

St. Patrick Parish

Religious Education Program



JUBILEE YEAR OF

SAINT FRANCIS

1226- 2026

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

(Prayer for Peace)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Dear Parents,

We welcome you and your children to St. Patrick Parish Religious Education Program (PREP).

The goal of our program, in collaboration with you, is to foster each student's growth in personal holiness and in their relationship with God through the development of knowledge about the person of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church. We thank you for allowing us to work with you in the formation of your child's faith.

We trust that this handbook will familiarize you with the policies which guide the operation of the program. We hope that you will take the time to read this handbook and keep it in a safe place for future reference.

PARISH PURPOSE & VISION STATEMENTS

At St. Patrick Parish, our purpose is to open the door to Divine Encounter so that our community can fall in love with Jesus Christ and to nurture our relationship with Him.

Our vision is to be a welcoming community of disciples growing together through the sacraments and service to others. Together, we will be a more joy-filled place of worship and continue to be a light for the surrounding communities.

PARISH LEADERSHIP

<i>Pastor</i>	Monsignor Joseph Duncan
<i>Parochial Vicar</i>	Fr. John Nordeman
<i>Permanent Deacon</i>	Rev. Mr. Louis Libbi
<i>Permanent Deacon</i>	Rev. Mr. Tom Strohmetz
<i>Principal of St. Patrick School</i>	Ms. Patricia O'Donnell
PREP Office Personnel:	
<i>DRE</i>	Mr. Julian Swiggett jswiggett@stpatrickmalvern.org
<i>Assistant to the DRE</i>	Mrs. Monica Bartoldson mbartoldson@stpatrickmalvern.org
<i>Coordinator of Christian Initiation And Pastoral Care</i>	Sr. Eileen Tiernan etiernan@stpatrickmalvern.org
<i>Liturgical Music Director</i>	TBA
<i>Parish Office</i>	Mrs. Laura DeJong
<i>Adult Faith Formation Director</i>	Mr. Daniel Milani
<i>Director of Parish Services</i>	Ms. Meghan Beatty

PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

131 Channing Avenue, Malvern
(610) 296-8899 **during PREP 610-644-5797**
PREP web site www.stpatrickmalvern.org/prep

PARISH OFFICE

131 Channing Avenue, Malvern
610-647-2345
Parish web site www.stpatrickmalvern.org

WEEKEND LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil 5:00 pm
Sunday 7:30 am, 9:30 am, 11:30 am

RECONCILIATION

Thursday: 8:00-8:45 AM
Saturday 9:30 – 10:30 am

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

The parish serves as an effective catechetical agent precisely to the extent that it is a clear, living and authentic sacrament of Christ. The Christian family is ordinarily the first experience of the Christian community and the primary environment for growth in faith. Within the Christian family, the members first begin to learn their basic prayers of the tradition and to form their consciences in light of the teachings of Christ and the Church.

--National Directory for Catechesis (USCCB)

Since example is more powerful than words parents are urged to:

- + provide an atmosphere of prayer in the home.
- + attend Mass as a family.
- + encourage frequent reception of Penance & Holy Eucharist.
- + model Catholic ethics and Gospel charity within and outside the family.
- + attend Sacramental Preparation and Faith Formation gatherings.
- + reinforce the catechist's work by:
 - ❖ good attendance each week.
 - ❖ seeing that your child is on time for class.
 - ❖ supervising study and written assignments.
- + participate in activities sponsored by the program.
- + provide the Religious Education Office and the catechist with health and medical information as pertinent, absence notes.
- + notify the Coordinator of the program regarding special learning needs of your child
- + encourage & expect courteous behavior & acceptable dress
- + observe the dismissal routine

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The communication of religious truths needs an atmosphere of love and trust in order that each child may have an experience of faith that is fulfilling. For this to take place mutual respect is imperative. Student responsibilities for creating this atmosphere include:

- + Respectful attitude and speech toward catechists and fellow students.
- + Cooperation in classroom and program projects.
- + Reverent attention and participation in liturgies, prayer services and classroom prayer.
- + Personal habits of:
 - ❖ Punctuality (ARRIVE ON TIME) – before class students should wait in hallway until teachers invite them into classroom. No student is permitted in classroom without the teacher.
 - ❖ Preparedness (PREP BAG, TEXTBOOK, HOMEWORK, STUDY)
 - ❖ Appropriate dress
 - ❖ Attentiveness
 - ❖ Responsibility (care of textbook; respect and care of property of other children in the day school with whom we share our classrooms; respect and care of all St. Patrick School property.)

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE

In order to derive maximum benefit from classroom activities and formal instruction students should strive for consistent attendance. Sporadic attendance can be reason for the student not being admitted to the next grade level.

Candidates preparing to receive a sacrament (Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation) shall have one year of preparatory catechesis immediately prior to and leading into the actual year of conferral of the sacrament.

Irregular attendance during all years but especially during the sacramental preparation years is viewed carefully since the Church charges us with the serious responsibility of seeing that children are adequately instructed before the initial reception of the sacraments.

Time is a valued gift and we are therefore challenged to make the most of the limited time we do have with your children. **Arrange your child's extracurricular activities around the instructional time scheduled for PREP classes. Sport practices are not a reason for an early dismissal. If your child should miss a class, his/her catechist will communicate about the assignment which must be completed before the next class.**

ABSENCES

Since teachers do not have time to repeat lessons for absentees, parents are responsible for covering the missed material at home.

If your child's schedule changes in mid-year, please contact the Director and Catechist to arrange an agreed upon accommodation that must formally be approved. If you just stop sending your child with no contact with the Director, they will be dropped from the program and will need to repeat their grade to continue.

CAR POOLING

A permission and release form must be completed by both the parent/guardian and the Catechist if a student is being transported to St. Patrick Parish Religious Education classes by a Catechist.

CELL PHONES

Cell phone and texting is prohibited during all class sessions. We assume that any student would only use a cell phone while attending PREP to call a family member for transportation needs after dismissal time.

CHANGE of ADDRESS or PHONE NUMBER

Please notify the Parish Religious Education Office and the Parish business office of a change of address, telephone number, or email.

CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the responsibilities of both parents to provide the Parish Religious Education Program with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both parents to provide that document immediately to the Religious Education Office.

CLASSES

Levels K-6 Sunday (in person weekly) 10:30 – 11:35 AM

Levels 1-6 Monday (in person weekly) 5:00 – 6:15 PM

Level 7 Confirmation follows a special schedule.

All classes are held in the school building. Fifteen minutes after classes have begun all doors of the building will be locked. Admittance to the building after class has begun must be by the main, middle door by ringing the bell. Students should be reminded of this periodically.

WHOLE FAMILY CATECHESIS OPTION

Levels 1-5 Sunday (meets once a month throughout the year) 10:30 -11:30

Parents may choose this option of Religious Education for their families at registration. A form must be signed by the parents whereby they promise to fulfill the requirements of the Family Catechesis program. This option is intended for the whole family to learn and grow together in their faith. This is not “home schooling” but a different approach to catechesis within the whole family, with the parents as the catechists.

Parents and children attend an introductory meeting and 7 in person gatherings throughout the year. The gatherings are held approximately every 4 to 5 weeks. At these gatherings, the parents engage in a presentation on the Unit themes to be taught in the intervening weeks. The children meet with a catechist who teaches the 1st lesson of the Unit, the parents teach the remaining lessons of the Unit at home during the weeks until the next gathering. The children’s progress is evaluated at the end of each unit.

An advantage to this program is that the parents can teach each week’s lesson at the optimum time for their child(ren) at home and avoid any obstacles to the weekly schedule.

