

Religious and Sacramental Education



St. Mary Magdalen Parish
861 Maitland Ave
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701
407-831-1212



St. Mary Magdalen's Religious and Sacramental Education Program



Parent Handbook 08-

Grades K – 8

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Dear St. Mary Magdalen Families,

"Faith demands, by its very nature, to be known, celebrated, lived, and translated into prayer....On the human order, when one loves another person, he or she desires to know that person more and more deeply and profoundly. So with Christ, when one has truly established intimacy with him, he or she will desire to know Christ ever more deeply." (From General Directory for Catechesis, In Plain English)

Welcome to a new year of faith formation. It is a privilege to join with you as catechists and teachers in the mandate to bring the above quote to a lived reality within the lives of our children. We know you take this charge seriously, for it establishes the moral, ethical and religious ground on which our children rely as they grow into faith-filled adults. We, your staff of catechists, religious educators, priests and deacons also accept this charge with joy and gratitude to God, and we pledge to you, our families that we will do our very best to support and collaborate with you as together we set about passing on our faith to our children.

You have an excellent team of talented and deeply committed men and women serving as our catechists and assistants this year. But we cannot do this without your collaboration. The General Directory for Catechesis, In Plain English states: "Parents are the primary educators in the faith. Together with them...all the members of the family also play a role in the formation of young members....The family passes on human values in the Christian tradition, and it awakens a sense of God in its young members. It teaches the first tentative steps of prayer, it forms the moral conscience, and it teaches human love as a reflection of divine love."

Joining together in the holy work, guided by the fire of the Holy Spirit, we cannot fail. It will be a great year. On behalf of your parish catechetical team, thank you.

In Christ's abundant love,

Fr. Charlie Mitchell, Pastor

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” (*Catechesis in Our Time* 5)

As disciples of Christ we are called to continuous conversion. We grow in a deeper knowledge, understanding, and relationship with our Lord throughout the various stages of our lives. The faith formation of children is only the beginning of this journey. Our goal is to work with the parents and guardians whom the Church recognizes as the primary and principle educators of their children.

God the Father has revealed himself to his people slowly and in stages throughout salvation history. Catechesis follows this Divine model by teaching and forming the children slowly and in stages. Continuing formation in the faith is directed not only to the children, but also to youth, adults and the Christian community as a whole. Our religious education program reaches out to all peoples as we grow, live and celebrate in the life of Christ.

All students will leave their classrooms at the dismissal bell and remain with their catechist outside of the school building. All children **must stay with their catechist**, and **will not be permitted** to stand with or pickup younger siblings. The young people will sit on the sidewalk by class.

Parents are asked to park their cars in the first row with cars facing toward the south. Children whose parents are in the **FIRST ROW ONLY** will be dismissed to their cars. Since the children may not move towards their car until they are directed with the megaphone phrase “Front row, front row only,” parents are asked to refrain from calling to their children until they have received that directive.

Once all cars in the first row are fully loaded, cars will be given the signal to pull out. The second row should begin to move forward into the front row as cars pull out. When the first row has pulled completely past the telephone area, **the second row will be loaded in the same manner**. The process will continue until all children have been dismissed.

If an **extremely urgent** situation will prevent you from picking up your child using the established dismissal process we have **one option available**.

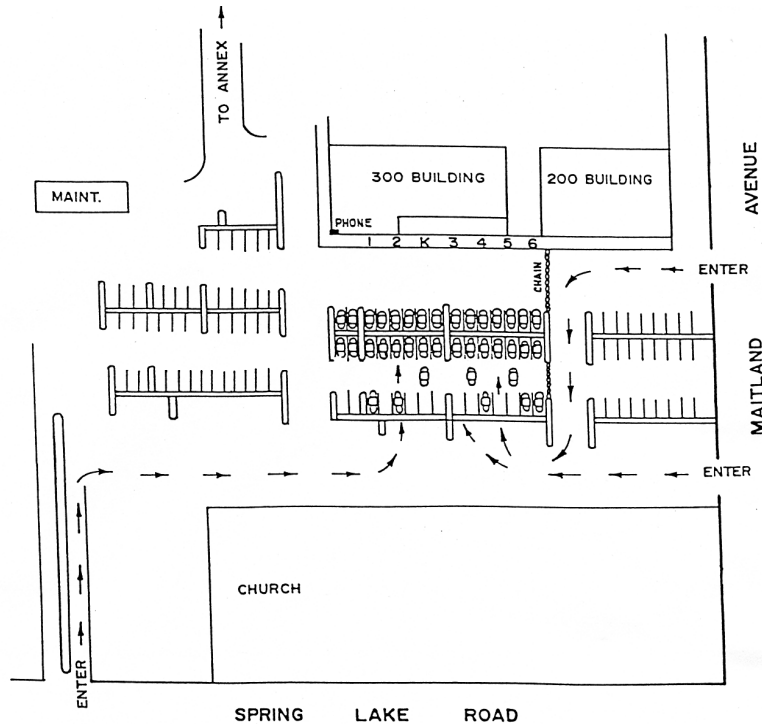
- Complete an Alternative Dismissal Form in the church or call the Religious Education Office at 407-831-1212 before 3:00PM on Wednesday.
- Park in front of the Saint Mary Magdalen School Office.
- Come to the south side of the breezeway (Cafeteria side).
- To ensure the safety of our children we will no longer be allowing parents on the sidewalk during dismissal. Your child will be brought to you.

