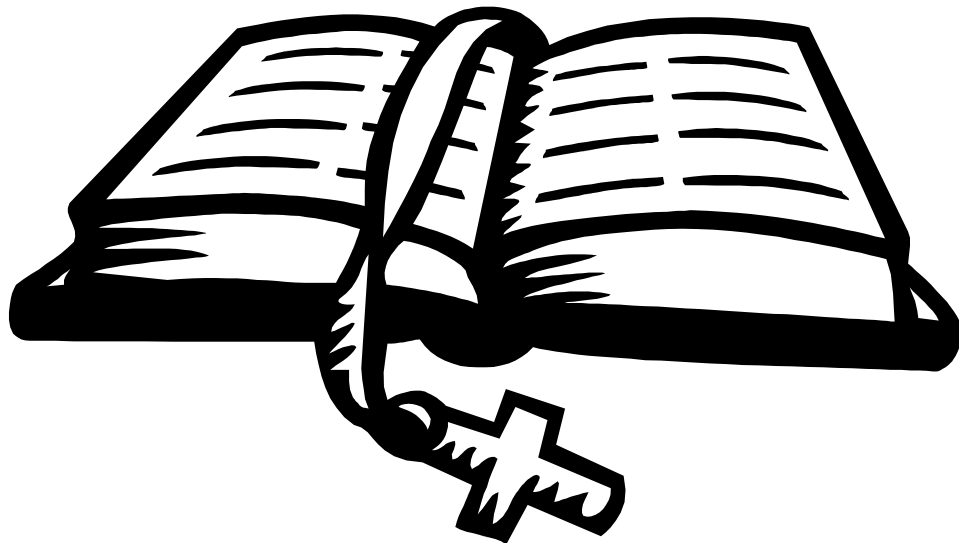


**THE CATHOLIC PARISHES  
OF  
ST. FRANCIS AND ST. JOHN**

***RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
HANDBOOK  
2011-2012***



# CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARD

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CYO HANDBOOK

### Preface

An effective religious education program is essential to proper formation of young people in their Catholic faith. For those who are born into the Catholic Church, and those whose families join the Church when children are young, thorough knowledge of the teachings of the Church must be gained during childhood. This helps to assure that the faith will be an integral part of the lives of Catholics when they become adults. **Parents make a commitment to the education of their children in the faith at the time that they present them for Baptism. Thus, the primary responsibility for education of children in the Catholic faith rests with parents.** However, the Catholic Religious Education Program offered through the parishes of Stillwater should have an important role in supporting the educational efforts of parents. Ideally, the Religious Education Department and parents should cooperate closely in this educational program. The service of parents who volunteer as religious education instructors is invaluable. It is essential that parents make every possible effort to enroll their children in classes and make certain that they attend regularly. Also, it is important that parents, who are not able to serve as volunteers, **attend and participate in religious education classes with their children at least once during each semester (fall and spring).**

### Registration

All families must be registered with the Religious Education Department in order for children to participate in religious education classes and *CYO* programs. Registration for families/students will be conducted annually during the month of August. Children must reach the age of 4 years by September 1 to enter the Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten Program. Children in Grade 1 and above will normally be enrolled in classes corresponding to their grade in school. There will be no charge assessed for enrollment of children in any of the religious education classes.

Children with special needs are welcome in religious education classes. Individual consideration will be given to meet the particular needs of each

child. Parents of children with special needs are encouraged to consult with the Coordinators of Religious Education to determine the best means to serve these children.

## **Section I - Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5 Curriculum**

The curricula that are used for each grade level have received approval from the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). For the Pre-K/Kindergarten class the curriculum is lectionary-based, and follows the liturgical calendar. The content of the Gospel reading serves as the primary source for the classroom lesson each week. The text/workbooks for Grades 1-6 are from the Image of God series that have as their primary source the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Other sources include Sacred Scripture, the documents of Vatican II, and writings of Pope John Paul II. This curriculum is outlined in a series of books that are age-specific and provide a balance between doctrine, scripture, and celebrations that occur throughout the Liturgical Year. This primary emphasis of this series is on the dignity of each child who has been created in the image and likeness of God. The series presents the Catholic faith in a stimulating format that is easy to read and understand.

### **Class Attendance**

Class sessions for Pre-K through Grade 5 are scheduled **from 11:15 AM to 12:30 PM on Sunday at St Francis**. Parents are asked to insure that children arrive and are in their classrooms by this time. However, it is important that students **not arrive for classes before 11:00 AM** because teacher volunteers will not receive and supervise the children until 15 minutes before classes are scheduled to begin. Parents should pick children up after classes have ended, by no later than **12:40 PM**. If a child needs to be dismissed early, parents of the child must notify the class instructor (or the Coordinator of Religious Education) when the child is brought to class.

