

*St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr
Catholic Parish*



*“Three things will last forever
--faith, hope, and love—
And
The greatest of these is love.”* (1COR 13:13)

*Religious Education
First-Eighth Grade
Parent/Student Handbook
2017-2018*

Pastoral Staff

Reverend Jay Finno, Pastor
Reverend Greg Warmuz, Associate Pastor
Mrs. Sandra Morgan, Director of Religious Education
Leslie Krauledis, Associate Director ext. 146
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From the director...

September 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Please allow me to express my gratitude in serving the St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr Community. The opportunity to share in the faith lives of your children, as maturing Catholic, is a privilege. Together with parents, it is our goal in the Religious Education Office to foster personal and spiritual growth within each young person attending our Religious Program. To accomplish this goal, we need to walk this faith journey united as a community.

“Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children.” (CCC 223)
“Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.” (CCC2226)

It is our responsibility, as mature Catholics to help empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today. Our baptismal call is to educate and draw the youth to participate in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith.

Most of us have questions about the Catholic faith. This is true whether we are Catholics from infant baptism or converts from another faith. The faith formation program provides opportunities to find answers to these questions.

The last page in this handbook is an acknowledgement form which should be printed, signed by parents/guardians and all students attending our program. Please have your oldest student in the program return the form to their catechist/teacher.

Our hope is to meet your family where you are on this faith journey and walk with you as you take your next step. Our goal is to serve you on this endeavor in Christ. Please do not hesitate to call or email. If I can render any assistance to you, I will do so happily.

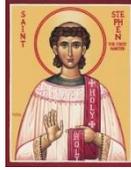
Peace and Blessings,



Mrs. Sandi Morgan, M.Div.
Director of Religious Education

The Story of St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr

Acts: 6 & 7



In the early Christian church, a few years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the believers in Jerusalem put all their resources together. However, the Greek Christians complained that their widows were being ignored in the daily distribution of food.

Seven deacons were appointed by the group to oversee sharing of food and other everyday matters.

Stephen, a man "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," was among them.

Stephen performed great wonders and miracles among the people of Jerusalem. Jews of the outer provinces began to argue with him, but they could not win against his spirit-filled wisdom. So in secret, they convinced false witnesses to lie, accusing Stephen of blasphemy against Moses and God. In ancient Judaism, blasphemy was a crime punishable by death.

The accusers brought Stephen before the Sanhedrin, the great council, where the false witnesses said they heard Stephen say Jesus would destroy the Temple. Stephen launched into a powerful defense, detailing the history of the Jews from Abraham through the prophets. He concluded that the Sanhedrin had murdered the prophesied Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

The crowd became furious at him, but Stephen looked up to heaven:

"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56, NIV)

At that, the mob dragged Stephen out of the city and began to stone him.



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HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Page 16 in this handbook is an acknowledgement form which should be printed, signed and returned to your student's teacher by parents/guardians and all students attending our program. You are responsible for all policies and procedures within this handbook.

I. Parish Mission Statement

St. Stephen Parish is a Catholic community of faith striving to witness to the Gospel. Our Baptism and Confirmation calls us to bring Christ's Love to our families, our work places and our community. Grateful for God's gifts, we seek to nurture those gifts and to give back to the Lord by sharing our time, talent and material treasure. In all of our parish activities we seek to develop a personal relationship with the Lord who directs our lives and a vision that sees the world with the eyes of Christ and that leads to a commitment to justice. We seek a sense of unity in Christ that leads us to be an open and welcoming people and a sense of joy in being graced by the gifts of God's love.

II. Religious Education Mission Statement

St. Stephen Parish Mission Statement reminds us that we are a "Catholic community of faith striving to witness to the Gospel." The Religious Education Program is an integral part of that mission. We recognize that the primary responsibility for the Religious Education of children rests with their parents/guardians.

The goal of all catechesis/religious education is to "make a person's faith become living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction." (National Catechetical Directory, #32, U.S.C.C.) The Religious Education Program of St. Stephen's strives to assist parents/guardians in guiding their children toward a mature faith and in preparing their children to receive the sacraments.

