

*Religious Education  
Handbook*



*St. Gregory the Great  
Catholic Church*

**WE OF ST. GREGORY PARISH BELIEVE THAT  
CHRISTIANITY IS A WAY OF LIFE**

**OUR GOAL**

is to help children develop as whole persons, enabling them  
TO RECOGNIZE,  
APPRECIATE,  
CELEBRATE AND SHARE  
THE GIFT OF FAITH, THE GIFT OF LIFE,  
THE GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE,  
THROUGH, WITH AND IN GOD.

**OBJECTIVES**

We aim to lead students to the realization that Catholic Christian living is a response to God's love.

We will assist parents, who have the most significant influence on children's spirituality, by providing basic truths of our religion which will enable the students to claim them as their own.

We will encourage families to celebrate the Lord's presence in life and liturgy.

We will focus on the basic values of self-respect and love, so important for developing meaningful relationships with God and other persons.

We will provide information which will enable students to grow toward greater maturity and self-direction in age-appropriate understanding of the Catholic faith.

We intend to foster an awareness of the interdependence of all Human beings.

## ADMISSIONS

### Registrations

No person on the grounds of race, color, or national origin is excluded or otherwise subjected to discrimination in receiving services at the religious education program. Nor do we discriminate in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, color, disability, age, sex or national origin.

It is the goal of the parish to provide religious education for every child in the parish. In rare cases, the parish may not be able to invite a student into the program because it does not have the resources to meet the special needs of the child, especially in preparation for the sacraments.

In matters of admission to the program or to the reception of a sacrament, the pastor is responsible for a decision.

### New Student Registration:

Admission to the Religious Education Program at St. Gregory the Great is open to families who are **current, registered members of St. Gregory Parish.**

Registration for **new students** is initiated in early spring for the following school year. Hours and dates are announced in the parish bulletin. Registration is conducted on a first come, first served basis. It is advised that registration forms are submitted as soon as possible to assure that you get the class day and time that are most convenient for your family.

New students transferring from another parish Catholic School or Religious Education program must present a letter or report card from the sending program prior to acceptance and placement in our program.

**Bring the following items to registration:**

**Baptismal certificates** are needed for new registrations and returning students whose certificates are not on file in our office. If in doubt, bring the certificate.

**Emergency contact** information. Bring several names and phone numbers of neighbors/relatives who can be reached in case of an emergency. Doctor and medical information are also needed.

**Photo – passport size.**

**Parish registration number / envelope number.**

**Re-Registration Requirements:**

Students currently enrolled in the program are encouraged to re-register in the spring for placement for the following year.

**Registration Fees:**

It is within the ministry of the church that we share God's Word with the people. If you have any questions or problems concerning payment of fees, you are invited to come and discuss this with the Director of Religious Education (954-473-8321 ext. 149). Our ministry is to spread the message of Jesus to our young people. Do not let finances keep your child from hearing God's Word!

Please check our website for updated fee schedule.

**No child will be refused due to financial hardship.** Payment plans and alternative payment methods are available. Please speak to the Director of Religious Education.

### Custodial Rights:

In the case of divorced parents, the Religious Education Program will interact with the parent who has legal custody of the child. The Religious Education Program ordinarily will deal with the parent having legal custody in matters of absence, tardiness, truancy, early dismissal, disciplinary issues, Religious Education Program records, authorization to receive sacraments, etc. Access to in-person conferences and the records and information pertaining to a minor child, including, but not limited to, Religious Education Program records, may not be denied to a parent because the parent is not the child's primary residential parent. Full rights apply to either parent unless a court order specifically revokes these rights. In the latter case, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide evidence of such a court order.

### CURRICULUM

Every year your child is introduced to a different aspect of our faith in terms that are age appropriate. The identical curriculum for both Catholic Schools and Parish Religious Education Programs is mandated by the United States Conference of Bishops. Therefore, you will note the importance of having your child attend religious education classes every year.

The scope and sequence of the curriculum are spiraled so that each year the young person's catechetical formation is both deepened and expanded. Age-appropriate lessons present content that is faithful to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and presented in the spirit of the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

### Curriculum at Each Grade Level:

Kindergarten: Helps children discover **God** in the **love of family and friends**, in the **church** community, in their own special abilities, and in all of creation.

1st Grade: Emphasizes a personal relationship with God, **Father, Son and Spirit**, and **belonging** to the Church.

2nd Grade: Fosters the understanding of **Reconciliation** and the **Eucharist**.

3rd Grade: Focuses the child's identity as a member of the **Catholic faith community**, discipleship and the leadership of our Church community.

4th Grade: Promotes an awareness of what it means to live a Christian moral life. **The Law of Love** and the **Ten Commandments** are essential to living justly.

