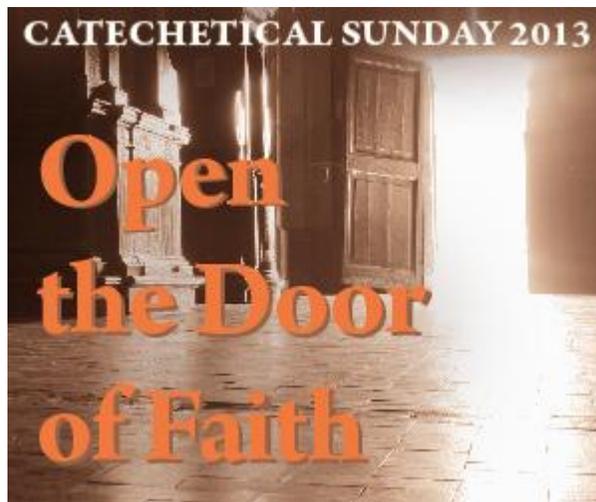


**St. Simon the Apostle Parish
Parish Religious Education Program
(PREP)**

Parent/Student Handbook 2013 – 2014



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as of 9/4/13

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Philosophy and Goal	3
Admission Policy	3
Financial Procedures.....	4
Archdiocesan Policy on Child Protection	5
Curriculum	6
Youth and Young Adult Ministry	8
<u>New Roman Missal</u>	8
Behavioral Expectations/Discipline	9
Sacramental Preparation/Celebrations	11
Academic Procedures	12
General Procedures	13

PHILOSOPHY AND GOAL

St. Simon Parish Religious Education Program(PREP) is committed to leading adults, youth and children on the Journey of Faith by providing opportunities which help them in developing a relationship with God(Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier), learning about our Catholic faith, celebrating sacraments, praying (personally and communally) and serving the people of the world.

For **Adults**, life-long religious education continues with preparation for sacraments (Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation), enrichment courses/workshops sponsored by St. Simon Parish, NOURISHING THE ADULT IN US (Westside), and Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, and study, reflection and discussion of life issues in terms of our Catholic Christian tradition.

For **Children and Youth**, the PREP staff seeks a dynamic partnership with parents, who by word and example teach their children from birth throughout life. At their child's Baptism, parents promised to undertake the responsibility of providing for their Christian formation. The PREP staff endeavors to assist parents to build on and continue that Christian formation with formal classes where the teacher and student discover more about God on both the knowledge and feeling level in a developmentally appropriate manner.

ADMISSION POLICY

Parish Registration

Families that are registered and supporting members of St. Simon the Apostle Parish may register children/youth in the Parish Religious Education Program. Exceptions will be made after consulting with the Director of Religious Education (DRE) and the Pastor.

Age Eligibility

Age requirements for students will normally be those of the student's public school system. Whenever possible, children will be placed with their peer group in school.

Parent/Guardian Consent

Due to Archdiocesan policy requiring written consent by parent or guardian to allow children to participate in parish programs(Decree on Child Protection C.2), a child's custodial parent(s) or guardian must give written consent to register a child in PREP. We also ask that the custodial parent/guardian sign the front page of this handbook to signify that the signer has read, understands, and supports the policies contained in the Parent/Student Handbook. Parents are asked to review the handbook contents with their children so they know what is expected of them.

Notice of Non-discrimination

St. Simon the Apostle Parish will offer Religious Education Programs for all parishioners without regard to race, sex, color, national origin, ancestry or physical/mental limitations. It does not discriminate on that basis in regard to administration of its programs or the recruitment of its teachers.

Remedial Programs

Students, who enter our program after extended periods of time without formal religious education, and those who transfer from other programs, will be assessed by the DRE for their grade level readiness. Remedial assistance will be provided if needed.

Special Needs Program

Children in Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle or Senior High School with special learning needs (i.e., with mental or physical disabilities) are welcome and included in our programs. Parents are asked to indicate their children's special needs at registration time.

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. The Elementary PREP will supply a mid-term progress report to the non-custodial parent as indicated on the registration form. Changes in the child's normal routine must be approved by the custodial parent/guardian. No child will be dismissed from our programs to the non-custodial parent without the written consent of the custodial parent/guardian.

FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

Supply Fees

St. Simon the Apostle Parish provides a portion of the costs for our programs for children and youth. Families are asked to pay a portion of those costs as a **Supply Fee**. Families are asked to pay this at registration in full or as a deposit of ½ total with the remainder due at the beginning of classes. Families experiencing special need are invited to contact the Pastor or DRE to explain their situation and request partial or full waiver. Such requests will be treated in a confidential manner.

Refund Policy

Families who withdraw children from our programs **before** September 1st will be entitled to a full refund. Families who withdraw children from the program **after** September 1st will be entitled to a partial refund (after 9/1 – 75%; starting day - 50%) pro-rated according to the balance of classes remaining in that year at the time of notification of the Religious Education Office.

ARCHDIOCESAN POLICY ON CHILD PROTECTION

The Director of Religious Education is required by the Ohio Revised Code and Archdiocesan Policy on Child Protection to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.

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

1. Engaging in sexual activity with a child;
2. Endangering a child;
3. Denying to a child proper or necessary subsistence, education, medical care, or other care necessary for the child's health;
4. Using restraint that causes a child pain or injury;
5. Administering prescription drugs or psychotropic medication to a child without the written approval and ongoing supervision of a licensed physician;
6. Providing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances to a child;
7. Committing of any act, other than by accidental means or by actions taken in self-defense or under similar justifiable circumstances, that results in any injury or death to a child;
8. Inflicting of physical or mental injury that threatens to harm a child's health or welfare.

Effective March 31, 2003, the Archdiocesan *Decree on Child Protection* (B.2) requires all employees and volunteers who have significant contact with children to have a criminal background check and be fingerprinted.

There will be no grandfathering of any employee or volunteers. In addition, all employees and volunteers who have significant contact with children will attend a Virtus – Protecting God's Children Awareness session which includes an orientation on the Archdiocesan *Decree on Child Protection(2013)* which explains the policy, screening of workers, preventive intervention and the responses to be taken.

CURRICULUM

EARLY CHILDHOOD – Stories of God’s Love Ages 3 and 4 (RCL Benziger 2009)

Preschool and Kindergarten is designed to create a strong foundation for future religious education. The program helps young children to take their first steps on their journey of Faith. Stories of God’s Love teaches children appropriate Scripture stories that tell them of God’s love and connects these stories to the children’s lives. The focus of Stories of God’s Love is Jesus Christ, the Revelation of God’s love. Through Jesus, young children come to discover that God always loves them. Jesus, God’s own Son, invites them to be His friends and to live in friendship with Him and with others. The young children also discover themselves as members of the family of the Church, the community of the friends of Jesus. They join with the Church family to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of His love. Check the back of the leaflet the children will bring home every week to find ideas for the family to expand on what the children learned in class. There is also a website RCLBenzigerPreschool.com where the children go to play games or parents can find resources.

Elementary Grades 1 – 6 –Blest Are We Faith and Word Edition (Pearson Education, Inc. 2008)

Blest Are We Faith and Word Edition is a comprehensive spiral thematic curriculum that incorporates the Four Pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in the structure of every chapter, and every unit, at each grade level. With this approach, a thorough understanding of Catholic teaching is nurtured year to year to enable children not only to learn their Catholic faith, but to love and embrace it.

The following themes are covered: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Eucharist and Reconciliation; the Church; morality; the Sacraments; and the Old Testament. The lives of the saints and real-life examples of Christian witness are used to encourage the growth of a Gospel-centered moral conscience and Christian discipleship. Children and families are also introduced to many of the ministries and vocations within a parish through a new feature that encourages living the Catholic faith through active participation.

The four chapters in each of the five units address the unit theme in light of one of the four pillars of the catechism. The first chapter of each unit centers on doctrine or “What Catholics Believe”. The second focuses on liturgy or “How Catholics Worship”. The third chapter centers on Christian moral teaching or “How Catholics Live” and the fourth chapter focuses on Catholic prayer.

The website www.blestarewe.com provides a wealth of resources including games and Family Time. Look for the “Take Home” page to come home every week.

Grade Two – Since the children in Grade 2 will be making their First Reconciliation and First Communion, there will be parent meetings explaining these two sacraments and your role in supporting your children.

