



# CHURCH OF ST. CLARENCE

*PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION*

*PARENT & FAMILY HANDBOOK*

*2021-2022*

**30106 Lorain Road North Olmsted, OH 44070**

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**[www.st-clarence.org](http://www.st-clarence.org)**  
**Facebook.com/StClarence**

# Welcome Letter

Dear Parents,

It is an honor to support you in your desire to foster your child's faith development. Parents are the primary leaders and educators in their children's faith. The St. Clarence Parish School of Religion exists merely to supplement the ways that you are raising your child to discover and practice the Catholic faith. The program works in tandem with participation in Sunday Mass and your conversations, formation and practice at home throughout the week. It is our desire to partner with you in helping your child grow.

A generous team of skilled catechists and volunteers are preparing for another meaningful PSR year. As they do, please take a moment to review the policies of the St. Clarence PSR program and keep this as a reference. As Catechists, Parents and Students work together to uphold these roles, responsibilities and expectations, we can create a nurturing community which prioritizes the growing discipleship of children.

Please reach out with any questions or comments. Thank you for your commitment to this community.

Sincerely,

Grace Kincaid Murphy

St. Clarence Director of Faith Formation

*Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. - Deuteronomy 11:19*

# Roles & Responsibilities

All Parents, Catechists and Students agree to uphold the expectations and mission of the St. Clarence PSR Program and continually invest in their own spiritual formation. In addition,

Parents Agree to:

1. Attend Mass regularly with their children.
2. Communicate regularly with Catechist about child's progress.
3. Review child's PSR folder weekly and ensure completion of assignments.
4. Follow the PSR Calendar and attend all applicable events.
5. Inform PSR office of child's sacramental, medical, behavioral or learning needs.
6. Provide proper materials for instruction.

Catechists Agree to:

1. Prepare adequately for lessons by following the curriculum, teaching sound Catholic doctrine and incorporating prayer, Scripture and enrichment into each lesson.
2. Communicate with parents about class goals and child's progress.
3. Communicate behavior expectations to students and, by example, establish a welcoming, participatory, learning environment.
4. Closely adhere to all parish and diocesan safety standards.

Students Agree to:

1. Consistently attend PSR ready to participate, returning all work and materials as requested.
2. Share all information from Catechist and PSR Office with Parents.
3. Exhibit a Christian attitude and behavior, treating all people and property with respect, dressing appropriately and complying with all safety, entry and exit policies.

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## Cancellation of Classes

PSR will be cancelled when North Olmsted Schools close the same day even if conditions improve. If weather, water or electrical problems arise later in the day causing a PSR cancellation, it will be announced on [www.st-clarence.org](http://www.st-clarence.org), our voicemail, facebook page and via email. Local TV and Radio stations also post details.

Confirm that PSR always has your current phone and email so you can receive these important updates.

## Calendar

The PSR annual calendar lists dates of required sessions, events and parent meetings and will be mailed home, available online, and in print at St. Clarence in August. PSR classes are held from mid September through mid May, with breaks for Christmas, Easter and the North Olmsted Schools spring break.

**Friday, August 20 - Last Day of Registration**

**Monday, September 13 - First Day of PSR**

## Communication

The PSR program will communicate with parents and families through email, the parish website [www.st-clarence.org](http://www.st-clarence.org), the parish bulletin, Facebook ([www.facebook.com/StClarence](http://www.facebook.com/StClarence)), letters, and handouts sent home with the children. We encourage you to subscribe to our infrequent text/email updates by following the Flocknote directions on the back cover.

## Absences and Attendance

In the case of absence the parent/guardian will notify the PSR office prior to class by calling 440-734-2078 or emailing the PSR Secretary ([PSRsecretary@st-clarence.org](mailto:PSRsecretary@st-clarence.org)) and work with their child to complete all make up work. Up to 5 absences per year are considered excused if the parent has communicated with the PSR office. This does not apply to Sacramental Preparation events. In the event a child exceeds 5 absences, parents, the Catechist and

Director of Faith Formation may need to create an alternative learning plan for the child to ensure normal grade level progress. Late arrival and early dismissal are strongly discouraged. An excess of these incidents may also result in a restructuring of your child's learning plan.

## Student Tardiness

A bell begins each session, after which, for children's safety, all doors except the door near the rectory will lock. Students arriving late to class must come to the PSR Office to receive a late arrival slip and are then to be escorted to the classroom by an Office Aide.