III. Expectations/Rules

Parents/Guardians provide the most powerful catechesis by their example. It is vitally important that Catholic beliefs, reverence for scripture, frequent prayer and participation in the worship life of the parish be modeled by the family at home and in church.

Weekly attendance at Mass is expected. The Mass schedule can be found at www.ststephentinley.com When we attend Mass in response to God's Commandment to "Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day," we give God

thanks for the love, mercy, and gifts lavished upon each of us. This is the primary way in which parents/legal guardians can reinforce what the child is learning in class. Parental/guardian commitment also includes praying regularly with your child at home as well as sharing your time, talent and treasure with the parish as you are able, including helping your child by:

- Reminding children of God's love and mercy.
- Attending the grade level Mass with your child. The grade level mass schedule can be found at on the website under the religious ed tab
- Making sure children attend each class, arrive on time and are prepared for class with books, homework and materials.
- Reviewing lessons with your children, helping with homework/activities and teaching of prayers.
- Asking children to leave all electronic games and other toys at home.
- Reminding children that cell phones **may not** be used during Religious Ed
- Cell phones must be turned off when the students enter the building
- Cell phones may be turned on at dismissal
- Please call the office if you have an family emergency and need to reach your child

As the 'first faith teachers' of their children, parents/guardians need to stay current in the faith. You are encouraged to take advantage of adult formation opportunities here at St. Stephen's. During sacramental years we ask special cooperation and participation of the parents/guardians.

Students are expected to attend and participate in **all** class sessions for the full time allotted, complete all assignments/activities, and abide by the rules/policies. Attendance will be taken in Church at the beginning of the Prayer Service at each session. In addition, it is expected that students and families will attend yearly grade level masses. Each grade level is assigned to **attend** one grade level Mass per year. (See website for calendar dates.)

Bully Free Zone

We strive to provide a safe environment for all students. Every student has the right to learn their faith without fear of threat, injury or violence (physical harm to another person).

Discipline policies may vary upon the circumstances. The pastor and director have final recourse in all discipline cases. The following are considered bullying behaviors: pushing others around, calling others names, spreading rumors, talking behind others backs, excluding others from your group, writing unkind notes about others, telling people not to like someone, bossing others, hitting, kicking or hurting others laughing at others in a mean way, sexual harassment, cell phone bullying or cyber bullying this includes “facebook, instagram, snapchat, twitter” and all social media bullying. This policy also includes any severe physical or verbal act which is made in writing, electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following results:

1. placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s person or property
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health
3. Substantially interfering with the student’s academic performance; or 4. Substantially interfering with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the faith based activities and services of the church.
4. Students are to keep their hands to themselves. Students should never be bothering other students by touching or poking others.

This list is an illustration and not an exhaustive list of all bullying.

Rules

The St. Stephen Religious Education Program teaches the “Three R’s”: **Respect, Reverence, and Responsibility**. Students are expected to:

- **Respect** themselves, other students, their catechist/aide, and the property of others.
- **Responsible** for their work and their actions.
- **Reverence** for God’s teachings, scripture, prayer, each other, and the church building. (i.e. cell phones turned off for church and class)

Conduct/Behavior

Good conduct, cooperation, courtesy and attention, are always expected during class time. If a student is asked to leave the classroom due to misconduct the student will be escorted to the office to call his/her parents or guardians to pick them up immediately. Due to the volume of classes and students on the premises Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings all communication regarding misconduct of students will take place on Thursdays following the incident.

If there is not improvement after the communication with parents, in fairness to the catechist and other students in the class, the DRE reserves the right to ask the parent/guardian to provide an alternate form of religious education outside the regular class such as homeschooling. If the homeschool work is not completed, the student may be asked to leave the program.

Catechists (volunteers who share their faith in the classroom) will instruct children in basic doctrine which includes scripture, prayer, worship and morality according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Catechists are committed to being prepared for classes by using the lesson plans provided, which follow the curriculum endorsed by the Archdiocese of Chicago. Growing in their own knowledge of the faith by attending workshops offered through the Cluster. Catechists should provide a nurturing, prayerful and joyful environment for children and give witness to the faith by their example. With your cooperation, they will do everything they can to help your children grow in faith.

