

Religious Education and Sacramental Preparation Program 2024-2025 Handbook



Our Mission Statement

Faith Seeking Understanding

The parish's Office of Faith Formation seeks to teach children, youth and adults the appropriate knowledge of their Catholic faith and religious practices. Our vocation and ministry are to promote understanding by providing the Catholic education and skills necessary to become faithful and fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ. Age appropriate, they will assume the responsibility as baptized and vital members of the parish and faith community to be able to participate in the Catholic Church's mission to proclaim, celebrate, and serve in the building up of God's Kingdom on earth.

St. Michael Catholic Church

574 Eighth Street / P.O. Box 199

Calhan, CO 80808

Office: (719) 347-2290

Website: <https://saintmichaelcalhan.diocs.org>



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July 26, 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Greetings and blessings in the name of Our Risen Lord Jesus Christ!

By enrolling your child(ren) in the St. Michael Parish's Religious Education Program, you are enlarging your family community beyond the Domestic Church in the home! Your family, our catechists, the parish staff, and other parish families will work together to pass on the teachings, practices, and traditions of our wonderful Roman Catholic faith.

As our beloved Pope Saint John Paul II explained, in the *Domestic Church* there is no question that a child's faith is grown and nurtured best by parents/guardians who lead the way. Today, it is amazing just how much children absorb and learn by watching what their parents do and listening to what they say. A good example teaches a child the joy of the Mass, the healing power of Reconciliation, and the closeness of God and peace that can be found in prayer!

All of us involved in the Religious Education Program are honored to be a part of your family's continuing faith journey. We are an available extension to assist you as the Domestic Church. With your help, we will do everything we can to help your child(ren) grow and develop a much closer relationship with God. We will provide opportunities for learning, prayer, activities, fun, and of course the Sacraments.

As your Parochial Administrator, I ask that we collectively help your child(ren) learn the Catholic faith. Let us remember and live out, the adage you may have heard from your parents or grandparents: "*The family that prays together, stays together!*"

May God bless each of you abundantly, as we continue our faith journey together.

Sincerely
Yours in Christ,

Fr. Bob Newbury Jr.
Pastor

Dear Parents, Students, Catechists, Volunteers and Parishioners:

Welcome back to a new and faith-filled year of Religious Education (R.E.). This year's focus and theme: "***Becoming an Intentional Disciple of Christ***" inspires us to love God and others; by emulating the instructions of Christ by putting them into action in our daily lives and stewarding the gift of God's love and spreading the Good News with the whole world.

If you are new to our parish or religious education, welcome to our parish family! If you have questions or would like to get involved with one of our many parish ministries or groups please contact the Parish Office for more information.

You and your family are extremely important to us. We appreciate the opportunity support and assist you in your relationship with Christ. We are here to work with you and your family wherever you are in building a strong relationship with Christ and His Church through Prayer, Scripture, Liturgy, the Sacraments, and the Traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.

Registration for the 2024-2025 R.E. Year has begun.

Please complete the registration packet and provide copies of sacramental certificates for participants seeking to receive sacraments during 2024-2025. Copies should be attached to the completed registration packet (one per family please) and returned on or before the first day of classes:

➡ **Sunday, September 8, 2024.** (immediately following the 10 a.m. Sabbath Mass)

The information provided by families is stored and protected as Confidential information and will only be used for R.E. program purposes. It is essential for us to have current information on file for each family and child, to keep parents/guardians well informed and to maintain a safe environment for our parish's children and youth.

It is our priority to provide faith-filled support and guidance for the children, youth, and families at the St. Michael Parish. You are encouraged to also visit the parish's website or contact the parish office with any questions.

Peace in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rev. Bob Newbury". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. Bob Newbury
Pastor

SAFETY FOR ALL FAMILIES:

Safety for St. Michael Parish families is our first priority. The St. Michael Parish complies with the Mandates of the Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. All our catechists are screened and undergo year-round child safety training. We follow the Diocesan Policy Guidelines for Those Working with Children and Youth, as well as the Diocese of Colorado Springs' Sexual Misconduct Policy. We encourage and promote a child safe environment.

CLASS ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

PARISH MEMBERSHIP:

As Religious Education (RE) takes a total commitment of and for the family (who comprise the Domestic Church). Diocesan and parish policy require that all families enrolling their children in the St. Michael Parish RE programs be registered in the St. Michael Parish. We ask that you please ensure that your St. Michael Parish registration information is current in the parish's main office, so enrollment documentation can be processed timely and accurately.

Additionally, please consider sharing your time and talents within the St. Michael Parish. In doing so, your parish becomes more fruitful, and you become a model of Christ for the children. If you would like some assistance in how you can share your time and talents within the ministries of the parish, please do not hesitate to contact the parish main office at (719) 347-2290.

ENROLLMENT FEES:

Enrollment fees for children and youth RE and sacramental preparation programs are standard in parishes and dioceses within the U.S.

