from the program.

Classroom Usage Rules – Religious Education classes are held in the classrooms of St. Dunstan School. Catechists will go over the Religious Education Policy regarding the use of the classrooms and enforce the rules. We expect full cooperation from the students. In general, the classroom usage rules are as follows:

- Food and drink are NOT permitted in the classrooms; please finish all snacks at home. Exception: Designated classroom parties.
- Absolutely NO gum chewing at any time
- Restrooms are available but students are asked to use the restroom before coming to class.
- Students are not to touch items found in the classroom desks or in the classroom. If a student has done damage to the classroom or taken an item from the classroom, they will be held accountable and will be required to reimburse the classroom student or teacher for any damage or item removed.

- **No caps or hats** are to be worn in the classroom or church at any time.

Curriculum – The curriculum used in the Religious Education Program must follow the Archdiocesan Policy. Only those textbooks approved by the Archdiocese that conform to the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are used. Catechists follow the Archdiocesan recommended expected learning outcomes per grade level and Confirmation Guidelines when planning lessons.

We currently use Loyola Press' *Finding God* curriculum in Grades 1st-6th as well as Sadlier's sacrament textbooks for First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Discipline Policies – Every person is worthy of being treated with care and the respect fitting one made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, classroom behavior needs to be characterized by genuine Christian care, mutual respect and honesty.

Disruptive behavior prevents learning for the whole class and can be frustrating for the Catechist and students. Under no circumstances will a student or an adult be permitted to inappropriately hit, touch or use abusive language for any reason. Lack of self-discipline during class will be addressed promptly and parents will be notified. Removal of a student from the classroom may lead to suspension from the program.

Should an incident occur prior to, during, or after class, the responsible Catechist or adult will intervene to insure student safety as well as notify the Director as soon as possible. Parents should notify the Director as soon as possible if an incident occurs that wasn't addressed by the Catechist. The Director will investigate all incidents and communicate with the Catechist and parent corrective action.

The normal disciplinary steps in our Religious Education Program are as follows:

- Warning for disrupting class
- Second incident, student will stay after class to talk to catechist
- Third incident, student will be sent to talk to the Director along with parent notification
- Consistent and unresolved behavior problems will result in the parent being contacted to discuss alternatives including dismissal from program

A student will be removed from the classroom immediately suspended from attending the Religious Education Program for any of the following violations:

- Drugs/Alcohol/Substance abuse
- Verbal or Physical Harassment or fighting

- Stealing or damaging parish property
- Jeopardizing a person's safety

The parents will be contacted immediately when a student is suspended. The pastor will be notified when such action is taken.

The Director will conduct an investigation and consult with the catechist and pastor to determine appropriate corrective action including expulsion from the program.

Emergency Procedures – The Religious Education Program has procedures in place in the case of a fire emergency or other emergency. Students will be instructed on these emergency procedures at the beginning of the year. At the first sound of the fire alarm, all building occupants must evacuate the building immediately. Classroom will evacuate using the doors the exit either to the north yard or south yards. In general, our general evacuation procedures are as follows:

- Immediately exit each classroom at the sound of the alarm
- Do not take any personal items with you
- Listen for catechist instructions and line up as a class in the yard
- Catechists will take roll and count to make sure all students are present
- Maintain calm and order throughout emergency
- Parents will be notified using the Emergency Contact List with instructions as needed.

Medical Situations – In the event a child is unable to continue to participate in the classroom activities, the Catechist and/or aide will bring the child to the office so that their parent can be called to pick-up the child. If the parent cannot be reached, the DRE or office staff will call the person(s) listed as the Emergency Contact.

Communications—The Religious Education Office sends out a newsletter on a regular basis to inform parents of current events in the Religious Education Program as well as sends out communication via email to the email address on file for all the families enrolled in our Religious Education Program. In addition, flyers will be distributed with important information regarding various activities the students might be participating in.

Students in Grades 1st through 3rd will be provided with a *take home* envelope that will contain the above communications as well as any important classroom work. All other students will have the communications distributed to them in their respective classrooms.

We urge that all our catechists maintain regular communication with the parents of their students.

Student Textbooks—The cost of all textbooks and materials are included with your tuition. Also included is supplemental material intended to be completed at home with the parent’s supervision. If supplemental material is lost, there will be a replacement fee.

Each student enrolled in our Religious Education Program will receive a grade level student textbook. All student textbooks are kept in their classroom.

Homework—When homework assignments are given, parents are expected to assist as well as supervise assignments. Absence from class does not excuse a student from homework. Please check your child’s envelope regularly (Grades 1st-3rd) or materials that they bring home from class for assignments, notices, updates and parent communications.

Prayers—Every religious education class begins and ends with prayer. Children are also given the opportunity to lead classroom prayer. It is expected that parents assist their child with memorizing our prayers. Prayer lists will be sent home to assist.

Progress Reports—We do not “grade” faith, however, we do send out mid-year progress reports to apprise parents of their child’s faith development. Catechists/parent meetings may be arranged at any time through the Religious Education Office. Please contact the Director if you would like to arrange a conference.

Testing/Evaluations—There is an educational value to testing. It is meant to encourage the student and points out the areas that need to be reinforced. Religious education teachers must be very careful to distinguish for the children that test scores in religion do not reflect a child’s value before God.

Students enrolled in the Confirmation I Program must successfully pass the end-of-year test (as required by the Archdiocese) to continue into the second year Confirmation II Program.

Altar Servers—Students enrolled in the Religious Education Program in Grades 5th through 8th are eligible and encouraged to volunteer to assist the Sunday liturgy as an Altar Server. Training is provided prior to being assigned to serve at a mass. Monthly schedules are sent out to all Altar Servers and are also available on the church website.

Registration Information—Registration forms are available on the parish website in late July for downloading for the upcoming Religious Education year. The program also holds “walk-in” registration the week prior to classes starting. Parents are encouraged to register early as classes do fill up quickly.

The following information is provided for your information:

- Tuition fee information is reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary.
- Tuition covers the cost of each student’s textbook, supplies, resource materials and other miscellaneous items. It also helps to defray the overall cost of running the program.
- Financial concern should not prevent registration in our program. If there is a difficulty, please contact the Director of Religious Education.
- Early registration will help assure a roster spot. It also enables us to secure the necessary number of catechists and volunteers for our program, and to order textbooks and resource materials.
- Changes in status, including telephone numbers, email and home addresses should be reported to the Religious Education Office.
- Copies of Sacramental certificates received from other parishes are required at the time of registration.
- When registering from another parish, proof of previous religious education is required in the form of a certificate of completion, letter from the Director of Religious Education or pastor of the former parish.

Parent Responsibilities—Parents are expected to follow St. Dunstan Parish policies including:

- Registration in St. Dunstan Parish
- Volunteering in the Religious Education Program
- Attend Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation liturgies regularly
- Know and support the teaching of the Catholic Church
- Assure your child’s regular attendance at religious education class
- Be personally involved in your child’s religious education, including sacramental preparation
- Attend sacramental parent meetings, program events, complete required paperwork by the due dates, and oversee your child’s participation in workshops, retreats and rehearsals

Final Note—The Director of Religious Education reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given notification of changes made.