## Early Dismissal

A request for your child's early dismissal must be phoned in to the PSR Office before 3:30 p.m. Monday. Please write the catechist a note as well. You must come to the PSR Office to sign out and receive your child. An office aide will get your child; please don't go to the classroom.

## Parking and Traffic Patterns

On Mondays all traffic enters the property from the West entrance and exits on the East end. For safety, crosswalks must be used and no child should enter or exit the parking lot unattended. Do not park in the row closest to the building (reserved for safe entry and exit.)

## Arrival Procedures

Parents are responsible for their child's safety traveling to and from the PSR classroom. A parent or parent-appointed designee is to accompany each child to the classroom prior to the start of the session and wait with them until the Catechist arrives. Students should not arrive earlier than 10 minutes prior to the start of PSR. Parents who are Catechists are also to keep their children with them until 10 minutes prior to the start of PSR.

## Dismissal Procedures

All families must annually submit a Student Transportation Authorization Release (STAR) to designate any individuals in addition to the parent who are allowed to collect their children. Children will only be dismissed from the classroom to legal parents/guardians and individuals designated by the parent as safe for pick-up on the STAR form. Parents are responsible for informing designees of arrival/dismissal procedure.

## Extracurriculars and Monday PSR

While many extracurriculars offer significant benefits in the growth of children, Religious Education is a necessary component of the overall education of a Catholic child who attends public school. St. Clarence Parish, therefore, does not consider Monday PSR classes to be “extracurricular” for the children in our program, but instead an essential part of their entire elementary-level education and life experience. We ask that parents partner with us in this by setting priorities for Monday afternoons/evenings despite the schedules of other programs.

## Registration

All registrations and session preferences are recorded on a first-come, first-served basis and begin during the second semester of the previous year. A child is enrolled in the Parish School of Religion when all registration forms are complete, all copies of required sacramental certificates have been supplied to the PSR office, and all fees are paid in full.

Once enrolled, the child’s assigned class becomes his or her session for the year and changing is often not possible as places are filled and Catechists are identified and prepared. Should a medical, pastoral or family crisis occur that necessitates the transfer of a child, the parent must contact the Director of Faith Formation. Transfers cannot be guaranteed but we will try to meet the need within the confines of parish program vision and policy.

## Visitor Policy

Each child's safety is paramount. All visitors must sign in at the PSR Office upon arriving and sign out before leaving. All visitors, including parents, will only be allowed in a classroom with (1) permission from the PSR Office; and (2) wearing a 'Visitor' badge obtained at the PSR Office.

## Fees

*Please register early to guarantee your child's spot.*

1 Child	\$ 80
2 Children	\$ 160
3 or More Children	\$ 240

An additional \$25.00 sacramental fee is due for each child preparing to receive First Reconciliation/ First Communion, or Confirmation and is non-refundable

Payment plans may be available upon request for families with two or more children enrolled in PSR programs if requested.

It is the policy of St. Clarence that no child be refused Religious Education due to financial need. If tuition is a hardship please contact the Director of Faith Formation.

## Health/Learning

Registration is incomplete without pertinent information about your child's behavioral, learning and medical needs. In the event of an emergency we will contact you via the phone number you have provided and your listed emergency contact will be called if you cannot be reached. Updated contact information and newly arising medical information is to be forwarded to the PSR office as needed.

Please see the Director of Faith Formation if your child requires any medication during class time. Students may only possess medications during class sessions in the case of certain conditions

that require immediate medication access such as asthma inhaler or epi pen. In such cases, parents are asked to provide a completed 'Self-Medication Form' for the office to have on file. Any surgically implanted medication delivery system should be noted by the parent in the child's registration.

If your child becomes ill during class time, the parent or legal guardian will be called and asked to immediately pick up the child.

## Curriculum

Weekly participation in the weekend Mass is the first priority and most essential part of each child's ongoing faith development. PSR is second.

Our religious education curriculum follows Diocesan and USCCB guidelines and conforms with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Children are expected to participate in religious education every year. Ongoing formation is mandated for all members of the universal Church.

Monday 1-8 grade classes use the *Be My Disciples* (RCL) series. In grade 8, *Decision Point* (Dynamic Catholic) is also used for Confirmation. Our annual curriculum also includes the *Called to Protect™* program.