Attendance records are kept for all religious education classes. Please call the office and leave a message if your children will be absent. Although regular class attendance is important for all children, it is particularly critical for those who are preparing to receive, for the first time, the Sacraments of

Reconciliation and Holy Communion (normally, children in Grade 2). Children who are planning to receive these sacraments must attend 80% of the classes, which means no more than 5 classes may be missed. **When children have more than two unexcused absences, parents will be contacted by the CRE to discuss means for improving attendance and making-up class work that has been missed in order to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.**

### **Safe Arrival and Departure from Classes**

When bringing children to classes, or picking them up after classes, parents must park either in the lot next to the school (entering from the east side and departing from the west side) or next to the church across the street from the school. In either case, parents should escort their children into the school before classes and from the school to their vehicle when classes are dismissed. **Under no circumstances should parents stop on West Street between the church and the school to drop off or to pick-up children!! This creates a serious hazard to the safety of the children!!**

Children in Pre-K/Kindergarten and Grade 1 must be **signed-in** as they are brought to their classrooms by parents or **siblings that are above 5<sup>th</sup> grade** before the session begins, and **signed-out** when they are picked-up at the end of each class session.

### **Classroom Management & Appropriate Dress**

An important aspect of religious education is teaching children to be respectful in word and action, to one-another and to adults who are serving as their instructors. Respect and consideration for other persons are important aspects of Christian life that should be learned at an early age. At the beginning of each school year, children will be informed regarding appropriate behavior during the class sessions, and the consequences of misbehavior. If a student exhibits inappropriate behavior that disrupts the class or shows disrespect for instructors or other students, he/she first will be given a verbal warning. Under no circumstances should an instructor touch/physically discipline a student. If a student continues to exhibit inappropriate behavior after several warnings, he/she should be escorted to the Religious Education Office, and placed under the supervision of the Coordinator, who will discuss

with the student the necessity for improving behavior. (Note: A classroom should never be left unsupervised while a student is escorted to the office.) The student will remain in the office for a period of 'time-out' away from class. If a student is sent to the office to address a disciplinary issue, the student's name and a description of the incident will be recorded and kept on file. Parents of the student will be informed in a timely manner (at the end of the class session or soon thereafter) on any occasion when it is necessary for a student to be sent to the office. If the disruptive behavior continues, parents may be required to attend class with their child in hopes of rectifying the issues. In the event that a student is engaged in fighting or destructive behavior, parents will be notified and a meeting will be arranged with the Coordinator to discuss effective remedies for this behavior.

**All students must be dressed appropriately. No shoes with wheels shall be worn to RE Classes or RE activities. If students are not dressed appropriately, parents will be called to bring suitable attire.**

## **Section II - Grade 6 through 8 Curriculum**

The curricula that are used for each grade level received approval from the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Currently we use the **Call to Faith** as our Religious Education curriculum for grades 6 through 8.

### **Class Attendance**

The basement will be available to the **middle school students** (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades) at 10:45 a.m. At this time there will be youth fellowship, ice breakers, and prayer intentions. Class sessions for Grades 6-8 are scheduled **from 11:15 AM to 12:45 PM on Sunday**. Parents are asked to insure that the students arrive at **St. John** and are in the basement by 11:15 AM. Following youth fellowship and the Rosary, students will then disperse to their appropriate classes for instruction until 12:45 p.m.

If a student needs to be dismissed early, parents of the student must notify the class instructor (or the Coordinator of Religious Education) when the student comes to class.

Attendance records are kept for all religious education classes. If a student has a record of poor class attendance, parents will be contacted to discuss means for improving attendance and making-up class work that has been missed.

