



ST. MARK Catholic Church

called by Christ to Worship God, to Invite all with love, to Nurture our faith, and to Serve others

Religious Education (RE) Policies and Procedures

St. Mark Religious Education Program

The Office of Faith Formation provides Religious Education classes to children, teens, and adults of the parish. We seek to develop in each person an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, a love of the Church he founded, and an understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. All teaching provided aligns with the teachings of the Catholic Church. All classes are taught by dedicated volunteer catechists.

Family Responsibilities

Parent(s) and families are the primary religious educators of their children. RE classes only meet for 85-90 minutes per week. These classes are not a substitute for the necessary education in the faith that must occur in the home by the child's parents. The RE Office works in partnership with parents in order to assist them in living their vocations as educators of their children.

The Catholic Church's foundational expectations for practicing Catholics are as follows:

1. Attend Sunday Mass and rest from servile labor on Sunday & holy days of obligation.
2. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) at least once a year.
3. Receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least once during the Easter Season.
4. Observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. Help to provide for the needs of the Church.

Staff, Volunteers, and Safe Environment Training (adults)

St. Mark's Religious Education program is founded upon maintaining a physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe environment. In the Diocese of Arlington, all adults (*over 18 years of age*) undergo a background investigation and participate in a safe environment training course using the VIRTUS program.

- All clergy, staff, and adult volunteers are in compliance with the Diocese of Arlington Child Protection Policy.
- Volunteers under the age of 18 do not undergo this screening and training since, as minors, they fall under the category of children whom this policy is intended to protect.
- You can learn more at the website for the Diocesan Child Protection Office [here](#).

Textbooks and Materials

RE classes use textbooks from publishers that are in conformity with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Diocese of Arlington. Each volunteer catechist receives a teacher's manual or similar class resource to assist in planning their lessons. Students are provided with a book on the first day that they attend class. Books will be kept in the classroom and offered for students to take home at the end of the year. All classroom materials and resources (such as writing and art supplies) are provided by the RE Office.

Learning Disabilities / Health-Related Problems

If a student has a learning disability or health-related problem, this information should be noted on the RE registration form. It will remain confidential, but this information will be passed along to the catechist to aid in the education of the child. The RE staff and catechists will work with the parent(s) to

address any learning or behavioral challenges. Please contact the Director of Religious Education (DRE), Tiffany Lambert, with concerns or questions.

Safe Environment Training (children)

The Diocese of Arlington has implemented the Circle of Grace program for Grades 1 through 12. The goal of the program is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

- Parent(s) will be emailed the lesson; parents also have the opportunity to review the lesson in the RE Office.
- All lessons for in-person classes will be taught by the volunteer catechist. Parent(s) have the option of opting their child out of the in-person lesson and addressing material at home within their purview as the primary catechist of their child.
- The specific class date for teaching the program will be announced in the fall.

Attendance Policy

- The 2025-26 class schedule can be found [here](#). **There will be an optional open house, where students can meet their catechists, on September 7, and classes will begin on September 14.** Classes will end on April 26. Please note that the St. Mark Religious Education program observes **many but not all** of the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) student holidays and teacher workdays.
- In case of absence, please email – in advance – both your child’s catechist and Sarah Lundquist in the RE Office at slundquist@stmark.org. The DRE will coordinate home assignments with the family in case of an extended excused absence.
- Regular attendance is essential for individual students and the success of in-person classes as a whole. A total of **4 absences** are permitted over the course of the year. Parents of students with absences exceeding this number will need to set up a meeting with the DRE to discuss a plan for completing missed classes.
- Due to personnel hours required to manage absences and makeup assignments, **makeup work is limited to 4 additional classes in a year.**
- All self-paced online students must follow the schedule that will be provided by the RE Office and complete their course **by May 1** in order to be promoted.

Arrival and Dismissal – Grades PreK4 through 8

- Class locations: Information regarding dropoff and pickup locations in the Christian Formation Center (CFC) will be conveyed at the time you receive your class assignment in late August/early September.
- Locked doors: Doors to the CFC will be locked during RE on Sundays from 9:20-10:45am and 6:00-7:30pm.
- Late arrivals: Students must arrive on time for class. After the RE session has begun, anyone who wishes to enter the CFC must buzz at the main entrance (Door 1) to access the CFC Office, where they will sign in and be escorted from the front desk.
- Early dismissal: Students who need to leave a class session early must be picked up from the CFC Office by an adult on the list provided at registration.
- Dismissal, PreK4 – Grade 3: All children in PreK – Grade 3 must be dropped off and picked up (and signed out) by an older sibling or adult on the list provided at registration.
- Dismissal, Grades 4 – 8: Children may leave the CFC at the end of class unattended unless the parent requests to pick the child up from the classroom.
- Walking home unattended: A child must be picked up from St. Mark by an adult on the list provided at registration. Any parent wishing for their child to walk home alone must make arrangements with the DRE.
- Custody issues: If there is a particular custody situation with a child, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the DRE **during the registration period.**