The enrollment fee of \$20.00 per student, not more than \$40.00 per family per R.E. and \$20.00 per student, not more than \$40.00 per family for the Sacramental Preparation calendar year, is the norm for children attending RE at the St Michael Parish. The fee covers books and learning materials for the year. Financial assistance is available on a case-by-case basis for those families who simply are financially challenged. Please speak with the St. Michael Pastor for more details.

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATION:

In support of growing faith formation, weekly attendance in the RE classroom and for weekend liturgy (Mass) is expected for all levels of religious education.

It is understood that unavoidable circumstances and sickness may affect a child or participant's attendance in scheduled classes or activities. If possible, please inform the catechists and the Faith Formation Office if a child or participant will be absent from a class or activity. Timely and effective communications between us ensures everyone achieves the goals of RE curriculum, class events, and faith-based projects.

In general, the acceptable norm of a total of three (3) excused absences are permitted per calendar year. An increased number of absences, naturally hinders and, at times, adversely affects the student(s)/participant(s) flow of learning. Student(s)/participant(s) are expected to make up any class reading assignments or activities missed due to the absence/s. This is especially important in Sacramental Preparation classes when the total number of sessions may be six (6) to ten (10). Excessive absences can cause the Church and its Pastor to postpone reception of a desired and anticipated sacrament, to a later date for a child or youth participant.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP POLICY:

To ensure the utmost safety during morning and evening classes, children should enter and exist through the upper level (main) entrance only please.

TARDINESS:

Please bring your child to class, even if you anticipate being late. Please make sure you sign the attendance sheet prior to leaving the classroom, if possible. If the class is not in the designated classroom at the time of drop-off, please bring your child to the Faith Formation Office.

FOR YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY please **never leave your child alone in a classroom that is not attended by an adult catechist**. Always wait for your child's catechist(s) to arrive before leaving and please always sign your child in and out of the class/classroom. This is part of our compliance of the Diocese of Colorado Springs' and Parish's Safe Environment Policy.

EARLY RELEASE:

Please let your catechists and/or the Faith Formation Office know if you will need to pick up your child earlier than the scheduled release time (12:00 p.m.). Prior to leaving with your child early, please remember to sign them out of the class, if possible. This helps us to ensure and promotes our accountability of every child or youth, who has been left in our care.

LATE PICK-UP:

As you may already know, our catechists are volunteers who give generously of their time and talent to help teach and share our faith, experiences, and knowledge with the parish's children and youth. Catechists usually stay approximately 10 minutes after class for parents running late. Please call the Faith Formation Office and leave a message to let us know if you are running late to pick-up your child; that way the catechists can prepare.

If you are late for pick-up and your child's designated classroom is empty, please come to the Faith Formation Office. Catechists are required to bring any child that hasn't been picked up from class to the Faith Formation Office until the parent/guardian arrives.

NOT A PARENT/GUARDIAN PICKING UP A CHILD:

Diocesan policy requires written permission from the parent or legal guardian authorizing another person to pick up their child. If someone other than immediate family wishes to pick up your child, please notify the Faith Formation Office, who provides a simple “Permission to Pick-up Authorization Form” in the registration packet given to all families each year during the initial registration process. This form should include everyone you authorize to pick up your child during that year. This form is maintained on file in the child’s/youth’s RE folder. No catechist is authorized to release a child to anyone other than a parent or guardian without this authorization form. If a last-minute emergency or otherwise unplanned event arises which prevents you from picking up your child, please inform the catechist(s) or the Faith Formation Office in person or by telephone who will be picking-up your child after class.

DRESS CODE:

The St. Michael Parish always promotes respectful and modest dress attire. Children and youth are to be appropriately dressed for class; as if they were attending the Liturgy of the Mass.

For example: **NO** bare midriffs, bare backs, backless or strapless tops, short-shorts, tights as pants, “spunks” or bathing suit tops of any kind. Additionally, no inappropriate artwork, statements or lettering on clothing also please.

VISITORS:

Please check with your child’s catechist(s) in person or by telephone about bringing a visitor prior to the class. Visitors or friends are welcome, if the class is not disrupted. We ask that you please limit friend visits in the classes to no more than two (2) visits per RE calendar year. As we know, RE class time is well-planned and organized, focused and limited, and sacramental preparation is extremely important.

BAD WEATHER POLICY:

The Faith Formation Office follows the local Calhan Public School Schedule. If school is closed in Calhan, there will be no RE classes. If there is severe weather during the period preceding the scheduled RE class, please check the parish’s website for instructions or a cancellation advisory. Please use your discretion as a parent/guardian: If the weather is severe or the roadways are too dangerous to travel on, please err on the side of caution and safety -- stay at home. Weather related events are considered authorized/permitted absences and your child may make up any missed work later when the classes resume.