- ❖ **Level 6 is not part of the Family Catechesis option and must attend in person. This is a preparation year for Confirmation which is received in the Fall of 7th level.**

CLASS CANCELLATIONS

In the event of inclement weather, an announcement **will be posted on our webpage**. *For Monday PREP, please note:* If Great Valley School district **closes, dismisses early or cancels afternoon activities** due to inclement weather, our PREP classes **for that day only** are automatically cancelled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidential information may be shared with a volunteer if such information is needed for the proper administration of the program.

COMMUNICATION

Good communication between parents and the Program is extremely important to the success of our collaborative goals. Avenues of communication used to inform parents of major happenings may take one of the following forms:

- ❖ Information Meeting
- ❖ Monthly Notices emailed
- ❖ Mailing to Parent
- ❖ Notice in Sunday Bulletin
- ❖ PREP page on Parish Website

Parents should also check their child's PREP bag weekly for any notices and homework assignments.

Occasionally, a catechist may feel the need to contact a parent with regard to a child's progress in class. Catechist-parent communication is encouraged to resolve troublesome issues and catechists have been encouraged to involve parents at the earliest sign of a concern.

CURRICULUM

Special Education: Each child will learn to love God according to his / her level of development.

Levels K to 5 Curriculum **(weekly classes and Family Catechesis program)**

“Finding God” published by Loyola Press

Each level has the same Unit Themes, however each theme is developed and presented according to the developing level of faith and knowledge of the students in each grade level.

Unit One: God, Our Creator and Father

Unit Two: Jesus, Our Lord and Savior

Unit Three: The Church, Our Community in the Spirit

Unit Four: Sacraments, Our Way of Life

Unit Five: Morality, Our Lived Faith

Level 6 Curriculum

“Gifted with the Spirit” published by Pflaum

The students in this level will begin to immerse themselves in Scripture and Church teaching in preparation for their Confirmation in the Fall of their 7th Level. The students will continue to grow in their prayer life and Catholic spirituality, with emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s action in their lives. This year long preparation will lead them to a personal commitment to living as a Catholic Christian through their reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in 7th Level.

Level 7: The Confirmation Candidates have a special schedule of final preparation for reception of this Sacrament.

DAMAGE

Parents will be required to pay for any damage caused by their child.

DISCIPLINE AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR

At St. Patrick's, we are dedicated to upholding the values of kindness, respect, and responsibility in all aspects of our PREP program. Our goal is to ensure that every student thrives academically and spiritually, and we believe that maintaining respectful behavior and a focused classroom atmosphere is key to achieving this. Our catechists work diligently to create an atmosphere where students feel safe, supported, and encouraged to do their best. We ask that you continue to reinforce with your child the importance of being respectful to teachers, classmates, and the school environment.

To ensure that every child can become closer to God, it is essential that we all work together to reinforce the importance of positive behavior and adherence to classroom expectations.

Our expectations are simple but vital:

1. **Respect for Others** – Treating classmates, catechists, and all members of the of our PREP community with kindness and consideration.
2. **Active Engagement** – Coming to PREP class prepared and ready to participate, showing a commitment to learning.
3. **Responsibility** – Taking ownership of actions and respecting PREP rules and guidelines. **Faith and Integrity** – Living out the values of our Catholic faith in our interactions with others.

Good conduct is expected from every child who is attending PREP. A disruption is unfair to both the teacher and the other students. Serious breaches of conduct, such as constant interruptions of the class, destruction of property, etc. are cause for a child to be dismissed from class and sent to the Director.

The Program has no tolerance for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form. The Parish is responsible for determining what appropriate or inappropriate behavior is. Conduct by children or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to immediate dismissal of the students, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities. Parents will be notified of any serious situation.

ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Parents can drive into the school parking lot from the Channing Ave. entrance and drop off the children to enter the Main door at the center of the school building. Then proceed to drive out the exit gate on to Roberts Ave.