Grade Five – Children in Grade Five take the NCEA Information for Growth: Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education (NCEA IFG: ACRE edition) in January. This instrument assesses the program and does not give scores for individuals. The results are communicated to parents, children, and staff. Beginning in 2004 the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis requires that it be given in every school and parish in the archdiocese.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Total Youth Ministry is a holistic approach to ministering to young people. The sessions are designed to address the goals of *Renewing the Vision*(1997) of 1) empowering youth to live as disciples of Jesus, 2) drawing them into responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the community and 3) fostering personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

Several times all grades will gather for a special Prayer Service or activity. Christian service by the individual and in groups is encouraged.

Middle School/High School Curriculum

Grade 6 – See Elementary Grades 1 – 6 **Blest Are We Faith and Word Edition**

Grades 7, 8, 9 - Faith First – Legacy edition (RCL, 2006)

In addition to preparing youth for learning *Key Concepts*, *Faith Vocabulary* builds religious literacy; *Did you know...* introduces students to saints and other people of faith. To strengthen Catholic Identity “*Our Church Makes a Difference*” demonstrates how the Church impacts the world. In “*What Difference Does Faith Make in My Life?*” youth reflect on what faith means to them. Special Scripture study chapters are interwoven throughout. Using a variety of activities, they apply what they learn to everyday life.

Grades 7, 8 & 9 have the option of using Mystery of God

God’s Revelation to us is the source of our faith and the source of many questions about life. Students will explore their personal faith and the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. They will be asked to make a faith response to what they are learning.

Grade 7 – Jesus in the New Testament

Students will explore the life and message of Jesus as passed on to us by the New Testament writers. They will experience the power that praying the Scriptures has to help them come to know Jesus better and grow in friendship with him. Unit One will focus on the four Evangelists and their accounts of the Gospel. A variety of activities will help them apply the Gospel message to their life. Unit Two will introduce them to the letters in the New Testament and to the Book of Revelation. As they learn more about Saint Paul’s proclamation of his faith in Jesus Christ, they will be challenged to deepen and stand firm in their Christian faith.

Parents: See Pray and Review page from each chapter.

Grade 8 – Morality: Life in Christ

As persons created in God’s image, we are guided by the Commandments and Beatitudes to live a successful moral life. The principles of Catholic morality, including social teaching, help teens make important choices in their daily lives.

Parents: See Pray and Review page from each chapter.

Youth in Grade Eight take the NCEA Information for Growth: Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education (NCEA IFG: ACRE edition) in January. This instrument assesses the program and does not give scores for individuals. The results are communicated to parents, children, and staff. Beginning in 2004 the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis requires that it be given in every school and parish in the archdiocese.

Grades 9 – Church and Sacraments

The mystery of the Church unfolds as youth discover how believers take on the responsibility of continuing Christ's work on earth. The study of the sacraments centers on how they bind us together as a community of faith and empower us to live our Christian life more fully. The knowledge the student gains about the Church and the sacraments will only bear fruit and make a difference in their life, if they cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Parents: See Pray and Review page from each chapter.

Grade 10 – Confirmation – Confirmation: Receiving the Gift of the Spirit (Pflaum Publishing Group 2005)

The celebration of Confirmation brings a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which increases and deepens baptismal grace, and strengthens the gifts of the Spirit and bonds to the Church.

Confirmation: Receiving the Gift of the Spirit is a course designed to help teens prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. There are eight units that the teens will be using. Each unit provides a complete learning session on a theme important to the process of preparing for Confirmation.

Special sessions will include a Kick-Off for candidates and their parents with a guest speaker, an overnight retreat, a night with their Sponsors and finally a Sending Forth with their parents and sponsor.

Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Anyone in Grade 6 or older is welcome to participate in our Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

We have Three Goals which come from Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry: 1) To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today. 2) To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community. 3) To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

We not only have social time, but we also work on service projects, have fundraising, prayer, and catechesis. During the summer there is an overnight of some sort whether a trip somewhere or staying in Plagge Hall.

Dates and times of meetings can be found in the Sunday Bulletin, but are usually Mondays from 7:00 – 8:30pm.