## Called to Protect Program

Parents must give their permission for their child to participate in this program. A Student Participation Consent Form will be mailed home for parent signature and return prior to the presentation of the program lessons. Not signing will be understood as consent.

A *Called to Protect™ for Parents & Families* session will be offered each year for parents.

"The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has mandated that ... we (the diocese) offer information on protecting children from harm directly to children and their parents. We feel that the Praesidium Program does this in a clear, concise and comprehensive manner. Praesidium teaches skills about boundary violations. It teaches

adults how to detect warning signs and behavioral patterns of sexual abusers. It also equips children to protect themselves.” – *Praesidium Diocese of Cleveland Expectations*

The *Called to Protect*™ program by Praesidium, Inc., a national leader in abuse risk management, is a comprehensive training program with educational components for children and parents on how establish and maintain safe environments and prevent child sexual abuse. This program is now a required part of all religious education curriculums in the Cleveland diocese. Students in grades 1-5 will annually receive their grade-level lessons from the *Called to Protect*™ for Young Children program. Students in grade 7 will receive the lessons from the *Called to Protect*™ for Youth program. Lessons for grade levels will take place during regularly scheduled class time and lesson scheduling will be published in the PSR calendar sent out in August.

## Evaluation

While content learning is not the only factor in a student’s faith education and formation, it is an important element. Therefore, Catechists perform both formal and informal assessments of student learning. Parents of children with special testing or learning considerations must inform the PSR office prior to the first class so we may accommodate your child’s needs.

## PSR Team Members

The PSR Team (all faculty including Catechists, Catechist Assistants, Hall Monitors, Office Aides, Nursery Workers and Substitutes) is formed by parishioners who volunteer to share their time, effort and faith with your child. They complete all applicable training, formation and meetings pertinent to their role.

In accordance with Diocesan Policy all PSR Team Members submit a Volunteer Application with listed references and follow diocesan directives regarding child safety awareness. If over 18, Team Members also complete *Virtus; Protecting God's Children*<sup>TM</sup> training, the diocesan approved child abuse awareness program which is required of all volunteers who work with children more than once a month or for more than 4 hours within a month. Finally, Team Members submit to a background check which may include fingerprinting. Volunteers are approved by the Pastor prior to assisting with the PSR programs.

## Discipline Policy

Students are expected to demonstrate respect for all PSR Team members, fellow students, themselves and all property. Each class will develop a set of rules and consequences based on Catholic Christian principles at the beginning of the year. Catechists will handle routine discipline matters within the classroom and will communicate with parents. Catechists may involve the Director of Faith Formation in discipline matters at any time. Any child whose actions make the environment uncomfortable for other students or who threatens the safety of any member of the class will be immediately referred to the Director of Faith Formation for disciplinary action. Parents will be called in all such cases. In cases of continued problems or disruptive behavior, parents may be required to sit with the child in class to guarantee appropriate behavior or have the child removed from the program.

Abusive substances, inappropriate language, physically or sexually abusive behavior, weapons, gang related materials or clothing are not permitted at any time on the premises and will necessitate expulsion from the program. See Legal Issues, page 8.

Personal items not relating to classroom instruction should not be brought to class. Gum-chewing is not allowed at any time.

# Sacramental Preparation

Sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion is offered within the second grade. Sacraments are celebrated with parish children who are age 7 (grade 2) and older who have completed at least one year of formal religious education prior to grade/level 2. In addition to Monday classes, preparation includes 2 retreats, 2 meetings and practices. Parents will be notified of additional preparation events for children and/or parents.

In Grade 2 it is essential that children attend the retreat and practices. Sacramental preparation occurs within the regular grade 2 class year and therefore the general Absence and Attendance Policy applies. Frequent, or several consecutive absences may result in a delay in the child's celebration of the sacraments.

Sacramental preparation for Confirmation is offered during the grade 8 year. Confirmation is usually celebrated near the conclusion of the academic year. A candidate for this sacrament needs to have received adequate religious education, including immediate sacramental preparation, so that she or he has a full understanding of the faith. If a family has a grade 8 student attending a Catholic day-school where religion is taught or a high school student who has completed PSR/Catholic grade school, that student may also apply for Confirmation. Parents will be notified of additional sacramental preparation required activities and meetings for students, parents and/or sponsors.

Confirmation Candidates must attend all classes, practices meetings and retreat. Only one absence will be allowed for each candidate and it must be due to an emergency situation. Make-up learning assignments will be given. Further absence may result in a delay in the celebration of the sacrament.

