



**BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH**  
**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**  
**PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**2006-2007**

**BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH**  
**Office of Religious Education**  
**1626 WEST 26<sup>TH</sup> STREET**  
**ERIE, PA. 16508**  
**814-454-0171**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Program MISSION Statement:** Our purpose is to teach the heart and beauty of our Catholic Faith and Tradition. Recognizing that parents are the primary educators of their children, we strive to assist parents by offering quality religious education and instruction.

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**PROGRAM GOALS**

We are a faith filled community called by Christ to spread God's Kingdom. By our faith sharing, instruction, and example we guide our members to grow in knowledge of our Catholic Faith and Tradition and to a life of service and stewardship. Therefore, our program goals are:

- ✠ to provide a program of formal religious education for the children and youth of Blessed Sacrament Parish;
- ✠ to support parents in their role as primary educators of their children;
- ✠ to offer sacramental preparation to children and youth at the appropriate diocesan recommended age levels;
- ✠ to allow our children and youth to experience the Church as community;
- ✠ to expose children and youth to the liturgical and sacramental richness that is part of our Catholic tradition;
- ✠ to enable students to become responsible, loving, and praying individuals who live a life rooted in charity and justice based on the moral teachings of the Church.

**ROLE OF PARENTS**

**It is the role of the parish to *assist* the parents in nurturing the faith of their children. At the same time, it is essential that parents cooperate with the parish and work with those who are designated leaders of the parish program.**

**Parents who would like their children to be a part of our program should:**

1. complete a religious education registration form,
2. inform the children's catechist of any pertinent information regarding medical history, emergency information, rights of a non-custodial parent, or any changes in the household that may affect the behavior or attitude of the children.
- 3. read the policies, and procedures contained in this handbook**
4. maintain an open line of communication with the catechist and be supportive of the catechist, especially in the area of discipline,
5. attend Mass weekly with the children,
6. take the responsibility for the role of primary educator,
7. practice the traditional prayers of the church at home with the children,
8. attend parent meetings when requested,

## ADMISSION POLICIES

**Blessed Sacrament Parish does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, or physical or mental challenges.**

Any family that is registered in Blessed Sacrament Parish may enroll children in the Religious Education Program. In order for children to be admitted, the family must complete the necessary registration forms. Non-parishioners are welcomed to participate in our program but are asked to pay non-parishioner class fees and are required to obtain a letter from their pastor giving permission to attend classes at Blessed Sacrament.

### **Registration:**

A general registration session will be held each August for students in grades 1-10. In order to have materials ready for the beginning of the year, a late fee will be assessed for any registrations received after August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Families who wish to enroll children at other times during the year may do so by contacting the Administrator of Religious Education, Sarah Dolph – 814-454-0171.

Confirmation candidates register in the Fall of their junior year in high school in September. A meeting is held at which time students and parents receive an information booklet and registration forms.

**Non-Custodial Parent Rights:** At the time of registration, if applicable, parents will advise the Religious Education Leader of the custodial and non-custodial parent's rights of each child from a divorced family. In the case of split custody where one parent will not bring the child to religious education on his/her custodial weekend, arrangements can be made for the child to make-up class work. In this case, as long as class work is completed, such a custodial arrangement will not have a detrimental affect on the child's attendance record.

### **Books and Materials Fee:**

The annual fee is determined by the cost to the parish for program materials and books, as well as miscellaneous expenses such as special materials needed for sacramental preparation and retreats.

**Current Fees:** \$50.00 per student grades 1-10 for first child, then \$15.00 for each additional child in the family, if registered before August 27<sup>th</sup>. \$55.00 per student grades 1-10 for first child, then \$20.00 for each additional child in the family, after August 27<sup>th</sup>. (Non-parishioner rate: \$65 for the first child, \$20 for each additional child.)  
\$70.00 per student for Confirmation preparation program materials and retreat. A discounted fee of \$50.00 is offered to candidates who have siblings in the Religious Education Program. (Non-parishioner rate: \$85)  
Fee is waived for children of *volunteer* catechists, facilitators, and aides.

**\*\*NO PARISHIONER WILL BE DENIED FROM ATTENDING BECAUSE OF PARENTS' INABILITY TO PAY.** Please contact the pastor if class fees are an issue for your family. Please know that this is offered in the spirit of a community called to assist one another in love.

The book/materials fee is non-refundable after the start of the first class.

## ATTENDANCE

**Diocesan Policy 401.20 states:** “All children/youth will have a minimum of 40 hours of religious education per year including instructional time, liturgical celebrations (excluding Sunday worship unless it is a specific class responsibility), community building activities, and service activities.”

In light of this policy and in review of our program:

- ✠ ***Please remember: Religious Education is not a substitute for Sunday Mass and Sunday Mass is not a substitute for Religious Education.***
- ✠ Children who are enrolled in the parish religious education program are expected to be in attendance for each scheduled class time. It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure their presence. Attendance records are kept in the Religious Education Office.
- ✠ In an effort to increase our required number of hours and in light of the fact that some children in our program rarely or never attend Mass, we are adding a **once-a-month whole class Mass (11AM Mass) that will be considered part of required class time.**
- ✠ Service and whole-community activities will become an integral part of the program.