### **Classroom Management & Appropriate Dress**

An important aspect of religious education is teaching students to be respectful in word and action, to one-another and to adults who are serving as their instructors. Respect and consideration for other persons are important aspects of Christian life that should be learned at an early age. At the beginning of each school year, students will be informed regarding appropriate behavior during the class sessions, and the consequences of misbehavior. If a student exhibits inappropriate behavior that disrupts the class or show disrespect for instructors or other students, he/she first will be given a verbal warning. Under no circumstances should an instructor touch/physically discipline a student. If the disruptive behavior continues, parents may be required to attend class with their child to assist in correcting the behavior. In the event that a student is engaged in fighting or destructive behavior, parents will be notified and a meeting will be arranged with the Coordinator of Religious Education to discuss effective remedies for this behavior. While on the property of St. Francis/St. John Parishes or while participating in activities sponsored by the Church, students will not use tobacco, alcohol, or any other controlled substances. **Suitable and modest attire is mandatory for all religious education events. Slacks, skirts, jeans, casual shirts, t-shirts are acceptable, depending upon the occasion. Halter-tops, bare midriffs, or excessively low-riding jeans are never acceptable. All students must be dressed appropriately. If not, parents will be called to bring suitable attire.**

## **Section III - Grade 9 through 12**

### **Pre-Confirmation (9<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

Class sessions for Grade 9 meet each **Sunday evening from 6:30 PM to 7:45 PM** at the St. Francis Center. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade will use the Bible and the Catechism as its curriculum. All classroom management and appropriate dress rules for secondary students apply to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade as well.

### **Formation for Confirmation (Grades 10 and 11)**

Formation classes for the Sacrament of Confirmation meet each **Sunday evening from 6:30 PM to 7:45 PM** at St. Francis. A 2-year period of preparation is required for all young people who receive this sacrament. Preparation begins in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and culminates with the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation at the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Diocesan policies state that Confirmation programs should emphasize the teachings of the Catholic Church, a life of personal relationship and prayer with God and a life of service to our fellow man. In this we "learn about Christ," we "walk with Christ," and in service we "become Christ" to those around us.

Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit - His actions, His gifts, His biddings - in order to be more capable of assuming the Apostolic responsibility of Christian life. To this end, catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. Confirmation perfects Baptismal Grace; it is the sacrament which calls on the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation (as sons and daughters of God), incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with Her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds. (From the Catechism of Catholic Church)

Some of the highlights in the preparation of each student for Confirmation include: choosing a patron saint under whose name he/she will be confirmed; choosing a sponsor (someone whose faith life has provided a good example and to whom young people may look to as a good role model); participation in at

least one religious retreat; building a more solid community relationship with other Catholic youth; and performing at least one major service project during each year. **Regular attendance at classes (80% attendance required) and other events of the preparation program for Confirmation is mandatory!** If classes or other parts of the preparation program are missed, students/parents will meet with the Coordinator to make arrangements to complete work that has been missed.

### **Post-Confirmation - Faith in Action (12<sup>th</sup> Grade and other Confirmed Teens)**

Students in Grade 12 and those previously confirmed will meet each Sunday evening at **6:30 PM** at the CYO House (717 S. Hester) for discussions relating to their lives as adult members of the Catholic Church. These classes will cover topics such as a means for continuing their growth in the Catholic faith, making decisions within the framework of Christian morality, and accepting responsibilities to Church, family, and society as an adult. This class will involve movie reviews and discussions, bible studies, service projects, and guest speakers.

### **Classroom Management & Appropriate Dress**

At the beginning of each school year, students will be informed regarding acceptable behavior and appropriate dress for class sessions and other activities associated with formation for Confirmation. If a student exhibits disruptive behavior or shows disrespect for instructors or other students, he/she will first be given a verbal warning. If disruptive behavior continues, the problem will be discussed with the Coordinator for Religious Education, and parents may be contacted to arrange a meeting to discuss the most effective approach for correcting the behavior. While on the property of St. Francis/St. John Parishes, or while participating in activities sponsored by the Church, students will not use tobacco, alcohol, or any other controlled substances. **Suitable and modest attire is mandatory for all religious education events. Slacks, skirts, jeans, casual shirts, t-shirts are acceptable, depending upon the occasion. Halter-tops, bare midriffs, or excessively low-riding jeans are never acceptable. All students must be dressed appropriately. If not, parents will be called to bring suitable attire.**

## SECTION IV

### CATHOLIC MORAL TEACHING ON ISSUES RELATING TO HUMAN SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTION

Addressing concerns relating to human sexuality and reproduction is of critical importance to the future of our society in general, and to the lives of all people as members of society and of the Catholic Church. It is important that, by the time they reach adulthood, all Catholic people become familiar with the teachings of the Church regarding topics such as the proper use of God's gift of human sexuality, the difficulties posed by same-sex attraction, and the intrinsic evil of abortion. However, these topics must be addressed in the proper manner. The Catholic Religious Education Program follows three general guidelines for discussion of these topics; **1)** parents must be informed when discussion of human sexuality is going to take place, have the opportunity to give input to these discussions, and the right to request that their children not participate in these discussions; **2)** discussion of human sexuality must be conducted in an age-appropriate manner; **3)** there will be no discussions like those that are typical of '**sex education**' classes taught in public schools (descriptions of anatomy or function of genital organs). The Coordinators for Religious Education will have the primary responsibility of ensuring that guidelines pertaining to discussion of human sexuality are communicated to catechists and that these guidelines are followed. The coordinators will be expected to keep CREB and the Pastors for the Catholic parishes informed regarding classes in which discussions of human sexuality are planned, and the nature of discussion that are occurring in religious education classes.