5th Grade: Presents the ways we live out the **Sacraments** through liturgy and works of mercy; also explains the honor to **Mary** for her role in the life of Christ.

6th Grade: Approaches the **Old Testament** in a chronological thematic manner.

### Grade 7 – Pre Confirmation /

### Grade 8 and High School Confirmation:

The parish program gives 7th grade, 8th grade, and high school students a clear understanding of the Catholic faith as they deepen their relationship with Jesus and the Church. The text and guides are judged to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by the U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to oversee the use of the catechism.

### **Pre-Catechumenate/Level I Class**

Students who are in third grade in school or older, who have had no formal Religious Education classes and have not received the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion will be placed in a Pre-Catechumenate/Level I class. This is the first year of a minimum of two year preparation for the reception of the sacraments. If a student has not been Baptized, they will be ready for Baptism at the end of the Pre-Catechumenate/Level I year.

### Catechumenate/Level II Class

Students, who have successfully completed the Pre-Catechumenate/Level I class the year prior, will be placed in the Catechumenate/Level II class for immediate preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion. After the reception of these sacraments, students will be placed the following year in their **respective grade level** to continue their faith formation.

### BOOKS AND MATERIALS

#### Required Books:

Each student is expected to bring his/her religion book, workbook, or Bible (for older students), plus a pencil and a folder with paper. Lost books must be replaced at the student's expense.

### ATTENDANCE

#### Class Attendance:

Religious Education is an ongoing process. Continuous participation in the Religious Education Program from grades 1 through 8 is required for the reception of the sacraments. A student who is removed from the program by the parents between grades 2 and 6 or after the Catechumenate/Level II classes will not be accepted into our Pre-Confirmation program until interviewed by the Director of Religious Education and an evaluation of areas of doctrine and curriculum that have been missed can be made up. The student must demonstrate sufficient grade level catechetical information to the Director of Religious Education.

Because you want your child to receive the maximum benefit from their Religious Education experience, it is most important that your child attend each and every class. Perfect Attendance Certificates will be given out at the end of the year. We sympathize in advance regarding the choices that must be made. **However, sports activities, dance classes and other extracurricular activities in no way outrank religious education as priority items!** Please do not confuse your child by placing these activities before the message of Jesus.

### **Mass Attendance:**

Religious Education classes are not a substitute for weekly Mass attendance. Weekend Mass attendance by the entire family must be a priority **and is expected of all students and their families.** In addition to class attendance, Mass attendance is taken weekly by the teacher.

### **Absences:**

On the occasion that your child will not be able to attend class, we ask that you abide by the following protocol:

1. Contact the Religious Education Office prior to class (954-473-8321 ext. 149).
2. Obtain the child's make-up work upon student's return to class.
3. Return make-up assignments to the child's catechists.

**We ask that your child have no more than four (4) absences per year.** A student with more than four absences in a sacramental or pre-sacramental year (grades 1 and 2, Pre-Confirmation and Confirmation, Pre-Catechumenate/Level I and Catechumenate/Level II) may be asked to delay the reception of the sacrament until such time that the student, in the judgment of the administration, is sufficiently prepared.

### **Late Arrival:**

Every effort should be made so that students arrive on time for class. When the bell rings, students who are not in class, are late. The student must pick up a "late slip" at a designated area which will be stated at orientation. No student will be admitted to class without a late slip. **Three occurrences of tardiness will be considered one absence.**

## **STUDENT EVALUATIONS**

Progress Reports will be mailed to parents twice a year. Homework and tests are meant to evaluate the student's grasp of material presented in class. Students are responsible for making up any missed homework assignments and tests. Please go over this information with your child.

### **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

Students should arrive no earlier than 10 minutes before classes begin. We cannot provide supervision of students prior to class.

**Students in the Monday 3:45 P.M. Session and the Thursday 6:00 P.M. session must be walked to their classrooms by a parent. These students must also be picked up in the classroom by a parent at dismissal time.**

**Students in the 7:00 P.M. Thursday session will gather in the covered patio in their grade level assigned places. The catechist will come for them when the bell rings and escort them upstairs to class. At dismissal, parents need to park their vehicle and pick up their child/children inside the gates of the covered patio area according to class lines.**

#### **Release of Students:**

A child should never be released early without the knowledge of the parent/guardian. The Director of Religious Education will release the child only to the person who is listed as emergency contact. Any other person seeking the release of the child must have the approval of the parent with legal custody, which ordinarily will be in writing.

#### **We Do NOT Have Early Dismissal:**

Due to the fact that we have a limited number of sessions and a great deal of material to cover, we will not release a student early unless they are ill. Sports, and other extracurricular activities, are NOT an excuse for missing class.