### **Class Schedules:**

Currently, all grades will meet on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:45. Confirmation classes are held at least once a month on Sundays either from noon until 1:30 pm or 5:45 till 7:15pm. Calendars are distributed at the beginning of each year. Class dates and times are also published in the monthly calendar found as a bulletin insert as well as on the parish website: [bserie.org](http://bserie.org).

### **Missed Classes:**

Each class session is planned to build on previous classes. Children who are absent do miss a great deal and will have to make up the material with the help of the parents. *In order for a child to advance to the next grade level and to be considered eligible for sacraments, a minimum of an 85% attendance rate is expected.* If a child is to be absent, parents are asked to contact either the teacher or the religious education office. On Sundays, you may call 454-0171 and leave a message on Sarah’s voice mail or e-mail [sdolph@bserie.org](mailto:sdolph@bserie.org).

### **Arrival and Dismissal:**

Classes begin promptly at 9:30am and should enter the building via the doors nearest to the cafeteria. Please DO NOT drop off your child more than 10 minutes before class time. A parent should be available to pick up their child promptly at 10:45am. **If requesting early dismissal or someone other than a parent will be picking up the child, a note *must* be presented to the teacher.**

### **Classroom Visits:**

Parents are welcome to visit their children’s classrooms **at any time**. They are required to check in with the program administrator before entering the classroom.

## **Field Trips:**

Catechists who wish to take their class on a field trip or any other activity out of the ordinary routine are to request permission for the activity at least two weeks in advance in writing. Once permission is granted the activity may be arranged under the following conditions:

- The activity or field trip must have a catechetical purpose.
- The event must involve reasonable activities and distance.
- The catechist is responsible for informing parents and getting permission slips from all students in advance, in writing.
- A copy of the Medical Release Form must be obtained for each student and attached to the permission slip. The forms are on file in the Religious Ed Office.
- The field trip/activity must be limited to the pre-arranged plan and should not be altered.
- At least one adult chaperone for every 10 children above 4th grade and one for every 5 children, fourth grade or younger must accompany the group.
- If cars are used as transportation, drivers must be over 25 years of age. A copy of a valid driver's license and proof of insurance must be obtained. Each driver should be informed of the route to be taken and must follow that route. No side trips should be permitted.
- No field trip or special event is considered sponsored by the parish unless the permission of the religious education leader or pastor is granted in advance.

## **DISCIPLINE**

In order to provide for a safe and well ordered program in which the student and the catechist can learn to follow Jesus' call to love, some rules for behavior are necessary.

### **The students have the following responsibilities:**

- ✚ show respect to catechists, other students and program personnel.
- ✚ treat property, good name, and physical safety of others with respect,
- ✚ be present only in areas of the building for which they have permission at a specific time,
- ✚ display actions and a tone of voice that is appropriate for a classroom,
- ✚ never be in the possession of or under the influence of any illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; evidence of such use will result in the student being removed from the environment while the parents and *proper authorities are notified. ZERO TOLERANCE,*
- ✚ never be in the possession of or make threats of future possession or use of any weapons. Evidence of such possession or threats will result in the student being removed from the environment while the parents and *proper authorities are notified. ZERO TOLERANCE.*
- ✚ It is also the responsibility of the students to immediately report any breach of the disciplinary codes, especially those that involve any kind of harm, injury, or threats to harm or injure.

**For a single minor occurrence,** the teacher may remove a student from the classroom for a "cool down" period with the program administrator. Consequent occurrences or occurrences of major concern will be immediately addressed with the parents.

***If repeated attempts to correct a disruptive behavior have failed, the student will be removed from the class permanently. A student may be re-admitted after a parent/student/catechist/REL conference during which time an agreement will be made between all parties as to how future disruptions/disciplinary problems will be handled.***

## EMERGENCY CANCELLATION

In case of severe weather, please use your better judgment. It is always best to error on the side of safety. If classes are cancelled, the teachers will make every reasonable effort to call their students no later than 9:00am. Please be sure your phone lines are open on days of inclement weather.

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Blessed Sacrament offers preparation programs for the sacraments of **First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation**. All of the sacramental preparation and reception of the sacraments is conducted inclusively, involving both the students of our Parish Religious Education Program and Blessed Sacrament School. Confirmation classes include students from both public and parochial high schools. No distinction is made.

