

St. Leo Religious Education

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www.stleos-parish.org

Parent/Student Handbook 2007– 2008

Prayer for our Parish

O, God, you have made
us the Church of your dear son.
Make our parish a family of one heart
and mind in love toward you.
Grant that our common life and work
may be an example to all around us.
Guide our pastor and his assistants in their work.
Acknowledge the intercessions of
St. Leo the Great, our patron.
And keep us secure in your love.
Amen.

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St. Leo Religious Education Parent/Student Handbook

Religious Education Mission Statement

(revised by St. Leo Religious Education Board, June 2003)

St. Leo's Religious Education Program is a catechetical process which serves the youth and adults of our parish by leading them through Jesus Christ to the knowledge, love, and service of God.

Religious Education Vision Statement

(revised by St. Leo Religious Education Board, June 2003)

The vision of St. Leo's Religious Education Program is for the youth and adults of the parish to grow in their love of God through Jesus Christ and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to participate in an active Christian lifestyle.

Admission Policy

St. Leo's religious education program does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, physical or mental challenges.

Any family that is registered in St. Leo's parish (or a parish with whom St. Leo has a formal relationship for religious education) may enroll their children in the catechetical program.

Children entering St. Leo's Religious Education Program must be baptized. Parents whose children are not baptized at St. Leo's Church must supply a certificate of baptism.

All families whose children attend St. Leo's Religious Education are expected to attend weekly Mass.

Registration and student information forms must be turned in the first day of class each year. Parents must indicate that they have read and accept the policies contained in this handbook.

The registration will be in person the first day of class or by appointment within the following week by calling 772-4349.

Lessons learned at home More Important than Religious Ed

Parents as Most Important Teachers

Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children – an inalienable right and responsibility. By parental consent and authority, catechists help parents in educating their children toward a virtuous and loving life.

Parents are expected to participate in weekly Eucharistic liturgy with their families so that the children will realize that keeping God at the center of their lives is important.

Parents are the key. There is no better example. We can teach and teach, and it does no good whatsoever if parents are not the example. The Church can pour millions of dollars into the program, but it does no good if parents do not go to Mass or confession.

No one can take the place of parents in teaching that God is the center of life. Children will be confused if what the catechist teaches does not coincide with parental practices.

By participating at Mass, by lifting our minds and hearts to God, we unite our lives with Christ's life and teachings.

We reflect how we can become Christ to others. "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me" (St. Paul) becomes the Christian way of life. We need the spiritual nourishment of Christ to help us live happy lives for the sake of others, as well as ourselves.

God's commandments and Jesus' teachings are guides for our happiness of living in oneness with God's love and mind.

The Role of the Parent(s)

- A parent(s) who would like their child to attend the program:
1. Must be a registered member of a parish.
 2. Attends Mass weekly with the child.
 3. Takes responsibility for their role as primary teacher.
 4. Shares their faith with the child(ren) at home and by making sure the child does any required follow-up to the lessons taught in class.
 5. Brings the child to class at the right time and picks him/her up promptly at the end of class.
 6. Teaches the child the traditional prayers of the Church at home.

The Role of Parents (continued)

7. Makes sure the child enters the building where classes are held and goes to the classroom.
8. Is supportive of the catechist, especially in the area of discipline.
9. Reads this handbook, completes and turns in the forms necessary for registration.
10. Informs the religious education leader of any pertinent medical and emergency information

Non-custodial Parent Rights

If the situation applies, the parent registering the child for religious education will supply the name and address of the non-custodial parent so that a copy of correspondence may be sent to the non-custodial parent if this has been requested.

If there are any other parental rights of the non-custodial parent, this should be brought to the religious education leader's attention in the registration form. This is essential to ensure that the program acts in the best interest and safety of the child(ren).

Class Preparation

Each week parents are encouraged to look over and talk with their children about what they learned this week. Please remind the children to bring their folders and religion books to class each week and/or complete the family activity given to the students each week.

Home Activities and Spiritual Development

Homework and family activities are given:

- to give an opportunity **to think about God**
- to put faith into action
- to review essential prayers
- to give families an opportunity to discuss their faith with each other
- to help remember important ideas
- to go over points missed in class

Communications between family and REP

Parents are always welcome to visit class

Parents are welcome to visit and join in the class. If parents' schedules allow, they are asked to please let the catechist know how they can help. Classroom leaders always need help with music, arts and crafts, snacks, taking roll and checking homework while the teacher greets the children.

Most of the catechists are volunteers and not professional teachers. They would appreciate another parent in the room to help with correction of papers, giving one or two children extra help with a lesson, hearing prayers of younger children.

Parents are asked to check in with their children's teachers and ask "How can I help this year?"