#### **Late Pick-Up Policy:**

After a reasonable amount of time (approximately five minutes after class has ended) where a volunteer catechist remains with a student who has not been picked up at dismissal time, the student will be brought to the Religious Education Office. At that point, parents are called, or the contact person on the emergency form, and asked to pick up the student.

In the event that one hour has passed and there has been no communication with a parent or emergency contact person, the Plantation Police Department will be called to intervene.

### **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

The primary goal of sacramental preparation is to provide understanding and acceptance of the concepts related to each of the individual sacraments. A sacrament involves a relationship with Jesus and presumes faith. Readiness, not age or grade, is the criterion for the reception of a sacrament. The celebration of sacraments is the action of the community. The family has an essential role in the preparation for and celebration of a sacrament.

Before a student can be presented for the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation, a student must attend religious education classes for a minimum of 2 consecutive years.

Parent/Student meetings are held for the reception of First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. These parent/student meetings are mandatory. All requirements regarding the reception of the sacraments will be discussed at these meetings.

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Religion teachers 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 lessons. They are not expected to deal with students who do not cooperate.

The learning environment is sacred. Any student who creates a problem in class will be removed from class and brought to the Religious Education Office. The parents will be notified by either a telephone call or a written Conduct Slip. A conference with parents may be requested at that time.

Students using obscene language, physical violence, disrespect to classmates and/or teachers, theft or vandalism will be brought to the Religious Education Office. Parents will be notified immediately to take their child home.

**Student Withdrawal:**

Any student found leaving the grounds during their Religious Education classes or whose behavior or attitude is depriving others of a religious education may be asked to leave the program.

A student who engages in conduct, whether inside or outside the Religious Education Program, that is contrary to the moral code of the Church may be asked to leave the program.

**Substance Abuse Policy:**

The use or possession of illegal drugs or illegal mood altering substances, alcoholic beverages, 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 and will be cause for expulsion. Law enforcement authorities may be notified.

**Weapons:**

Any person carrying a weapon onto parish property or an off- site event sponsored by St. Gregory poses a clear and present danger to all students and staff. Any student in possession of a weapon will be expelled from the program. Parents and law enforcement authorities will be notified.

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.

**Search and Seizure:**

The Director of Religious Education or his/her delegate in our Religious Education Program has access to the lockers, handbags, desks, cars or any other object that is brought onto the campus of the Religious Education Program, and may remove any object which is illegal or contrary to Religious Education Program policy.

### **Dress Code:**

Dress is casual; however, it should be appropriate for class or church. Students are taken to church at various times during class. Shorts may be worn, but must be an appropriate length for church. No tank tops, half shirts, or underwear that is clearly visible should be worn. No t-shirts advertising alcoholic products or cigarette products, or those displaying profanity, offensive or suggestive words will be allowed.

**Absolutely no baseball caps may be worn to class.**

### **Environment for Learning:**

Students are not allowed to bring radios, CD players, electronic games or toys of any kind to class. These items will be taken from the student and returned in May after classes have ended.

Cell phones and beepers are not to be used during class.

Students may not bring friends to class who are not enrolled in our program.

Religious education is a wonderful privilege, not an absolute right. When discipline problems exist, the Director of Religious Education reserves the right to provide options as well as the right to remove a student from the program.

### **MEDICATION PROCEDURES**

The administering of medicine to a child outside the doctor's office or health institution is a parental responsibility and should not be delegated to Religious Education Program personnel except under unusual circumstances. Parents should ask their physician if it is possible to prescribe medication so that it can be administered at home. Only when absolutely necessary is the Religious Education Program willing to accept responsibility for administering medications, and then under the following guidelines:

The Religious Education Program will never administer/dispense medicines (including over-the-counter drugs) to students without specific authorization by both a licensed physician and the parent of the student.

An “Authorization for Medication” form must be completed and submitted by the parent. The name of the medication and dosage must be indicated on this form.

Prescription medication must be in the original bottle which must be labeled and must have the exact dosage.

### **ARCHDIOCESAN POLICIES**

#### **Parental Communication with the Religious Education Program:**

Persons with concerns about a catechist should first attempt to address the concern with the catechist. Only after such attempts have failed, should the parent contact the parish Director of Religious Education. If the parent continues to be dissatisfied, the parent should contact the pastor. Only after such attempts have failed should the Department of Religious Education of The Archdiocese of Miami be contacted.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Catechists will keep confidential information entrusted to them as long as no one’s life, health or safety is at stake. In these cases, parents will be promptly notified of teacher information by the Director of Religious Education.

#### **Religious Education Program Records:**

The following records are kept in the official file of the student: sacramental records, health records and an emergency information sheet. Only the contents of the official file will be forwarded to a new religious education program.