### Sacramental Preparation/Parish and Diocesan policies

Acknowledging the importance of complete sacramental preparation and in accordance with Diocesan policies and preferences, Blessed Sacrament's children's/youth sacramental preparation programs have been developed as follows:

#### FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST

**First Reconciliation Preparation is a two-year program\***, beginning in grade 1. In order for a student to be a candidate for this sacrament in **grade 2**, he/she must be enrolled in a religious education program both years. *In order for a child to advance to the next grade level and to be considered eligible for sacraments, a minimum of an 85% attendance rate is expected.*

**First Eucharist Preparation is a three-year program\***, beginning in grade 1. In order for a student to be a candidate for this sacrament in **grade 3**, he/she must be enrolled in a religious education program for all 3 years and have received the sacrament of Reconciliation. *In order for a child to advance to the next grade level and to be considered eligible for sacraments, a minimum of an 85% attendance rate is expected.*

**Children who enter the program uncatechized between grades 2 - 8** must first be enrolled in a religious education program for one year prior to reception of the sacraments. Also, remedial training under the guidance of the religious education leader and a parent is required. Students must be able to show progress by demonstrating required skills (i.e.: recite required prayers and show knowledge of facts appropriate for that age level) to be considered candidates for the sacraments.

**Youth in grades 9-11 who enter the program uncatechized**, must become part of the RCIA classes to be considered candidates for the sacraments.

\***NOTE:** Diocesan Policy has changed the year of reception of First Eucharist and will be effective in the 2006-2007 school year. **Thus, children who entered grade one in the 2005-2006 school year will receive First Eucharist in grade three. First Reconciliation will still be celebrated during grade two.**

## CONFIRMATION

**Preparation for Confirmation** is conducted by volunteer catechists along with the Administrator of Religious Education and uses both a whole group and small-faith group format. Regular sessions are held at least one Sunday a month. There is also a retreat and two whole-group service projects: wrapping Giving Tree gifts in December and presenting the Stations of the Cross during Lent.

**Confirmation Preparation is a three-year program, beginning in grade 9.** In order for a student to be a candidate for Confirmation in grade 11, he/she must be enrolled in a religious education program and/or Catholic School for all three years. *In order to advance to the next grade level and to be considered eligible for sacraments, a minimum of an 85% attendance rate is expected.* Both Public and Catholic School youth participate in the Confirmation preparation program during their junior year and it is considered mandatory to be eligible for Confirmation.

**Catechized youth who enter the program in grade 11, but were not part of any religious education program in grades 9 and 10** must participate in both remedial training and the regular Confirmation preparation program in order to be considered candidates for Confirmation in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Youth in Grades 11 or 12 who enter the program uncatechized** must become part of the RCIA program to be considered candidates for Confirmation.

## YOUTH MINISTRY

Religious Education and Youth Ministry are interwoven ministries. *All* youth of Blessed Sacrament Parish, grades 6-12, are considered to be members of our youth ministry when they choose to be active members of the parish. Through our youth ministry, youth in the parish are offered opportunities to participate in parish and diocesan activities and ministries throughout the year such as diocesan sponsored youth rallies and retreats, special seasonal projects such as the Giving Tree, fundraising when necessary, adventure outings, service and service missions, and youth-oriented liturgies currently offered at our Sunday 7:30PM Mass. **Volunteers are needed to help facilitate youth ministry activities. Please call the parish office (454-0171) if you are interested.**

## CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD

Children's Liturgy of the Word is offered at our 9:00a.m. Mass from September through May for children age 4 to grade 1. Children are dismissed from Mass just before the Liturgy of the Word to the cafeteria where they hear the readings of the day in simpler form and do activities based on the readings. No registration is necessary to participate. Volunteers are always needed to help with this ministry.

## CATECHISTS (TEACHERS)

All of our catechists give their faith, time, and talent for the children - your children. All of them are volunteers. They do not get paid; they do it out of their love for God and their call to the ministry of helping children on their faith journey.

**Would you think about giving your time?** No special talents are required, just a strong faith in our Lord, a call to spread His Message and the willingness to take advantage of some of the training offered by our diocese. Call the office (454-0171) and we will gladly talk to you about becoming a part of this parish ministry.

### Catechists 2006-2007

<b>Grade One</b>	Miss Lauren Wheaton	Aide: Miss Kylie Stayer
<b>Grade Two</b>	Ms. Jennifer Cook	Aide: Mrs. Peggy Hilliard
<b>Grade Three</b>	Mrs. Marsha Niebauer	
<b>Grade Four</b>	Mrs. Amy Patsy	
<b>Grade Five/Six</b>	Mrs. Barbara Lewis	Aide: Mrs. Karen Spizarny
<b>Grade Seven/Eight</b>	Miss Colleen Lanigan	
<b>Grade Nine</b>	Mr. Ed Koch	Aide: Mr. Jeff Yonkers
<b>Grade Ten</b>	Mr. Paul Snyder	

**CONFIRMATION FACILITATORS:** Mrs. Sarah Dolph, Mrs. Elaine Snyder, Mrs. Jane Deutschlander, Mr. Eric Dolph, Miss Amanda Milhisler,

### Curriculum

We use the Diocese-mandated textbook series put out by RCL Publishing called, *Faith First Legacy*.