DISMISSAL INSTRUCTIONS

The children will be dismissed out of the parish center/gym doors. Parents must physically walk up to the Parish Center awning to pick up their children. No child will be permitted to leave unattended to the parking lot. There will be catechists and PREP personnel in that area to assist with the children being picked up.

Please note:

- ❖ **The entrance to the school parking lot is on Channing Ave.**
- ❖ **The exit from the school parking lot is onto Roberts Ave.**

Special Awareness for Sunday morning classes:

Due to the schedule of masses, please be aware that PREP arrival will coincide with the 9:30 mass congregation leaving, and PREP dismissal will coincide with the 11:30 mass congregation arriving. The church and school lots will be filled. Also, there will be increased traffic.

Therefore, we ask PREP parents who are dropping off or picking up on Sunday mornings to be extra aware, patient, and careful of traffic.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Early dismissal should be considered an unusual occurrence. Sport practice or games **are not acceptable** reasons for early dismissal. For an acceptable early dismissal, students should bring a written note from their parent to the catechist with the time for early dismissal stated. The catechist will then communicate the request to the Office. No exceptions will be allowed for the safety of our children. A completed written assessment of the lesson covered on the day of the early dismissal will also be required.

Parents must report to the school office to meet & sign out their child for an early dismissal.

No child will be permitted to leave the building without his or her parent. For safety, all outside doors of the school are locked during class time. For an early dismissal go to the middle door of the school building, ring the doorbell that will alert the office person to unlock door after proper identification has been established.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

Sunday PREP: In the event of inclement weather, please check the PREP page of our parish website for any cancellation information. <http://www.stpatrickmalvern.org/prep>

Monday PREP: In the event that the **GREAT VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT** cancels school or dismisses early due to inclement weather, PREP classes **for that day** will be automatically canceled. Also, we will post on our PREP page of our website.

EMERGENCY MESSAGE

You may call 610-644-5797 to contact or leave an **emergency** message for your child during class time. In the event of a parent's arriving late, an adult will wait by the entrance until the parent's arrival. **Please do not e-mail us any emergency message after 4:15 on a Monday, or during Sunday PREP time. Please call the above number.**

FIRE DRILLS

Fire Drills will be practiced during the school year.

HOMEWORK

All students in grades 1-6 will receive homework assignments each week. These assignments are meant to assist the child in sharing with parents what he/she is doing in class. For each level, there are prayers to know by heart. Please help your child by praying these prayers with them daily until they become a prayer of their heart and memory.

Please assist your child weekly with their homework assignment. Your consistent involvement sends a strong message to your child that his/her religious education is important to you.

Level 6 work will be communicated by the catechist via e-mail to the parents.

LEARNING CHALLENGES/ HEALTH CONCERNS

Please help us help your child by alerting the Religious Education Office to any special learning challenges your child has. We want to support each student in the way that is best for him or her. Also, please make the child's teacher aware of any health concerns.

LOCKDOWN

A lockdown is a procedure which will be initiated when it is believed that there is a credible threat to students and staff safety. Lockdowns will be used to protect students and staff from harm. A Lockdown will be initiated when an unwelcomed person or persons are on the school grounds, local law enforcement has notified administration of a situation or a person of concern is in the vicinity. In the event of an emergency requiring the Lockdown plan to be implemented, an announcement will be made. Our catechists have been given written instructions and the plan will be practiced with the student of how to react to this situation during the school year.

LOST AND FOUND

A Lost and Found container will be located outside the lobby of the Parish Center on the first floor of St. Patrick School. Any items found or returned after class will be placed in this container.

PARTIES / SNACKS

It is our policy **not** to have parties or provide snacks for the children during class time. Both parents and catechists are asked to honor this policy. Your child is encouraged to have a snack *before* coming to class.