IV. Policies

Registration

Registration is conducted from April through September, prior to the start of classes. No student will be allowed to attend class unless the family first registers with the parish. Families of returning students are notified in April of registration dates. Registration information can also be found on the parish website and in the bulletin.

Tuition and Fees

While the parish supports the Religious Education Program, we also must rely on families to pay their share in order to meet our bills. Our tuition and fees are modest; they include all textbooks, supplementary materials and supplies.

Full tuition is due at the time of registration. If you cannot afford full tuition we request one half of the tuition due at the time of registration and the balance is due by October 31st. A \$25 fee will be added to any unpaid balance as of Nov. 1, 2017 and \$50 if not paid by Feb. 1 2018.

The inability to pay should never exclude a child from attending our parish Religious Education Program. Grants and payment plans are available. If your family is experiencing financial difficulty you may speak to the Business

Manager, to make other arrangements. All financial information remains confidential. Periodic statements are sent via e-mail to families by the parish business manager. The schedule and fees can be found at www.ststephentinley.com/2017-2018-registration

Withdrawal

Please inform the Religious Education office in advance of withdrawal from the program, so that transfer arrangements can be made. Refunds will be paid upon withdrawal as follows:

Prior to first class	-	Full refund of amount paid
September to December	-	50% refund
December to May	-	No refund

Change of schedule- In the event that your student needs to change the day and time of their class after September a \$25.00 fee will be charged to cover office expenses. This fee applies with each change.

Emergency Closing

In the event that classes are canceled due to inclement weather you will receive information through a School Messenger contact e-mail. If you have not provided us with a current e-mail address the information will be posted on the parish website: www.ststephentinley.com. Emergency closing information can also be found by going to a broadcast website: <http://www.emergencyclosingcenter.com/complete.html>. You may also listen to WGN Radio 720-AM, WBBM Radio 780-AM or watch CBS Ch.2, NBC Ch. 5, ABC Ch. 7, FOX 32, WGN-TV or CLTV cable for closing information.

Wellness

We adhere to the local School District #140 policy regarding food in our Religious Education Program. This is following the Illinois State Board of Education guidance regarding dangers of food in schools as it relates to severe allergic reaction. We ask you not to send food with your child, into the building or classrooms.

We adhere to the local School District #140 use of cell phones.

Dress Code

We follow local School District #140 dress code policies. Student appearance must not disrupt the educational process, interfere with the learning climate, or compromise reasonable standards of health, safety, and decency. Students are expected to dress in a neat and clean manner. Clothing that is suggestive or

indecent is not allowed. Parents/guardians should make every effort to review their child's attire so that it is appropriate for a Religious Education Program and complies with this policy.

V. Program and Sacramental Information

Admission/Inclusion

The St. Stephen Religious Education Program admits students of any sex, race, color or national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities. The order of admission to the Religious Education Programs is as follows:

1. Children of parishioners
2. Children from families with children already enrolled
3. Children now reaching school age
4. Children from families new to the parish

Schedule of Classes

Monday	4:15/5:30	Grades 1-8
Monday	6:00/7:15	Grades 1-8
Tuesday	4:15/5:30	Grades 1-8
Tuesday	6:00/7:15	Grades 1-8
Wednesday	4:15/5:30	Grades 1-8
Wednesday	6:00/7:15	Grades 1-8

Attendance

Every child is expected to attend and participate in all classes unless excused for a serious reason. If a child is going to be absent, it is the responsibility of the parent to contact the Religious Education office prior to the beginning of class.

To report absences call the Religious Education office at (708) 342-1544 Ext. 201.

Excessive Absences

The Religious Education Board has determined the students are not to miss more than **4 classes**. In the event that the student is absent he/she is required to make up the missed work.

Books and Homework

Grades 1-7 are currently using the Loyola Press Finding God series. The textbooks belong to the students and they may write in them. They are to be taken home after each class to provide an opportunity for parents/guardians and child to share faith lessons. Please check your child's folder on a weekly basis for any homework and important Religious Education Program and parish information. If your student loses his/her book there is a \$30.00 replacement cost.