While our dismissal procedure may seem inconvenient, we have evaluated many dismissal options and believe this is the safest and most efficient process for you and your children. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

SAFETY FIRST!

PARKING LOT PROCEDURES

Wednesday AND Saturday



SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Sacramental preparation is a very special time in the parish. It is also a special time in the lives of the faithful. We do our best to provide sacramental programs that form children, youth and adults for the rest of their lives.

One of the most important things the Church does is lead people to and celebrates sacraments. We cannot accomplish this responsibility by mere instruction alone. Therefore, sacramental preparation is separate and distinct from religious education classes.

Confirmation

A formation process in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is offered for those High School students who have been in our Parish Religious Education Program or in Saint Mary Magdalen School. The formation for confirmation consists of regularly scheduled sessions on Wednesday evenings, as well as the celebration of special rites, retreats, and opportunities for ministry.

Eucharist

Second and third graders who have been part of our Religious Education program for at least one year will be part of a formation process for the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Older children who have been part of our Religious Education program for at least one year will be part of a formation process with children of

Reconciliation

Our young people are prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation before they receive their First Eucharist. First Communicants are asked to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their families, prior to receiving the Eucharist for the first time.



☩ General Policies ☩

☩ ARRIVAL/SUPERVISION ☩

While your children are welcome in our community, their safety is our first concern. We ask you to please not leave children without parental or adult supervision. **All students will gather together in the church prior to class for the opening liturgy.**

☩ ATTENDANCE ☩

Regular attendance is expected. Children in a sacramental level will only be allowed five (5) absences. If there is a special circumstance that will prevent your child from attending class, please call Larann Wilson at the Religious Education Office (407-834-2211).

☩ TARDINESS ☩

Late arrival is discouraged, as it is disruptive. If your child must be late for any reason, please escort your child to church or school breezeway (a hall monitor will escort him/her to the classroom). It is imperative that **your child not be left without catechist or parental supervision.**

☩ RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEXT ☩

The Religious Education textbook is an integral tool in the classroom and it is essential that it be brought to class each week. The textbook is accompanied with a plastic envelope for catechist/parent communication, homework and other important materials. If the textbook is lost, replacements are available at a cost of \$15.00

We are able to provide bilingual (Spanish/English) textbooks for families with children in grades K-6. These books contain the same material as the English book. If your family would benefit from having a bilingual book, please speak with the Religious Education Office.

For further resources for your family, refer to www.webelieveweb.com. This website offers supplemental resources and activities for your textbook.

☩ "SHARING FAITH WITH MY FAMILY" ☩

The text for grades K - 6 includes a "Sharing Faith with My Family" page with each lesson. You should review the day's lesson with your child and help them complete the "Sharing Faith with My Family". The page is brief and usually can be completed in less than 15 minutes. The "Sharing Faith with My Family" should be signed and returned to class the following week.

☩ DISMISSAL FOR UNESCORTED WALKERS AND BIKE RIDERS ☩

All walkers and bike riders will be dismissed to the south side of the breezeway (cafeteria side) away from the church parking lot.

☩ DISMISSAL FOR ESCORTED WALKERS ☩

To ensure the safety of our children we will no longer be allowing parents on the sidewalk during dismissal. Adults who escort their child home must **wait at the breezeway. Your child will be brought to you.**

☩ EARLY DISMISSAL ☩

Early dismissal from class on a regular basis is not permitted, as it is disruptive. However, if an extraordinary circumstance requires your child to leave early, a note must be sent to the catechist. In addition, an Early Dismissal Form needs to be completed in church prior to class. (For your convenience you may also contact the Religious Education Office at 407-831-1212 before 3:00PM on Wednesday.) A Hall Monitor will bring your child to you.

NO CHILDREN WILL BE DISMISSED TO MEET PARENTS IN THE PARKING LOT.



☩ SEVERE WEATHER PICKUP ☩

In the event of severe weather (such as a Tornado Warning, Severe Thunderstorm Warning, etc.) please proceed to the covered breezeway. A Hall Monitor will bring your child to you.

☩ HURRICANE WARNING OR WATCH ☩

In the event of a Hurricane Warning or Watch, we will continue to follow the school cancellation guidelines of the Seminole County Public Schools.

