



St. John the Apostle
Religious Education Program
Parent and Students Handbook 2025-2026

St. John the Apostle Catholic Parish

475 East 4th Street

Hialeah, Florida 33010

Tel No.: 305-888-9769

Pastor: Fr. Luis Alberto Cruz, Sch.P.

Parochial Vicar: Fr. Felix Ganuza, Sch.P.

Religious Education Staff

Eddy Fernandez, Coordinator of the Religious Education Program

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

We want to extend a heartfelt welcome to you as you register your children for our Religious Education Formation program. We are truly blessed for your decision to prioritize their spiritual growth and entrust us with their Religious Education. We are here to serve and assist you in their formation. As primary educators of your children, you play an essential role in the shaping of this sacred journey. We invite you to actively participate in their formation, attend parent workshops, engage in conversations about faith at home, and join us for special events and celebrations throughout the year.

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. (CCC 2223)

We look forward to working together through the grace of God as we nurture your children's faith and create future disciples. May the Lord bless you in abundance as we walk together in faith!



OUR PARISH CULTURE

At St. John the Apostle we strive for a rich culture that revolves around unceasing prayer, healthy teamwork, and active discipleship, all working together to develop the spiritual growth of our community. Through Religious Education programs, youth groups, and dedicated catechists, we endeavor to instill in our children and community a deep understanding of their faith and encourage them to become active participants in the Church. It is through this collective commitment that we create an environment where individuals can grow in their faith, find support and encouragement, and experience the transformative power of God's love.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Arrival: Students must be accompanied to the school door (South Door) and be seated inside the school's terrace by 9:15 A.M. No parents will be allowed inside the school. Classes will start promptly at 9:30 A.M.

Dismissal: Dismissal will be at Church at 12:30 P.M, after the 11:30 A.M Mass finishes. Parents or guardians must pick up their children **ONLY** at the **CHURCH**, no one will be allowed to pick up their child in the parking lot or the school. **STUDENTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO WALK THROUGH THE PARKING LOT ALONE FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY.** Minors are not authorized to pick up any child. The laminated authorized pick-up card issued upon registration must be used for student pick-up. This card must be presented to the teacher every time the child is picked up from the class. **No child will be dismissed without the pick up card.** If you're late picking up your child, you must go to the Church, present the card and sign them out. **Excessive tardy pick-ups will be subject to a late fee. And if after an hour, if we have not heard from a parent, the police will be contacted.**

We will walk over to the Church at 11:20 A.M, each student will be seated with their teacher in a designated/reserved area. If you wish to sit with your child during Mass, please follow the dismissal protocol. If you arrive after Mass has started, your child will not be permitted to sit with you to avoid disruptions. **If your child walks home alone you must sign the consent form.**



CLASS TARDIES AND ABSENCES

Attendance is recorded at the beginning of each class. We have limited time with the students, and it is of extreme importance that they attend class every week. Each student is allowed **no more than five (5) absences per year to be promoted to the next level**. Tardies are disruptive to the class as well as providing a hindrance to your child's formation progress. **Two (2) tardies will count as one (1) absence**. At the moment that your child arrives to five (5) absences, you will receive a notice and **MUST** schedule a meeting with the pastor. Your child will not be permitted to return to class until we receive a clearance notice from the pastor. Unfortunately, due to scheduling differences, students cannot make up classes on different days.

MASS ATTENDANCE

One of the most important parts of our Religious Education program is Mass attendance. Students will attend Mass with their class every Sunday. Families are asked to attend Sunday Mass weekly. Each student is allowed **no more than one (1) missed Mass every month in order to be promoted to the next level**.

If the family goes out of town and attends Mass at a different parish, we kindly ask that a bulletin be brought back signed by a priest or a deacon from that parish. Please be sure to turn in the signed bulletin to your teacher when you return to class so that your Mass attendance can be recorded accordingly.

For those students attending our Religious Education program but are registered and attend Mass at a different parish, a letter from the parish asserting their weekly Mass attendance will be required toward the end of the Religious Education year to continue to the next year of preparation. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide the Religious Education office with **this letter at least two weeks before the last Religious Education Class**.