**Parental notification** of discussions on human sexuality in religious education classes may best be accomplished by requiring that catechists provide parents with a schedule of topics that are planned for the school year. This will give parents an opportunity to respond in a timely manner when they wish to have additional information about discussion topics or have their children excused from the discussions. Catechists are advised to prepare for distribution to parents, an outline or lesson plan for specific classes in which discussions are to include human sexuality. This is particularly important for classes involving high school students in which the dignity of the human person (the human body) and sanctity of the gift of human sexuality is discussed.

The **age-appropriate** nature of discussions relating to human sexuality must always be a concern of catechists. Such discussions should not occur in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade classes. When these topics are included in sixth through eighth grade classes, catechists must not use graphic descriptions when discussing topics such as abortion. Catechists must be especially careful when answering questions so that responses do not include information that is not appropriate for these students. Discussion of topics relating to human sexuality is more essential to the moral formation of students in grades nine through twelve. Classes may be devoted to discussion of Pope John Paul's "Theology of the Body" which emphasizes the dignity and sanctity of the human person and the gift of sexuality.

Typical **sex education** classes in which the anatomical structure of genital organs or the process of sexual intercourse are discussed are not considered to be appropriate for religious education. Parents are encouraged to discuss these topics with their children in their homes. Discussions in religious education classes are intended to assist students in making appropriate moral decisions to promote their dignity as human persons and protect the sanctity of the gift of human sexuality.

## **SECTION V**

### **CATHOLIC YOUTH ORGANIZATION (CYO)**

#### **Description of CYO Activities**

While the focus of the first four sections of the Religious Education Handbook is the educational program that is designed to enhance knowledge of our Catholic faith, the focus of this section is the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO). This section provides guidelines for the social and community service aspects of the Catholic religious education program for youth ranging from Grade 6 through Grade 12. Through CYO Catholic youth learn to put their faith into action. The youth of our Catholic community are encouraged to develop friendships and interact socially with their peers in ways that promote respect for the dignity and sanctity of every person. For meetings and other activities, the CYO is divided into two groups; one includes students in Grades 6 through 8, and the second is comprised of students in grades 9 through 12. Each of these groups will have regular meetings (2-4 per month) and special events such as retreats, movie nights, inspirational speakers, and service projects several

times per semester. Several service projects will be planned to involve *CYO* members in work to assist people who have limited financial resources, to assist the elderly who cannot always take care of themselves, and to help maintain our church buildings.

One important goal of *CYO* programs is to promote an understanding of the important role of modesty and chastity in interpersonal relationships. The basic concepts of modesty and chastity will be introduced in grades 6 through 8, so that when these young people begin dating relationships in high school they will be better prepared to remain chaste in these relationships. They will have the knowledge and confidence to set appropriate limits on physical intimacy in these relationships, as they begin to understand the proper integration of physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of adult vocations such as marriage and religious life. In addition to developing guidelines for interpersonal relationships, members of *CYO* are also encouraged to develop a life-long commitment to stewardship through service to other people in the community of Stillwater.

### **Goals of Catholic Youth Ministry**

The United States Council of Catholic Bishops has recently published a document entitled, "Renewing the Vision: a Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry" that expresses a renewed commitment to the development of Catholic youth as disciples of Jesus Christ and life-long members of the Catholic Church. The three primary goals for Catholic youth ministry discussed in this document are reviewed below....

**To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.** In our community and around the world, young people are searching for ways to contribute to an enhanced quality of life for all people. They are looking for challenges; they are looking for worthwhile causes; for significant ways that they can help those in need. As a faith community, we must encourage our Catholic youth to offer their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ through....

- Religious education programs that evangelize young people and draw them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Preparing young people for discipleship by engaging them in a program of catechesis, service, and ministry.

- Helping youth to explore vocations for life, and assisting them in developing leadership skills that will be valuable in any vocation to which they devote their lives.