Faith First Legacy Edition

For families with children in grades K through 8, parents may connect to **www.FaithFirst.com** when their children miss class. The lesson is on line.

At this **www.FaithFirst.com** website are links for the kids and for the parents – information that goes beyond the textbook: activities, stories, service projects.

www.stleos-parish.org for schedules and news

This website gives parishioners information about all St. Leo's activities: church, school, religious education, organizations, bulletin information.

Plus links connect to the Vatican and other Catholic websites which give valuable information and news from the Catholic viewpoint.

St. Leo's Bulletin carries REP news.

The bulletin is published each week and contains the events going on in the parish – adult education opportunities, retreats for adults, religious education news, St. Leo School news, fund raising events, Mass schedule, schedules for all ministries from altar servers to choir members, and much more.

St. Leo's bulletin is on line at **www.stleos-parish.org**

Class cancellations

During the winter months or for any emergency situation, **local radio stations** will announce all cancellations. If the Ridgway Area Schools are not in session due to bad weather (this applies to the Wednesday night classes), St. Leo's religious education will not be in session either.

Absence from class

Please encourage your child to attend all sessions. When a child misses class, please make sure to write an excuse to be given to the religious education leader or the classroom teacher.

Each class session builds on the material covered in the preceding classes. Children who are absent miss a great deal and will have to **make up the material** covered in the missed class.

When a child misses, the parents are asked to please **read the current chapter and do the exercises** with the child. When the child returns, he/she will be ready to participate.

Excessive absence (**more than 4 times a year**) will result in the student making up work during the summer or before the next class in the fall.

Completion of the 9th and 10th grade religion courses are a requirement for the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. For these grades, it is especially important to make up any missed religious education sessions.

Please consider the religion book a prayer book. Anytime we raise our minds and hearts to God, it is a prayer. The home activities reflections can be a prayer for both parent and child.

Field Trips

For any activity that occurs on grounds other than St. Leo's School or St. Leo's Church property, each student must have a "Parent Permission Form" signed by the parent or guardian. If such a permission form is not in the possession of the religious education leader, the student will not be able to participate in the scheduled event. This applies to retreats, service projects, and entertainment activities, etc.

Classroom behavior

To develop a closer relationship with God and to respect all people as made in God's image are the essential goals of all religious education. If any child habitually hinders this goal, then he/she will have to receive instruction outside the regular classroom.

All children are expected to: show respect to teachers & fellow classmates, act in a safe manner in and around the classroom and school, use their voices and actions as appropriate for a classroom, treat property with respect, complete "homework" assignments so they can participate & feel part of the class.

Correction of Inappropriate Behavior

Good discipline is aimed toward growth. If a child behaves in such a manner that he/she disrupts the class, the following procedure will be followed:

The first time: the religious education leader will speak with the child and he/she will remain out of the classroom for the remainder of the day. If the child understands why he cannot behave in that manner and intends to stop the disruptive behavior, he/she will be allowed back in the classroom the next week.

The second time: the parents will be called and the child will remain out of the classroom for two weeks. **The third time:** the child's parents and the child will meet with the religious education leader before the child can be again be admitted to the program.

In the cases of harassment, illegal substances, threats of violence, the student will removed from class and admitted only with consultation of the pastor and religious education leader. More details on harassment, illegal substances and violence are under the "Special discipline situations" section, page 7.

The religious education leader and the pastor reserve the right to evaluate correctional procedures and make adaptations to individual situations and circumstances.

Special discipline situations

1. Harassment: Harassment of all forms is illegal, as well as, immoral.

Harassment refers to behavior that is (1) not welcome, (2) personally offensive, and (3) fails to treat others with dignity and respect because of race, sex, creed, color, age, or disability.

Harassment includes the following verbal or physical conduct: verbal derogatory jokes, comments, or slurs visual derogatory posters, drawings, gestures physical assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movements, interfering with work or play retaliation for having reported such harassment

The offender will be dismissed when this is appropriate.

2. Illegal substances

Possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco of any kind are prohibited. Illegal substances or substances that are being abused in view of others will be seized. Parents will be notified and students will be removed from class.

3. Threats of violence

Threats of harm against individuals or groups will not be tolerated. Cursing, pushing, fighting will not be tolerated. If the catechist regards any disagreement between students as serious (meaning that the conflict will lead to physical harm), the students will be separated immediately, the religious education leader, and the parents notified.

Students and catechists are expected to immediately report to the religious education leader any threat made by a student. Students will be suspended until the authorities deem that there is no threat of harm.

4. Weapons policy

No student is allowed to possess a weapon of any kind or any object that could be confused with a weapon (such as a toy) on the church property.

Teachers are to report any such possession to the religious education leader. These items will be seized.