Mass is mandatory and part of their Religious Education program. The fundamentals of our Catholic faith are presented each week at Mass. Catechism classes are not a substitute for attending weekly Mass. **Participating in every Sunday Mass and attending Religious Education classes should be top priority for every family.** Attending Sunday Mass regularly is our gateway to spiritual growth.



DRESS CODE POLICY

All students must attend class and Mass well-groomed and wearing appropriate attire. The following are **NOT** allowed: shorts, leggings, ripped jeans, crop tops, Cami tops, tank tops, low neck tops, attire with offensive language or suggestive designs, pajamas, flip flops, crocs, or slides.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

We endeavor to teach and to give all students a loving experience of God in our religious education program. All teachers are always entitled to respect and proper behavior from all students. Please encourage your students to behave in a proper and courteous manner each week. In the rare occasion that a child has become disruptive, we will contact the parent to discuss strategies and ensure everyone has a positive and enriching experience

No toys, electronic devices, headphones or personal entertainment devices will be permitted. If any of these items are in use during class, they will be confiscated and returned to their parents after a meeting. Students may use the office phone if necessary for emergency purposes, and parents may contact the office as well. No food or drink in the classroom will be permitted. Additionally, students are not permitted to do work not related to Religious Education (ex. Homework, take-home tests, projects, etc...)

ELECTRONICS POLICY

No electronics allowed during class. This includes but is not limited to cell phones, iPads or tablets, and laptops. The catechist will collect all electronics at the beginning of the class and will be returned to the students at the end of the 11:30 A.M. Mass as a confirmation that your child attended the Mass. Electronics will be stored in a safe place prior to Mass. If you cannot wait till Mass concludes, you must speak with the Religious Education Coordinator **BEFORE** Mass begins. If you need to contact your child, please call your child's catechist or the Religious Education Coordinator.



PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

In keeping with the Archdiocese of Miami's commitment to protect every child from abuse, children enrolled in grades Kindergarten through Confirmation Preparation will be taught two classes on touching safety. Dates of these classes will be announced in advance. Information regarding the content of these classes is available in the Religious Ed. office. Additionally, our staff and volunteers all have been background checked and fingerprinted to ensure the safety of your children. They participated in the Virtus: Protecting God's Children program and receive periodic updates to their training. Your child's safety is our utmost concern. Adults are not permitted to use children's restrooms. There is an adult restroom in the church or those adjacent to the parish office.

COMMUNICATION

All Religious Education communications will be channeled through **WhatsApp and e-mail**. It will be the parent's responsibility to monitor messages regularly and keep up to date with our scheduled events. Hard copy reminders will not be provided.

PARENT FORMATION SESSIONS

At least one (1) parent must be present at the Parent Formation sessions. We will be having these sessions every First Sunday of each month, except in the months of September and December. In total, there will be six (6) sessions. **These sessions are MANDATORY.** Parents that miss more than two (2) Parent Formation Sessions, **MUST** schedule a meeting with the pastor to determine if your child will be moving forward in the Religious Education program. Beginning in January all Godparents (Sponsors) must attend all formation sessions. (Baptism and Confirmation).

RETREAT FOR PARENTS AND GODPARENTS

On Saturday, April 18, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. we will have a mandatory retreat for Parents and Godparents (Sponsors) of the students who will be receiving a Sacraments. (Baptism, Communion and Confirmation) This retreat will count as the Baptism Talk.