The New Roman Missal

The 1st Sunday of Advent, 2011 marked the beginning of the New Roman Missal. The prayers we say at Mass have been revised to reflect the current Latin edition. Our textbooks have been changed to reflect these changes. The new prayers are on Pew Cards that will be in the Gather Comprehensive books in church so everyone can follow along.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS/DISCIPLINE

Every person is worthy of being treated with care and respect, as is fitting someone made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, classroom behavior should be characterized by genuine Christian care, mutual respect, and honesty.

Expectations:

1. Show respect to teachers, helpers, other children, and program personnel.
2. Treat property, good names, and physical safety of others with respect.
3. Be present only in the areas of the building for which they have permission.
4. Act in a safe manner in the building and on the grounds.
5. Arrive and leave on time.
6. Participate at regular weekend Mass.
7. Bring textbooks and folders to each class.
8. Do homework when assigned.
9. No cell phones, MPS's, gum, candy or toys during class.

The PREP recognizes that children make mistakes in their responsibilities toward themselves and others. Since good discipline is aimed toward growth, the role of the teacher/catechist becomes at times one of guiding and correcting those mistakes in order that the child may increase their own self-discipline.

Use of cell phones, MP3 players or any other such device during class time is not appropriate. We ask that these devices be left at home or, at a minimum that these devices are turned off during class. Any device of this type being used during class time will be confiscated and returned at the end of class along with a note to parent guardian asking for their support in avoiding future class disruption. A follow-up call will be made to the parent/guardian.

Adopted by the PREP Advisory Committee as of 3/18/07.

Under no circumstances will a student or an adult be permitted to strike another or use abusive language for any reason. Lack of self-discipline during religion class will be addressed promptly.

Normal steps for disciplinary action:

1. Talk to child/youth about the infraction and come to an agreement about future conduct.
2. If it persists, talk with DRE about conduct and agree on course of action.
3. Notify parents by phone, followed by written notification, if it persists.
4. Arrange a child/youth, parent, teacher, DRE conference.
5. As the last resort, materials will be provided to parents for home instruction.

Substance Abuse Policy

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, or trafficking in any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, injection or percutaneous means. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property will be immediately suspended from the program. A conference with the parent(s)/guardian, child/youth and DRE is mandatory for readmission to the program. Any child/youth found in possession of or using any illegal, unauthorized substance a second time will be removed from the program. Any child/youth trafficking in illegal substances, even for the first time, will be formally withdrawn from the program and the matter turned over to local authorities.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION/CELEBRATION

Because Parents are the primary educators of their children, their role in the preparation of their child for sacraments is of the utmost importance. Communication between teachers/catechists and/or DRE and parents is done through written communications and scheduled Parent Meetings. Dates of these meetings vary and notification is mailed to the parents about a month in advance.

Attendance for Sacramental Preparation

Students must complete a year of religious education prior to the year of celebration for the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation. Exceptions will be made on a case by case basis, like youth who attend Catholic high school.

Baptism

It is recommended that parents bringing their first child for Baptism be prepared through attending parish Baptism preparation program.

Reconciliation

Children in second grade will be prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their family in a Communal Reconciliation service.

Eucharist

Children in second grade have the opportunity to receive their First Eucharist in the spring of the year during the Easter season. The Jesus Day Retreat is part of the preparation and usually takes place on a Saturday in March.

Confirmation

Youth in Grade 10 or older will be invited to participate in the Confirmation Preparation program. Those who choose to be confirmed will complete the following:

1. Each candidate participates in classroom preparation in the year prior to the celebration of Confirmation. Religion class in Catholic high school is accepted with occasional contact with parish youth in PREP.
2. Each candidate is asked to demonstrate his/her Christian maturity by taking part in service activities in several areas – Family/home/neighborhood, Parish, and Community. By doing service in these areas, they will begin to discover the special gift they are. It would be nice if they were to do one project with their sponsor.
3. Each candidate will attend the scheduled classes and activities in addition to an overnight retreat.

Parents remember... “Confirmation does not produce finished adult Catholics. It launches Catholics on the road to Christian maturity and equips them with resources to help them reach it.” “It is not an end of Christian formation.” It is the *next step* on their Journey of Faith.