Dress Code

Clothing should fit, be neat and clean, modest, and conform to [diocesan policy](#). Clothing that exposes cleavage, private parts, the midriff, or undergarments, or that is otherwise provocative, is prohibited. Examples of prohibited clothing include, but are not limited to: sagging to low-cut pants, skin-tight clothing, low-cut necklines that show cleavage, too-short skirts/shorts (no more than 3" above the knees), sleeveless tops (including tank tops), backless shirts, see-through material, clothing that uses inappropriate language, designs, or logos, or is otherwise offensive to Christian values.

Classroom Behavior

Expectations regarding appropriate behavior and consequences for inappropriate behavior are established at the beginning of the year by the catechist. Every child has the right to education in an environment conducive to learning. Thus, it is necessary to establish order in the classroom.

- Inappropriate behavior includes fighting, cursing, vulgar language; talking out of turn; disrespect to any volunteers, students, staff, or clergy; destruction of property; disruption of the classroom; and failing to cooperate with the request of any volunteer or staff.
- Students should respect the materials in the classroom that are the property of St. Mark Catholic School and its students. Students should not have gum or food in class.
- Catechists have been asked to notify the DRE at the first sign of concern regarding a student's behavior. Every effort will be made to assist the child in practicing self-control. If a child is brought to the DRE during class, the DRE will speak with the student about their behavior and contact the child's parents about the situation. If the child continues to disrupt the class, a parent may be required to attend class with the child.

In the event that a student's classroom behavior is disruptive, the catechist will:

- Speak to the child in private (perhaps briefly stepping out of the classroom) to encourage the student to change their behavior.
- Establish assigned seating from the first day and physically separate students, as space allows.
- Speak to the parent(s) of the child at the end of that day's class; the DRE may contact parent(s) as needed.

If the student continues to be disruptive, the catechist will send the student to the DRE during the class.

- The DRE will speak to the student, return the student to class, and speak to the parent(s) after class. If disruption continues, the parent(s) will be contacted and asked to work with their child to correct the behavior.
- If the child continues to disrupt the class, the parent(s) must accompany the student to class until the student's behavior is acceptable for the classroom environment.
- If school or private property is willfully damaged by a student, he/she and parent(s) will need to make appropriate restitution.

Medication and Illness

Parent(s) must inform the DRE in writing if a medical condition prevents their child from participating in any activity, if their child has severe food allergies, or if any classroom instruction modifications must be accommodated.

- Those administering and volunteering for the RE program will not maintain, supervise the taking of, or administer medication to students, including over-the-counter products.
- It is the responsibility of the parent(s) to notify the RE staff of any changes in allergies or dietary restrictions after registration has taken place so that personnel are aware and files can be updated. For children with severe medical conditions, parents are asked to remain onsite in case of emergency.

- If a child becomes ill or is injured during class, the RE staff will immediately make every attempt to contact the parent or guardian. In the event that no one can be contacted or if time is of the essence, the DRE or a designated party will act in a manner that is both reasonable and responsible.
- Catechists are asked to report any significant injury to the RE staff immediately. If an injury occurs, first aid will be administered, and the parent(s) will be contacted. If the injury requires immediate professional medical attention, the RE staff will call the appropriate emergency services, followed by a call to the parent(s).

Inclement Weather

- St. Mark follows FCPS for weather-related closings, delays, and early dismissals. It is not always possible for the RE Office to send out a timely notification of class cancellation, so please watch the news, check the FCPS website, or listen to the radio for updates when inclement weather threatens. When FCPS does make an announcement, please pay attention to whether the **physical school buildings are closed** (no activities happening on school grounds) due to inclement weather conditions, which will mean that our physical buildings will be closed. This applies to RE classes and other parish activities but not Masses.
- If classes are cancelled due to closure, it will not count as an absence for your student.

Safety, Fire and Other Emergency Drills

The school building will be secured during Religious Education classes.

- Side and emergency doors are locked at all times. All students, parents, and adult volunteers must enter and exit via the CFC main entrance (Door 1) only.
- The CFC Office is staffed by volunteers. In the event that the office volunteers must assist in a classroom, the doors will be locked until the volunteers are able to return.

Annual Drills: Each year the RE staff, volunteers, and students will complete a fire drill and a shelter-in-place drill.

- The drill procedures will be explained to the students by classroom volunteers.
- All students, visitors, volunteers, and staff in the CFC must participate in the drills.
- The drills will be pre-announced; parent(s) will receive notification of these drills via email.