



Saint Bridget of Ireland

Religious Education

2024-2025 Parent Handbook

Dear Parents,

A warm welcome to you and to your children! As I write this one of our teachers is writing the names of students on little sheep to welcome them to class the first day. I just got an email from a few other teachers with a list of ideas and plans for our All-Saints Party. And a shipment of shiny new Bibles came in yesterday, ready to be handed to your kids so that they can learn for themselves the life-changing news that God has defeated the power of death and evil. We can't wait to get started.

So, what is it that we'll actually be doing in Religious Ed.? Most of us are accustomed to an education system where we drop our kids off to the professionals to do the teaching. Unless you are a homeschool parent, you won't be the one teaching your son what a hypotenuse is, and it doesn't really matter to you whether it's a part of a triangle or a furry aquatic mammal. That's the teacher's job.

Religious Education is different. We will definitely be learning lots of information, and our catechists are top-notch, but the job of teaching the faith is ultimately yours. The Catechism says: *"the home is the first school of Christian life and 'a school for human enrichment.' Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life."* Worship and prayer are learned above all in the home, not the church education program. So, if that's your job as parents (and, personally, mine too as a parent), what is the job of the Religious Education program?

Our job and our commitment is to:

1. **Support what you do as parents.** We are here to be your 'second': to back you up and re-say the things that *you* say but in a different voice. Religious Ed. also helps to give the structure and context within which your discussions at home can fit (since dinner-table discussion don't often move systematically through topics of faith).
2. **Create a space where kids can be formed *with their peers*.** Kids need to see other kids praying and learning the faith. They won't see examples of this at school or in their favorite mini-series.
3. **Be the connection to the life of God in the Church.** We act on behalf of the church to ensure that children are properly prepared to receive sacraments, help connect them to roles of service within the church, and provide a web of relationships that strengthen their bond to the church.

My prayer for this year is that our classes on Sunday mornings will stir the imaginations and curiosity of your children, that they would find their hearts captured by Jesus, that they would begin to know how they fit into the great story of God saving the world, and that they would end the year hungry for more. Thank you for the honor of partnering with you. Please keep in touch and know that I am praying for you and your children.

yours,

Calvin Smith
Director of Faith Formation

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****Parish website: www.stbridgetberryville.org****

Mass Schedule

Saturday: 9:00am, 5:30pm (Vigil Mass)

Sunday: 9:00am, 12:00pm

Weekdays: 12:00pm (except Wednesdays)

Wednesday: 9:00am

Holy Days: 12:00pm, 7:00pm

Confession Schedule

Saturday: 4:00-5:00pm

Monday: 7:30-8:30pm

*Anytime by appointment with Parish Office

Regular monitoring of the Religious Education section of the parish bulletin helps you stay current with our program events. Bulletins are available after each weekend Mass and on the parish website.

Religious Education Office Hours

Sunday: 8:00am – 4:00pm

Monday: CLOSED

Tuesday: 9:00am – 4:00pm

Wednesday: 1:00pm – 7:00pm

Thursday: 9:00am – 4:00pm

Friday: 9:00am – 4:00pm

Saturday: CLOSED

You are welcome to stop by anytime during office hours, but it is best to call or text ahead of time to ensure that the Director does not have an out-of-office meeting.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Attending Mass is a necessary component of Religious Education. Please make plans to attend Mass weekly at either 5:30pm (Saturday), 9:00am or 12:00pm (Sunday).

Students and parents gather in the upstairs of Hobert Hall to wait for class to begin. At 10:15 each week we will have a large-group Family Catechesis time, where parents and students will learn basic prayers and elements of the faith together. At 10:25 we will begin calling the younger grades to gather at the stairwell to go downstairs with their teacher or aide. Students may not go to the classroom on their own, and parents may not bring their child directly down to the classroom.

Class begins promptly at 10:30 and ends at 11:45. (*Note: PreK/Kindergarten class will dismiss at 11:40 to avoid the rush of other students.*) During class, parents are encouraged to pray at the church or attend an adult class or talk, which take place in the upstairs of Hobert Hall.