ACADEMIC PROCEDURES

Homework

Teachers/catechists may assign reading, writing or an activity that is to be completed at home. This homework is a necessary and important part of the instructional process and provides an opportunity for parents to be informed about the area of our Catholic faith being taught. Please take a few moments each week to look in your child's book and folder for the work they have done and for the assignments or communications for the next week. Your involvement in their faith development may spark their interest.

Communications

Various means (listed below) are used to communicate information regarding the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP). Families will receive letters throughout the year concerning such matters as sacramental preparation and celebrations, Parent Meetings, special events and changes in the schedule. Items sent home via a child/youth will be given to the youngest child in the family enrolled in the program to avoid duplication. This is known to the teachers/catechists as the Youngest Child List (YCL).

1. **Handbook** – Contains main policies and procedures of PREP. It will be given to every family and updated every year, as necessary.
2. **Sunday Bulletin** – Contains information on what is happening in PREP.
3. **Parish website** – www.stsimonparish.org – Contains PREP schedule, catechists, upcoming events and links to other Catholic sites.
4. **Techline – OneCallNow** will deliver messages of importance to your phone regarding important activities related to PREP, plus weather-related cancellations.
5. **E-mail** – e-mails will be sent with any updates that you need to know.

Evaluation/Testing

PREP offers periodic assessments of student growth for Grades 1-9. Any tests given help catechists discern how the student may be growing cognitively (in knowledge), behaviorally (in action), and affectively (in attitude) in the subject matter presented. The test may show where more cognitive study is needed.

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati now requires that the National Catholic Education Association Information for Growth: Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education (NCEA IFG: ACRE edition) be administered at every school and parish in the archdiocese for Grades 5 & 8. In this parish it has been given in Grade 5 since 1992.

Progress Reports are sent home in the middle of the year, in December or January, for children/youth in Grades 1 - 9. The Progress Reports will be comments to indicate the student's progress. This report is **NOT** an expression of whether or not the child is a good Christian or Catholic. This is an area that can be best assessed by parental discussion, observation, and involvement.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Drop Off/Pick Up

Parents should pull in to the parking lot from the driveway closest to the rectory and leave by the driveway closest to the church. **PLEASE** do **NOT** cut through the parking lot. There are a lot of children around and we do not want anyone to get hurt. We ask that children in Grade 3 and younger be brought in to their classroom and picked up at their classroom by an adult. If an older sibling is to pick them up, please let the teacher know ahead of time.

Arrival/Dismissal

Students should not enter classrooms until the teacher is present. Please wait in hall outside of classroom. Normally, children should arrive no earlier than 15 minutes before class and be picked up no later than 10 minutes after dismissal.

Attendance

Parents are encouraged to see that their children/youth are on time for class and that they attend regularly. The parent should call or send a note to the teacher/catechist to report a child's absence. Please state the reason for the absence and how homework should be sent home. All work is expected to be made up. The parent will be contacted by phone or mail by the Catechist, if no note/call is received after two consecutive absences.

Dress Code

Everyday school clothing is appropriate for class. When serving as a Liturgical Minister (Lector, Eucharistic Minister, Greeter, Choir Member, and Gift Bearer) at Mass, people are expected to "dress their best."

Field Trips

Children/youth who go on field trips must have permission slips and release forms signed by parents and returned to teacher/catechist before the event.

Emergency Closing

A decision on cancellation will be made by 8:00 AM for Sunday morning classes and two hours before Sunday evening sessions. Calls will be made by OneCallNow.

Medical Emergencies

In case of a medical emergency, parents will be contacted as soon as possible. The emergency phone number will be used if parents cannot be reached. An Incident Report will be filled out by the Catechist in the event of an accident or injury. It will be signed by the DRE and the parent. A copy of the report will be given to the parent and the original kept in the DRE office.

Change of Address

Please notify the Religious Ed Office immediately of any change of address, phone number, or e-mail.

St. Simon the Apostle Parish
Parent/Student Handbook

Family Name:

Verification Statement

I verify that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the policies and procedures as outlined in the Parent/Student Handbook. I also understand that the policies and procedures may be amended or changed by the parish at its discretion without notice.

Signature

Date

Return form to: Beth Schumacher
St. Simon the Apostle Parish
825 Pontius Road
Cincinnati, OH 45233