Eighth grade utilizes the Decision Point program.

Service Projects

As Christians we strive to imitate Jesus' life of service to others. To achieve our goal of making a person's faith become living, conscious and active, each grade participates in a service project that serves parish and local community needs.

Progress Reports

A written report may be given twice each year, in the middle and at the closing session of the year. This is an evaluation, completed by the catechist of the child's participation and knowledge.

Sacramental Requirements

St. Stephen's Religious Education is an eight-year program. The Policies of the Catechesis and Youth Formation for the Archdiocese of Chicago stipulate that participation in a program for **2 consecutive years** is required to receive a sacrament. The Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are celebrated in grade 2. The Sacrament of Confirmation is received in grade 8. It necessary for consecutive completion of grades 1 and 2 for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion and grades 7 and 8 for Confirmation is required. Students transferring from a Catholic school or a Religious Education Program at another parish will be placed according to these requirements. All students must complete the curriculum for 6th grade on the Old Testament before entering 7th Grade.

Parent Participation in Sacrament Grades 2 and 8

Attendance is mandatory for sacrament preparation meetings and activities. As young students enter grade 2 and prepare for reception of the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, parents are expected to participate in a parent/child family retreat date for First Holy Communion and a parent meeting for both sacraments.

At the beginning of 8th grade a parent/guardian meeting is held to explain the immediate preparation for reception of Confirmation later in the year. Parents/guardians are expected to attend these meetings. Parents/guardians are encouraged to remind their son/daughter of dates and deadlines for completion of all requirements such as attendance at a mandatory 8th grade confirmation retreat, exam, mass attendance and required service projects.

Special Needs

A class for students with special needs (developmental disabilities of various kinds) is held twice per month. Please contact the Director for more information on this class.

Family Catechesis

We acknowledge special circumstances may require your child to receive faith instruction through family study. Arrangements for the Religious Education Program through family catechesis can be made by contacting the Director. Please call the office to make an appointment. Registration for family study will be processed following the appointment. Family Catechesis is only available for students in grades 3-6 since grades 1 and 2 prepare for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion and grades 7 and 8 prepare for Confirmation. (See Sacramental Class Requirements above.) Under special circumstances the Director may approve family catechesis for grades 1,2 and 7,8.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for children/ Sacrament Preparation

The RCIA with an adaptation for children is available for Religious Education students entering our program after 2nd grade and who have not studied the faith nor received the sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion. Call the Director for more information and/or to make an appointment.

Outside Program Participation

Students enrolled in the Religious Education Program are encouraged to participate in other parish activities, such as youth choir (contact music ministry office at Ext. 122) and altar service (contact Deacon Ken at Ext. 136). As a Catholic Christian Community, we also encourage children to become involved in school, social and civic activities that help build up and enhance the

community, as well as fostering their own growth as responsible citizens and well-rounded individuals.

We remind you that education in faith is a top priority in every Catholic family. When a conflict arises between attending religious education classes or some other event, religious education should come first. Involvement in outside activities is not an “excused absence.” If a conflict cannot be avoided, please call the office.

Parent Access

In the event that parents are divorced or separated, the Religious Education Program presumes that both parents have access to the children’s records unless one parent can provide evidence that he or she has the sole right and sole custody (Buckley Amendment). Information about the child’s records and attendance will not be discussed with or sent to, any other relatives or friends without parental permission.