#### **Harassment:**

The Archdiocese of Miami religious education programs are committed to providing a religious education program environment that is free of discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, our parish will not tolerate harassment of employees, volunteers, or students in the religious education program or at religious education program-sponsored events. Such conduct is immoral and illegal and will not be tolerated.

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, and/or visual, that is based on a person's protected status, such as sex, color, race, ancestry, national origin, age, physical disability, mental condition, marital status, veteran status, citizenship status or other protected group status. The Archdiocesan Religious Education Programs will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment.

If any employee, volunteer or student feels that he or she has experienced or witnessed harassment, that person must immediately notify her/his Director of Religious Education. However, if the Director of Religious Education is the individual who is believed to be harassing the employee, volunteer or student, then he/she must notify the Pastor who will conduct an investigation. An appeal would be made to the Director of Religious Education programs or the Vicar for Education. The Archdiocese forbids retaliation against anyone who has reported harassment.

#### **Use of Student Information and Pictures:**

The Religious Education Program reserves the right to use student pictures in publications. Any parent who does not wish his or her child's picture used must notify the Director of Religious Education in writing prior to the beginning of the Religious Education Program year.

#### **Public Display of Affection:**

The Catholic Religious Education Program promotes friendship, charity, kindness, love, and respect for self and others. However, inappropriate displays of affection, such as kissing or embracing which connote more than simple friendship, are not permitted in the Religious Education Program or at any Religious Education Program event. The administration reserves the right to determine what is appropriate behavior in a Catholic Religious Education Program.

### **Reporting Physical/Sexual Abuse:**

Parents and guardians should understand that state law requires a teacher or administrator who has reasonable suspicion that sexual or physical abuse has occurred to report this to Child Net. The teacher or administrator who fails to fulfill this responsibility can be charged with sexual or physical abuse, because the silence contributes to the crime.

### **Cooperation with Legal Authorities:**

It is the practice of the Religious Education Program to cooperate with any local, state, or federal investigators or law enforcement officers that contact the Religious Education Program in the course of any criminal investigation. The Religious Education Program will attempt to notify the parents of any student sought to be interviewed in the course of a criminal investigation on the Religious Education Program premises, unless directed by an investigator or law enforcement officer to the contrary, which is usually the case in investigation involving sexual or physical abuse. The Religious Education Program will attempt as well to have a representative present during such an interview, unless this is not permitted by the investigator, which is often the case in investigations involving sexual or physical abuse.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM POLICY  
AND DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION'S  
RIGHT TO AMEND**

**Purpose and Use of Handbook:**

This handbook has been prepared for the benefit of all who participate in the Religious Education Program of St. Gregory the Great Parish. It exists to help foster the efficient operation of this program by providing pertinent information. This handbook is not intended and should not be considered to create any additional rights for students, parents or guardians. In the appropriate circumstances, the Director of Religious Education has the discretion to take actions other than those specified in this handbook.

Any student action that is not in keeping with the philosophy/ objective of St. Gregory Religious Education Program is subject to the review of the administration and may lead the parish to dismiss the student from the religious education program.

Since situations can arise that were not foreseen at the time of writing this handbook, the Religious Education Program reserves the right to initiate, change or modify the policies as needed. Parents and students will be notified of any amendments.

The Director of Religious Education and/or Pastor is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any disciplinary rules for just cause at his/her discretion.

***Please pray for the Religious Education Program!***

We do not operate alone. It is a community effort that involves **FAMILIES** who profess their faith and live their Christian values, **MINISTRIES** who believe, proclaim and exemplify the Good News to the parish community, **PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER STAFF MEMBERS** who respond to the call of discipleship by sharing the message with this community, and the **ENTIRE PARISH** who prays for the Holy Spirit to bless these efforts given in love.

PARENTS' PRAYER

*God, You are Parent to us. You have made us in Your image and likeness. Help us to become more like You in our relationships with our children.*

*God, You are always there for us. Even when we turn away from Your love, You stay with us always. Teach us to be good parents.*

*Help us to be present to our children in good times and in bad times. May we support them and love them as You have loved us—unconditionally.*

*God, give us the strength and determination to be just and honest in our relationships with our children. Give us the patience and perseverance to face each day, knowing You are with us, as we try to become the parents we must become for our children.*

**ST. GREGORY THE GREAT CATHOLIC CHURCH  
PARENT-STUDENT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOK  
ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM**

***(Signed form due to Religious Education office before or the first day of class)***

*I, as Parent or Legal Guardian, acknowledge that I have read the entire contents of the Parent-Student Handbook and understand the consequences of any violations of the rules and policies of the program.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Family Name (Please Print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Family Name (if different from child)**

*Child (1) Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Child (2) Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Child (3) Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Child (4) Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
***Print Parent/Legal Guardian***

\_\_\_\_\_  
***Date***

\_\_\_\_\_  
***Signature Parent/Legal Guardian***