At 11:45 catechists will wrap up their teaching and lead students upstairs for dismissal. All students K-2 must wait with their teacher or aide to be picked up by a parent or guardian. Older students are dismissed into the hall to find their parents. Out of consideration of our volunteers, please ensure that you are available on time for pickup.

Early Dismissal

Any student who needs to leave class prior to the regular ending time must bring a note from home to the teacher. The teacher will give the note to a hall monitor or the Director; once the parent arrives to pick up and sign out the student, a hall monitor will go to the classroom, pick up the child from class and escort the student to the check-in desk to the parent. **No child will be released from class until a hall monitor comes for the student.**

Sunday Schedule

9:00 – Mass

10:15 – Family Catechesis upstairs

10:25 – Classes begin lining up

10:30 – Class begins/Adult class or talks available

11:40 – PreK/Kindergarten dismissal

11:45 – All other grades dismissal

12:00 – Mass

1:00 – Youth Group (6th-12th)

Classroom Environment

Preparation and Discipline

Our Religious Education students, staff and teachers deserve an environment that is most conducive to learning. Out of respect for all in the program, we expect all students to come to class prepared to learn. Proper preparation includes arriving to class on time, bringing all necessary classroom materials, adopting an appropriate enthusiastic attitude, and returning all completed homework.

Our time together in class is limited but very important to the growth and formation of students' faith. All students are expected to be respectful of the teacher, assistant, all religious education staff, and their peers in the classroom. Students should participate in class and complete assigned homework. If a student's behavior is disrespectful or disruptive, the individual will be sent to the Religious Education Department office and a parent will be called.

Electronics

No cell phones, tablets, or other electronics are permitted in the classroom. This is a diocesan policy. Anyone bringing a cellphone will be required to turn it off and deposit it in the box at the front of the classroom for the duration of the class. The child will be able to pick the cellphone up at dismissal. Exceptions are only made in the case of health concerns.

Dress Code

Catechists work to instill in their students a love for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Classes will make frequent visits to the church throughout the year therefore they must be prepared for those visits by dressing appropriately. Part of religious education includes lessons in human dignity, and that every person is created in the image of God. Volunteer and student clothing should reflect the values we believe and teach as part of our religious curriculum. All clothing worn to class is expected to contribute to a standard that fosters an environment conducive to Catholic teaching and build a respect to human dignity.

Students must refrain from clothing which exposes undergarments, is sexually suggestive, or which depicts themes counter to Catholic teaching, such as drugs, alcohol, profanity, weapons, etc. Students should also wear weather appropriate clothing (in case the class takes a trip to the church), and should come equipped with any necessary assistive technologies (e.g. glasses, hearing aids, walkers, wheelchairs or other technology normally used in school).

Classroom Content

Curriculum

At St. Bridget of Ireland, while our teachers use textbook curricula approved by the Arlington Diocese to plan and organize their lessons, they are excellent at going beyond the textbook to engage students with activities, games, prayers, and arts. As such, you will not often see your child come home with a textbook to study, but with Bibles, Catechisms, and other helpful books. Lessons are given at a grade appropriate level corresponding with the Standards of Learning given by the Diocese (these can be found at [https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/catholic-schools/religion\(1\)/](https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/catholic-schools/religion(1)/)) An overview of the scope and sequence of our entire Religious Ed. program can be found at the end of this handbook.

Sacraments

Through their coursework, students are also preparing to receive the sacraments. Each grade is essential for sacramental preparation and students should not be pulled out of the program "between sacraments." Completion of 1st and 2nd grade Religious Education is a sufficient preparation for the reception of First Penance and First Holy Communion.

All the grades together work to prepare students intellectually to receive Confirmation. However, due to the nature of this sacrament, while Religious Education is necessary for Confirmation, it is not sufficient. Students must also demonstrate a *desire* for the sacrament, and a *maturity* of faith, capable of “assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life.” (*See the Catechism of the Catholic Church, par.1309*). We establish these less tangible elements of preparation through monthly individual meetings with Discipleship Mentors. *More information about the process of preparing for Confirmation will be available at the Parent Confirmation meeting on Monday, September 16th.*

Circle of Grace

The Diocese of Arlington wisely requires all students to receive safe environment training. This year we will be using the *Circle of Grace* program, which helps children “identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated. *Circle of Grace* provides a strong parent component in which parents can actively participate in their children’s education and formation.” This is NOT a sex-education program. We are not permitted to teach sex-education to students; it is the sacred right of parents to do so. A link to the diocesan page explaining the program is available on request or on the parish website under the tab “Faith Formation/Children.” *Circle of Grace* will be presented to all ages on our annual “Safety Day” in October. As always, you may contact the Director with questions or concerns.