Child Abuse Decree

Each teacher at sometime during his/her first year of teaching must take the In-Service Child Abuse explanation. If any catechist witnesses or knows by a child's first person report that he/she has been abused, threatened, or harassed, it must be reported to the religious education leader. The leader then reports the incident to the appropriate authorities.

Book and materials fees

The pastor, in cooperation with the Religious Education Board, determines the annual fees for the Religious Education Program. The following fee schedule per family has been in effect for the past several years:

One child.....	\$20
Two children.....	\$40
Three or more children.....	\$50

No student will be prevented from attending because of his/her parents' inability to pay. An inquiry to either the pastor or the religious education leader is all that is necessary to have fees excused. Please know that this is offered in the spirit of a community called to assist one another in love.

Book and material fees are non-refundable after the start of classes.

St. Leo's Religious Education uses the following books which are all highly recommended by the Erie Diocese.

Pre-School: **I Am Special** published by Our Sunday Visitor
Kindergarten through 8th grade: **Faith First** published by Resources
for Christian Living.

9th and 10th grade: **Understanding the Catechism** published by
Resources for Christian Living.

Confirmation: **Confirmed in a Faithful Community** published by
St. Marys Press

12th grade: High school seniors are invited to attend all or any of
the adult education courses that are offered each
year at St. Leo's Parish.

Permanent and confidential file for each child

Information for each child is kept on file and permanently stored at the end of the child's religious education. If a child should join another parish, his/her records would be transferred to the new parish upon request of the parish or the parent.

Progress Reports given twice a year

Catechists give progress reports at the end of each semester. Parents keep the reports sent home. At the end of the year, a copy of each child's report goes into his/her permanent record file.

Other information on file

Each child's registration form with parent's names, emergency contacts, medical conditions that religious education should be aware of, and insurance information is kept on file.

If a child is baptized at a church other than St. Leo's, his/her a copy of his/her **baptismal certificate** is on file.

A **history** of the child's reception of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation is also kept on file.

Disciplinary actions of the students are also kept on file.

Student Safety

Early dismissal

Neither a teacher nor the religious education leader can dismiss a child before the end of class without the written permission of the parent or the parent showing up in person to request his release.

Drop-off & Pick-up Safety

The religious education building is near two very busy streets. There are no school warning lights.

Parents of elementary school children are asked to please park in St. Leo's parking lot and walk their children to and from class.

Older children may safely be dropped off on Allenhurst Avenue on the side of the street nearest the school near the stop sign NOT on the opposite side of the street!

No child should be crossing traffic to enter the school or to get a ride after class.

There are about 200 children entering and leaving the building between 6:40 and 6:50. Children look for their parents, run to get in the car, don't realize any dangerous traffic, and have almost gotten hit.

Please, remember the danger and please drop off and pick up the children on the safe side of Allenhurst Avenue, not on Depot Street.

Preparation for the Sacraments

In preparation for all the sacraments, families are expected to participate regularly at Sunday Mass. Children are expected to attend all the classroom sessions the year of preparation for each sacrament.

First Reconciliation is celebrated in second grade; First Eucharist in 3rd, and Confirmation in 11th grade.

First Holy Communion will be celebrated on Sunday **May 4, 2008**. The Eucharist Retreat will be on the Saturday, **May 3, 2008** in St Leo's social hall from 9:00 am till noon. Both parents and children attend this retreat.

On Sunday, February 17th, parents will attend a special session on the Eucharist from 6 to 8 pm in St. Leo's Church. Attendance at this parent session is required of all parents.

For First Reconciliation, both the retreat and reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation will be held on a Saturday during Lent- this year, **March 8, 2008**. The parent session for 1st Reconciliation will be Sunday, January 20th, 2008 from 6 to 8 pm. in St. Leo's Church. Parents are required to attend this special session for Reconciliation preparation.

The Confirmation date is usually announced by the Erie Diocese sometime in February. The last few years, Confirmation was celebrated sometime in the spring, during the Easter season. The requirements for Confirmation are the completion of the 9th & 10th grade religious instruction plus the diocesan requirements that are contained in the Confirmation student manual.

Major Areas of Emphasis for Religious Education

Guided by the principles found in the documents of the church concerning the ministry of catechesis, the catechetical program of St. Leo's parish will include the following elements:

- 1. Message:** Scripture and the teachings of the Church.
- 2. Community:** Effort will be made to form a Christian feeling of oneness by interaction & faith sharing.
- 3. Worship:** Experience many forms of prayer and worship.
- 4. Service:** Service and justice: the heart of Jesus' message.

Families are encouraged to subscribe to at least one Catholic magazine or newspaper .

Families are encouraged to read the Bible and include daily prayers in their family lifestyle.

Families are encouraged to help their children grow in their relationship to God, especially by including daily prayer as part of family life.