PRAYERS

In the Archdiocesan Guidelines, each grade level has traditional Catholic prayers to commit to memory, or “to know by HEART.” Each year another prayer or two is added to this treasury of prayer that is in the child’s heart and memory. Rather than studying/memorizing as a task to be completed...the best way to know our prayers is to pray them each day. Even Jesus learned his prayers at the knee of his mother Mary and alongside St. Joseph. Parents are encouraged to pray these traditional prayers with their children each day. Especially in these busy times, prayer provides us with an anchor of peace. Prayer is not a task nor an assignment...prayer is a necessity of our faith life. Children need to know their prayers BY HEART!

PUNCTUALITY

It is both confusing and distracting for a student to arrive once the class has begun. Interruption due to lateness takes precious instruction time from all students; therefore, students would benefit most when they are present in the classroom and ready for instruction by the designated time for start of class.

PLEASE BE PROMPT IN DROPPING YOUR CHILDREN OFF FOR CLASS.

RE-REGISTRATION

We ask that you re-register for PREP classes each spring. In this way we are able to update the student records and you can make changes, if needed, in class sessions for the next year. Classes for each session are filled on a first come – first served basis.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

All volunteers that are working with the children on a regular basis are required to submit to a criminal record check and a child abuse clearance. They are also required to follow the Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries, attend a Protecting God's Children session, and Mandated Reporter Training.

SHELTER in PLACE

We always want to make sure your children are safe, sound and secure during their religious education classes. In the event we should need to act on this the students would be moved from their respective classrooms to a designated safe place. All catechists will be given the necessary information to put this plan into effect. Parents will be notified with details and information.

SUPPLIES

At the beginning of the year each student will receive a textbook and students new to the program receive a PREP tote. Students are required to bring these to every class. Please mark your child's bag and religion book with their name. Pencils, crayons, paper and other supplies are provided.

TRANSFERS

When a family is preparing to move from the parish the Religious Education Office should be notified. Student records of attendance and grades completed will be forwarded to the new Religious Education Program upon written request of the parent.

VOLUNTEERING

PREP is able to maintain a high level of performance because of the exemplary work of volunteer men and women, who are an intrinsic part of this parish program. However, to remain at a high level, we must always seek to improve and to bring in new, enthusiastic people willing to sacrifice time to further this work. You can help in many ways, all of which are important. Please contact the Religious Education Office to see how your gifts can be used.

WORKS of MERCY

Each year the families of children in the PREP Program are invited to participate in various drives for the needy. Separate communications will be provided.

For your convenience we have included this page to record your child/ren's catechist and room information.

Child's name: _____

Catechist: _____

Room number: _____

Child's name: _____

Catechist: _____

Room number: _____

Child's name: _____

Catechist: _____

Room number: _____

PRAYER

Prayer with students in class is important. Prayer should include both formal prayers and spontaneous prayer. For each level, there are prayers required for memorization. Prayers assigned are those newly introduced at each grade level as well as all others preceding the grade level. **It is the role of the parent to teach the prayers at home by praying with their children.**

Prayers to be “learned by heart” at each grade level are:

Grade 1

Sign of the Cross
Our Father
Hail Mary
Glory Be

Grade 2

Grade 1 Prayers
Act of Contrition

Grade 3

Grade 1- 2 Prayers
Apostles Creed

Grade 4

Grade 1- 3 Prayers
Hail Holy Queen
The Rosary

Grade 5

Grade 1- 4 Prayers
The Angelus
Seven Sacraments

Grade 6

Grade 1- 5 Prayers
Come Holy Spirit
Act of Hope
Act of Love
Act of Faith

Grade 7

Grade 1- 6 Prayers



Your children’s “little eyes” gradually memorize and interpret with the heart that faith is one of the greatest inheritances you have received from your parents and ancestors...and if you hand on the faith and live it well, that is where the transmission happens. Showing them how faith helps us to go forward and face challenges, not with pessimism but with trust, this is the best witness we can give them.

--Pope Francis to Parents

This handbook and the policies contained within are subject to revision in which case the family will be notified in writing of any changes.

(rev. 03/26)



St. Patrick
PREP
Growing in Faith