Children who are new or have not received the sacraments of Baptism, First Reconciliation and/or First Communion are welcome at St. Clarence and may be assigned a tutor or placed within the Rite of Catholic Initiation for Adults, which is adapted for children.

The Director of Faith Formation (DFF) will place students and create an appropriate learning plan. Placement is at the discretion of the DFF and Pastor.

## Home Study

Applications for the Home Study program may be made with the Director of Faith Formation and are subject to approval by the pastor.

## Morality & Human Sexuality

Parents are strongly encouraged to educate their children in Catholic morality and teachings about human sexuality. Though Catholic Morality is part of the curriculum, specific components of human sexuality are not taught.

## Emergency Exit Plan

The Emergency Exit Plan, on file in the Director's office, will guide any emergency exit due to weather, fire, or general crisis including a lockdown. Students will participate in lockdown, fire and tornado drills during the PSR year. An emergency exit plan map is posted in every classroom and office.

## Domestic Relations Issues

In compliance with diocesan directives and for your child's safety, the PSR Office must be notified at the time of registration if a child lives with both or only one parent and any custody arrangements. Parents who are: currently separated; have a pending divorce; a shared parenting agreement; a modification of custody status; and/or any other information regarding the child's family situation are required to provide the PSR Office with this information in the form of a copy of a valid and current court order (custodial agreement) or other written documentation that is signed by both parents. Any change in the child's family situation within the PSR year must be immediately reported to the PSR Office. **All information disclosed is strictly confidential to the PSR Office. The non-custodial parent's name must be listed on the Student Transportation Authorization Release, if applicable.**

# Legal Issues

In furtherance of overall philosophy, goals and objectives of the Catholic religious educational experience, the Diocese of Cleveland has specific legal policies to which this PSR program adheres. A complete copy of each policy is available in the PSR Office. Among these documents are:

- Abuse Policy
- AIDS Policy
- Child Abuse Awareness Policy
- Copyright Policy
- Sexual Harassment and Violence Policy
- Weapons Policy
- Youth Gang Policy

The Church of St. Clarence Parish School of Religion maintains “zero tolerance” regarding harassment, violence, abuse of any kind, weapons, and gangs. All our religious education programs operate under the auspices of the Diocese of Cleveland and admit parishioner students of any race, color, sex, or national ethnic origin.

## Privacy Policy

Information provided on registration forms and sacramental records is confidential. No information will be released without the individual’s permission or, in the case of a minor; that of a parent. See the PSR Office for Release or Transfer of records.

## Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones should not be brought to PSR unless absolutely necessary. If cell phones must be brought, they are to be out of sight and silent during class. Cell phones can be confiscated during class if they prove a disruption, and will be returned to the parent at the end of the session. In case of emergency, parents are to call the PSR Office.

# Student Supplies

Your child will receive a textbook and folder on the First Day. A Catholic Bible (see below) should be available in your home for your family's use.

## **All students:**

- pencils or pens
- glue stick
- crayons or markers
- scissors
- highlighter (any light color)

## **In Addition, For Students In Grades 2-8:**

- Grade 2: 1" white binder with clear-view cover pocket
- Grades 3-8: ruled, spiral-bound notebook
- Grades 3-8: New American Bible. Paperback or hardbound, but should be of portable size.

Each item should be identified with the child's name and brought to every class. Catechists may elect to store these items for their class.

# A Commitment to Consistency

We believe that consistency--a commitment to regular rhythms of learning, community, worship and service--helps to nurture the discipleship of people across the years. The PSR program exists to supplement among young people two of these elements: learning and community. We are honored and encouraged by your commitment to consistent rhythms like PSR which support your family's efforts to follow Christ together.

## Office Hours:

***Monday – Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM***

**Grace Kincaid Murphy**  
**Director of Faith Formation**  
**[gkincaid@st-clarence.org](mailto:gkincaid@st-clarence.org)**

**Sandy Neeson**  
**PSR Secretary**  
**[psrsecretary@st-clarence.org](mailto:psrsecretary@st-clarence.org)**

**Absence Calls:**  
**(440)734-2078**  
**[psrsecretary@st-clarence.org](mailto:psrsecretary@st-clarence.org)**

**Be sure to sign up at Flocknote:**  
**Text Clarence to 84576,**  
**follow the link and choose “PSR Family”**  
**You can choose to receive messages as emails or texts.**