Homework

Some of our teachers use books and other materials to assign homework for the students to complete during the week. The way for your child to get the most out of his or her work is if a parent is engaged, checking in, asking questions, and going through the content with the child. Please ensure your children do their homework faithfully and fully.

Parent/Teacher Correspondence

Each week our teachers will send a brief email outlining the content covered in class that week, giving explanations for any homework, and including a preview of what students will be learning the following week. You may contact teachers via their @stbridgetberryville.org emails if you have questions. You may also always contact the Director at dre@stbridgetberryville.org or (540) 277-2948 if you have questions or concerns.

Parents have the option to meet with their student’s teacher to discuss progress and may contact the teacher to arrange this meeting. The teacher may always request the Director be present at the meeting. Parents who want to visit their child’s classroom outside of the initial open house must set up a time with the Director of Faith Formation to do so. Parents will not be permitted to visit the classrooms during class time.

Health and Safety

- **Parents who are not VIRTUS trained are not permitted past the check-point desk.**
- Adults and children who feel sick should not come in for class but contact the Director to report the absence.

- Children who show symptoms during class will be asked to leave class, their parents will be contacted, and they will wait at the check-point desk until they can be picked up.
- Catechists will have sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer available and may use them liberally.
- Masks are not required for students or volunteers. However, all are welcome to wear masks as they feel appropriate and, in some cases, we may ask a particular class to be masked while in the classroom out of charity for those with compromised immune systems.
- On nice days, several picnic tables are available outside Hobert Hall for class use. Teachers often opt to bring their children outside for class, but always remain on church property.
- Classroom doors will remain locked for the duration of class time so that they may be quickly secured in case of an intruder.
- Per diocesan requirements, we will practice a fire drill and lock down drill at the end of class time on October 20th, our “Safety Day.”
- Our volunteers have all cleared a thorough background check and are trained through the VIRTUS child-safety program.

Core Principles

The core elements listed below form the foundation and strength of the Saint Bridget of Ireland Religious Education Program.

- It is Christ, The Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught—everything else is taught with reference to Him. (*Catechesi Tradendae par.6*)
- Parents are recognized as and are expected to be the primary educators of their children.
- The end of true education is properly formed desire: to love what is good and hate what is evil.
- The doctrine of the Catholic Faith is presented in its fullness and entirety as both knowledge to be learned and a life to be lived.
- Gospel values teach a moral life as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments.
- Life in the Sacraments is central to developing the Catholic Faith.
- The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the summit of our Faith.
- Weekly attendance at Mass and regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance are essential.
- Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition form the Deposit of Faith and students will be encouraged to study both.
- Importance of prayer is emphasized as the life of our faith.
- Our Blessed Mother is the first disciple of Jesus, and we strive to imitate her and the saints.

Christ’s Final Command

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:18-20

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Catechism</u>	<u>Patron Saint</u>
PreK/Kindergarten	Whole Bible	Creed	John Paul II
First	OT Stories	Creed	
Second	NT Stories	Creed	Joan of Arc
Third	OT Characters	Mysteries (Sacraments)	Dominic Savio
Fourth	NT Characters	Mysteries (Mass)	Maria Goretti
Fifth	Whole Bible Story	Mysteries (The Liturgical Year)	Faustina
Sixth	Old Testament	Life in Christ (10 Commandments)	Elizabeth Ann Seton
Seventh	New Testament	Life in Christ (Virtues & Beatitudes)	Francis of Assisi
Eighth	The Bible & the Catechism	Four Pillars of the Catechism	Miriam and Blaise
High School	Apologetics		