Becoming a Catechist

If you would like information about becoming a catechist, co-catechist or aide, please call the Religious Education Office at (708) 342-1544. Training, support, and lesson plans are provided. All employees and volunteers who have contact with minors (children under the age 18) must meet the requirements of the Protecting God’s Children Program as set forth by the Chicago Archdiocese. These requirements are as follows:

1. Individuals must attend a Protecting God’s Children workshop. A listing of these workshops can be found at <http://www.virtus.org/virtus/>. Pre-registration is necessary for these workshops and this can be done on the above website. You must leave a copy of your Certification of Attendance at the parish office addressed to Karen Opyd, the on-site Virtus coordinator.
2. Individuals must register for a Criminal Background Check at <http://www.archchicago.org/>. Under ‘Protecting Children’, click on ‘Compliance for Clergy, Employees and Volunteers’. There is an access word required and that word is: protection. The process is self-explanatory. You do need to assign yourself a ‘User ID’ or a ‘Password’.
3. A CANTS authorization form must be printed and completed.
4. A Code of Conduct form, located on-line, must be printed and signed. Please return to the Religious Education office. The form simply acknowledges that you have received and read the Code of Conduct.

If you have any questions, need help registering for the criminal background check or the workshop, need forms or any other assistance, please contact Karen Opyd, within the Parish Office at (708) 342-2400.

Catechist Formation

There are mandatory meetings each year for our catechists. Lesson plans are distributed and current information about the program is discussed. Also, catechists are asked to attend at least one faith formation experience available throughout the year.

VI. Procedures

Drop Off

All traffic patrol people are volunteers of children in the program. Please be respectful to these people. They guard the safety of your children entering and leaving the building.

Parents/guardians are to park their vehicles and escort their child to the church. Parents and guardians are to follow the directions of traffic patrol on duty. Parents enter from 84th Avenue for drop off and continue out to 175th Street. **You must leave the property using 175th Street after dropping off your child.**

You may also park your car and walk your child into the building. Please be respectful of the traffic patrol persons and follow the traffic patrol person's requests. Parents are to walk their children into church where the teacher is waiting within the church. All classes begin in the church with a prayer service. Parents are welcome to join their children for the prayer service.

Do not park in the handicap parking unless you have been issued and have visible a handicap license plate or tag. The police will be called to ticket anyone parking in the handicap parking without proper licensing displayed.

Dismissal

Catechists walk their class to the Narthex and students are dismissed from there. Parents are asked to remain in the designated waiting area of the Narthex.

Early Release

On the rare occasion when a child needs to be dismissed early, the Religious Education office must be notified prior to that class and given time and reason for the early dismissal. The parent/legal guardian **must come into the office to sign out and pick up the child.**

In the event of an emergency and the parent/guardian is unable to pick up the child, the office needs to be notified. Please inform us as to which of the people listed as emergency contacts will be responsible for picking up the child. A phone call is expected from the parent to the office with this information. **These regulations are to insure the safety of your child.** Please help us to enforce them. We ask that you limit your requests for early dismissal as it is disruptive to the class.

If a parent gives permission for the child to walk home from religious education, a signed note from the parent/guardian must be given to the office.

Visitors

Parents are only allowed into the classroom area if they sign in and receive a pass from the office. If you would like to visit your student's classroom please come to the office to sign in and get a pass. It is important for the safety of the students that the office is aware of all visitors in the building. We will be happy to issue you a pass once the students are settled into their classrooms. If you need to speak to your student's teacher see them before class in the church or request an appointment with your child's teacher. Class time must be for lessons. If you wish to observe a class please come to the office for a pass. Your cooperation in this matter is essential for the safety of all students. If you are in the classroom area without a pass you will be asked to go to the office to sign in and receive a pass. We respectfully request visitation wait until after the first week of sessions as the students are settling in the first week.

HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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**St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr Catholic Church
Handbook Acknowledgement
2017-2018**

This form must be returned to your oldest student's catechist/teacher. The catechist will turn it into the office. Parents/Guardians and students are responsible for reading and understanding the policies & procedures within the handbook.

I have read and understand the parent/student handbook. I have read with my student the parent /student handbook and agree to comply with St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr procedures & policies.

Parent/Guardian Print your name & Sign

Date

I have read and understand the student/ parent handbook with my parent or guardian and agree to comply with the St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr policies.

Print name of & Signature of all students in family

Grade

Date

Thank you for your cooperation.

Mrs. Sandra Morgan, Director of Religious Education

Leslie Krauledis, Associate Director Ext. 146

Joann Buryj, Administrative Assistant Ext. 148

Patti Parker, Secretary Ext. 180

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