**To encourage young people to participate in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.** Like their parents before them, young people are striving to be part of a community. They wish to feel connected to a group of people with whom they can share common interests and goals. As a faith community, we must assist young people in establishing strong connections to their families, their church, and the community where they reside through....

- Supporting parents in their efforts to educate their children in the Catholic faith and encouraging the participation of families in the life of the Church and the entire community.
- Integrating Catholic youth into the liturgy and ministry of the Catholic parish community through active participation in youth groups such as CYO.
- Encouraging youth to develop a commitment to community service as their faith leads them to action.

**To foster personal and spiritual growth of each young person to develop a strong foundation in the Catholic faith.** During their years as teenagers, young people experience tremendous physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual changes. It is critical that this Church community offers a place for young people to grow in positive ways; a place to learn the truths of their faith; a place to develop an appreciation for the manner in which teachings of the Catholic Church contribute in a positive way to a fruitful life through....

- Supporting the development of healthy, competent, caring, and faith-filled youth.
- Addressing unique social and religious needs of youth throughout adolescent development.
- Encouraging young people to respect the dignity and sanctity of every person in all interpersonal relationships.
- Assisting young people in setting appropriate standards for modesty in dress and behavior during adolescent development.
- Encouraging appropriate bounds of modesty and chastity to promote a strong spiritual component in dating relationships.

In summary, an effective youth ministry program is one that actively engages young people because it is directed **To Youth** = as the Catholic community exercises its pastoral role in meeting young peoples needs. It is a program that emphasizes involvement **With Youth** = as young people share a common responsibility with adults in fulfilling the mission of the Church. This means that important aspects of ministry are conducted **By Youth** = as young people have the opportunity to plan and conduct their own service projects as they put their faith into action. The ministry program must be clearly designed **For Youth** = as pastors, RE coordinators, and other adult volunteers advocate for the needs and concerns of young people.

### **Supervision of the Catholic Youth Ministry Program**

This program is conducted in accordance with guidelines provided by the Diocese of Tulsa, and under the direction of the Pastors for St. John and St. Francis parishes. The Catholic Religious Education Board (CREB) is advisory to the Pastors in matters relating to the Catholic Youth Ministry program including general guidelines for youth activities, the annual budget for *CYO*, and hiring of the Coordinator of Religious Education and Youth Ministry (grades 6-12). Additional information on qualifications and responsibilities of the person holding the position of Coordinator are provided in the position description for the Coordinator of Religious Education and Youth Ministry. This position description has been prepared by CREB and approved by the Pastors for St. John and St. Francis parishes. The Coordinator is expected to work with youth in planning and supervising activities that provide opportunities for young people to integrate Catholic teachings into all aspects of their lives. Basically, the Coordinator serves in a critical role of assisting young people who are in transition from childhood to young adulthood so that they mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ. It is critical to the success of the *CYO* program that parents volunteer to assist the Coordinator in supervising activities throughout the year as the Diocese of Tulsa has set adult/child ratios that must be met. The Coordinator and all adult volunteers who assist with youth ministry must attend VIRTUS training, have a background check completed, and sign a Volunteer Code of Conduct document before beginning to work with the *CYO* program.

## **Requirements for Participation in the Catholic Youth Ministry Program**

Catholic youth who wish to participate in the *CYO* program must be registered with the Religious Education Department. Registration is conducted annually during the months of August and September. Catholic youth are encouraged to invite their friends who belong to other religious denominations to participate in activities of the *CYO*. Most activities will take place at facilities located at either St. John or St. Francis parish. When activities are planned at locations other than parish facilities, **permission must be given by parents in writing** before young people will be allowed to participate. Obtaining permission from parents for youth to participate serves to inform parents regarding the activity that is planned and to establish 'for the record' that parents have given permission for their sons/daughters to take part in the activity. Permission slips must be provided to the Coordinator for both Catholic youth, and young people of other denominations who plan to participate in activities. Whenever they are taking part in activities sponsored by the Catholic Church, young people will not be permitted to use tobacco (in any form), alcohol, or any other controlled substance. Suitable and modest dress is mandatory for all youth ministry activities. Slacks, skirts, jeans, casual shirts, and t-shirts are acceptable, depending upon the occasion. Halter-tops, bare midriffs, or excessively low-riding jeans are never acceptable. When participating in *CYO* activities, youth are asked to limit their use of cell phones and other electronic devices. It is requested that these devices **not be used at all** when youth are participating in prayers, bible studies, religious discussions, retreats, and service projects.