☩ DISMISSAL ☩

We ask that parents please pick up their children as close to dismissal time as possible. **If any of our young people have not been picked up within 15 minutes of dismissal they will be brought to the Parish Office.**

☩ DISMISSAL FOR WALKERS AND BIKE RIDERS ☩

Because of our concern for young people walking and riding bikes through the parking lot, a special dismissal procedure will be used for them. All young people who will be traveling home without parental or adult supervision **must send written permission to the religious education office.** This information will be given to your child's catechist. **Any child without written permission to walk or ride a bike will be sent to the parish office to have their parent pick them up. Verbal permission, either in person or over the phone, will not be accepted.** All walkers and bike riders will receive a "Walker and Bike Rider Transportation Card." It should be stapled into their book for presentation to the Hall Monitors.

☩ PARENTAL VISITATION OF CLASSES ☩

Because of safety concerns, the limited time we have with the children, and disruption to classroom activities, we are unable to accommodate parental visitation of the classroom. If there is a special need, please contact Larann in the Religious Education Office (407-831-1212). She will explain the Diocesan Guidelines and the process for fingerprinting.

☩ DIRECTIVES FOR PARENTS ☩ REGARDING SPECIAL CONCERNS

We encourage parents to maintain an open line of communication between themselves and their child's catechist. If you have any questions or special concerns, please speak with your child's catechist before it becomes a problem. We are dedicated to providing your child with the best Religious Education possible. To do this we need your input and suggestions.

☩ DISCIPLINE ☩

In order to develop to their maximum potential, our young people must be provided an atmosphere conducive to learning. Each young person must contribute toward maintaining this atmosphere by recognizing and respecting the right of others to learn and the right of the catechist to proclaim God's word without interference from young people who wish to disrupt the class by unacceptable behavior.

Since the catechist represents the parent in the classroom, there has to be a genuine unity of purpose between parents and catechist. With this in mind our young people will be expected to:

1. Maintain respect in speech, attitude, and action towards others.
2. Know and comply with the general Religious Education procedures and with the procedures set by their individual catechist.
3. Refrain from disrupting classes by disregarding classroom procedures.
4. Refrain from bringing toys, games, or other items not approved by their catechist.



☪SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS ☪

We are committed to serving young people with special needs. Some young people, such as those with visual or auditory disabilities can be served on either Wednesday or Saturday.

☪CLASS PARTIES/SNACKS ☪

Class parties and snacks will be arranged at the discretion of individual catechists. If your child's catechist chooses to have parties or snacks, your participation is encouraged. Strict guidelines will be forwarded as a precaution to food allergies. Because of the nature of the Lenten season, there should be no class parties held during Lent.

☪TESTING ☪

Tests for grades 3 - 8 will be given twice per year and sent home. Please refer to the individual grade curriculum.

☪CHILDREN/YOUTH VISITORS ☪

Due to safety and liability concerns, no unregistered child will be admitted to a catechist's class unless they have prior written permission from Larann Wilson. If your child would like to bring a guest to class, please **contact Larann at least 24 hours in advance**.

☪RESTROOM USE ☪

Because of safety concerns, the limited time we have with the children, and disruption to classroom activities, restroom breaks are discouraged. If possible, please have your child use the restroom prior to coming to class. **Please be assured that no child will be denied the use of the restroom in an urgent situation.**

☪EXCELLENCE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ☪

We are pleased to continue the "Excellence in Religious Education Program", in partnership with Outback Steakhouse, to recognize outstanding Religious Education Students. Outback Steakhouse sponsors similar recognition programs with some of the Catholic and public schools in our area. Outback Steakhouse meal certificates will be awarded twice a year (December and May) to children who meet all the criteria of the program. There are two participation periods (September to December and January to May), so if a child does not qualify in the first period, they will have another opportunity. Because many of our outstanding children may be unable to meet all the criteria, catechists may recognize them with other special awards.

Criteria

Below are the criteria that will be used to select students for the "Excellence in Religious Education" Program.

1. Attendance - Children who have perfect attendance, as recorded in the catechist's attendance folder. (While many families may have legitimate reasons to miss class, there can be no exceptions to the attendance criteria.)
2. Class participation/Attitude - Children who willingly participate in class activities and discussions, and who display a "Christ like" attitude for their catechist and peers.
3. Homework - Children who always complete their Sharing Faith with My Family page, and have it signed by their parent or guardian.
4. Behavior in church and class - Children who are respectful and well mannered in church and class. Children must comply with their catechist's guidelines for acceptable behavior, and the general Religious Education procedures.

We want all of our children to feel they are worthy of this special recognition of the "Excellence in Religious Education Program." Please help your children by encouraging them and praising their efforts.

☪CHRISTIAN WITNESS AWARD ☪

The Christian Witness Award will be given to children who exemplify the qualities that Jesus would want us to have. Some of these qualities are obedience, respect, attention to the needs of others, compassion, participation in class, regular completion of the Faith Alive at Home Page, and following class rules. Students who receive this award will be given a certificate and take part in the Opening Prayer Procession.