GENERAL FAMILY REQUIREMENTS

Preparation for the Sacraments is a family affair at St. John the Apostle. As such your attendance is required at various gatherings, and family retreats which are an integral part of our Sacramental preparation program. **Attendance is mandatory, and we will not offer make-up sessions.** Furthermore, parents are their children's first teachers and examples of faith, with that in mind we ask the following:

1. Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. Go to Confession frequently (see bulletin or website for times).
3. Discuss the Sunday readings with your children before or after attending Mass.
4. Help your children pray by praying regularly with them. On the first day of class, each student will receive a folder containing a document named “Catholicism”, in which you can find prayers that all students must know. We recommend you use this document to review with your child.
5. Please ensure your children’s attendance to all Religious Education classes.
6. Show interest in what happened in your child’s class. Take some time to discuss what they learned.
7. Join your children in participating in service opportunities that help others.
8. Foster an attitude of respect and cooperation within your child for Religious Education and also for the catechists and assistants that share their faith.
9. Please, commit to remembering the catechists’ name and room assigned to your children.
10. If your child loses their curriculum book or ID, it is your responsibility to pay a replacement cost.



FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST COMMUNION PREPARATION

1. Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion is a consecutive two-year process and begins when the child begins first grade. (Does not include Kindergarten) Children in older grades will receive religious formation classes at their grade level and will receive the sacrament after two consecutive years.
2. First Reconciliation and First Communion students must be registered by September 2025. A Baptismal certificate must be submitted at the time of registration.
3. All documents needed in preparation for each sacrament must be brought by October 26, 2025.

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Confirmation is a two-year process and is normally received in the eighth grade. However, if your child did not attend Religious Education classes in the seventh grade or did not attend a Catholic school for the seventh grade, he or she will be required to attend the first year of preparation and will be prepared for Confirmation during their second year.

First Year Confirmation Preparation: During the course of the first year of preparation all students are required to complete a short essay and twenty (20) community service hours. A detailed contract will be provided to the students on the second week of class. All hours must be dated after the first day of classes and must adhere to the guidelines provided. Additionally, there will be a Confirmation exam which will be administered at the end of the year. The essay, community service hours and a passing grade on the exam must be achieved in order to continue onto the second year of preparation.

Second Year Confirmation Preparation: During the second year of preparation all students are required to complete a short essay, fifteen (15) community service hours and participate in a St. John the Apostle retreat in order to receive Confirmation. More specific information about the second-year requirements will be provided during the second week of class. The essay, community service hours and youth retreat must be achieved in order to receive Confirmation.



ONGOING FAITH FORMATION

The primary purpose of our Religious Education program is faith formation. Faith formation is an ongoing development of the whole person into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, Discipleship. To use the image of St. Paul “we put on Christ” so that Christ is the center of our lives. All Catholics are on the journey of faith formation. Our program does not stop with the reception of First Communion. We begin this life-long journey in the waters of Baptism. The end of this journey is eternal life with Jesus in heaven. Please consider registering your children for ongoing faith formation.

VOLUNTEERS

We are always in need of caring and enthusiastic volunteers. Anyone interested in volunteering may contact our office at **305-888-9769** or by email: **sjacatechesiskids@gmail.com**. As mandated by the Archdiocese of Miami all adult volunteers (18 and over) MUST submit to a background check, sign and uphold the Volunteer Pledge to Promote a Safe Environment, and complete and maintain Virtus training. There is no cost associated with completing these requirements. Our volunteers receive free tuition for their children’s Religious Education classes.

"If from his earliest years a child is instructed both in piety and in letters, it can reasonably be expected that his life will have a happy ending."
— Saint Joseph Calasanz



Religious Education 2025-2026

First Day of Class: August 17, 2025

Last Day of Classes: May 17, 2026

Parent Orientation

(MANDATORY FOR ALL)

Sunday, September 7, 2025 @ 9:30 AM (Parish Hall)

Mandatory Child Retreat (Parish Hall)

First Communion: Saturday, March 14, 2026 @ 11:00 AM to 5:00PM

(We will kindly conclude the retreat with the 5:00 pm Mass, to which families are warmly invited to participate.)

Confirmation: May 02, 2026 @ 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM

(We will kindly conclude the retreat with the 5:00 pm Mass, to which families are warmly invited to participate.)

Mandatory Retreat for Parents, Godparents(sponsors)

Saturday, April 18, 2026 @ 8:30 AM (Parish Hall)

Please note, this retreat is intended only for families whose child will be receiving a Sacrament (Baptism, First Communion, or Confirmation) during this school year.