YOUR COMMITMENT TO FAITH FORMATION:

A fruitful and positive parish-level RE Program is always dependent upon a committed relationship between the catechist, student, and parent/guardian. Therefore:

- **Attend Weekly Mass** – Celebrating the Sunday Liturgy of the Mass (to receive the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist) is what nourishes our minds, spirits and souls – keeping us in a strong and prayerful relationship with Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Practice regular participation of the sacraments** – Receiving the Holy Eucharist and regularly participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) keeps us spiritually healthy and a model of Christian discipleship for our children and youth.
- **Be involved** – The Domestic Church (at home with parents/guardians) is integral to any RE program. How? Some examples include: Checking your child’s RE homework – asking questions to check their comprehension; ask them about what lesson they learned in class; pray and read the Bible with your child at home. Being involved and consistent will establish and build a sound Catholic foundation of faith in knowledge of our Church faith practices, traditions, the sacraments and sacred scripture. Together, we will teach children and youth – the current and future Catholic Church – how to engage the world and one another with our Catholic faith.
- **Volunteer** – Become an active member of the Church! Volunteer for one of the ministries, join a prayer or Bible study group, or teach children and youth more about their faith. Christ calls each of us as a disciple to put our faith into action! Through conscious and generous Stewardship of God’s gifts of Time, Talents, and Treasures we can make a difference and bring others to know Christ.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and (First) Eucharist

(Sacrament Preparation/Catechesis is separate from and in addition to, parish R.E. classes)

As primary educators of their child(ren), **parents/guardians** have the first and most important influence (as the *Domestic Church*) on the faith formation of their child(ren). The best and most fruitful catechesis process involves first the parents/guardians, supported and supplemented by systematic catechesis by catechists in the parish. A child may receive these sacraments, if:

- ❖ At least one parent/guardian should be a practicing, active and registered member of the St. Michael Parish.
- ❖ A current baptismal certificate (issued within the last 6 months) has been provided to the St. Michael Parish. (Note: If your child was baptized at the St. Michael Parish, please check with the parish's main office to verify that there is an entry in the parish's baptismal registry. If this is verified, no further action by the parent/guardian is needed. If, however, the baptism occurred at another church, the parent/guardian is responsible for requesting/obtaining a baptismal certificate for the St. Michael Pastor/Parochial Administrator.)
- ❖ The parent/guardian and the child are expected to actively participate in Sunday Liturgy of the Mass every week.* Parents/guardians must also attend a brief orientation and initial preparation class for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.
- ❖ A child must have attained the age of seven (7), which is considered the age of reason, and have completed the previous year of formal RE in a Catholic school, the St. Michael Parish RE or in their previous parish's RE Program.
- ❖ A child must be currently participating in a RE program of systematic, approved catechesis either in a Catholic school or as a registered student of a parish program. Concurrently, the child must be enrolled in a parish process of preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist, in which children from the Catholic schools, home schooling, and the catechetical ministry program unite. They must participate in all the communal dimensions (rituals, prayer services, worships, etc.) and other requirements determined by the parish's Pastor.

* Since the sacraments are a community celebration, sacramental preparation should occur in a community setting so we can initiate the child(ren) into the practicing Catholic community. We are here to help you deepen your child(ren)'s understanding of the Church's rich teachings by providing weekly classes and numerous opportunities to grow spiritually and morally. Bringing your child to class helps us do a better job to ensure active involvement in liturgical celebrations, as well as teaching children to turn to Christ and the Church to receive His sacramental graces, mercy, forgiveness and strength.

Please note that more than two (2) absences from sacramental preparation classes may jeopardize their preparation and may cause a delay (i.e., postponement) of their receiving the sacrament(s) until next year.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Celebration of the **Sacraments of Reconciliation and (First) Eucharist**
(First Holy Communion Policy on Dress Attire)

(Sacrament Preparation/Catechesis is separate from and in addition to, parish R.E. classes)

As many parents, guardians and grandparents today may recall, traditionally those who receive their first Sacrament of the Eucharist have traditionally worn new, dress clothes to the Liturgy of the Mass; reflecting the significance of this special and sacramental event in their lives.

At the St. Michael Parish:

Boys – May wear a suit with a white shirt and tie. A white or light colored, collared dress shirt, tie, dress pants, a belt, dress shoes and socks are also appropriate attire.

(Note: We do not *require* you to purchase a suit or a sport coat. If you have one or want your child to wear one, that's fine. Boys should wear a shirt with a collar. A tie is good, but not required. Dress or other suitable pants are fine also. There is no specific color of pants, shirt or tie required. If your child doesn't possess "dress" shoes and there is no plan to buy them, they are encouraged to wear their best shoes (no jeans, tennis shoes, flip-flops or sneakers please).

Girls – May wear a white dress, which is a symbol of purity and a reminder of their baptism (with or without a veil). The dress should extend to the knee or below. If the dress is sleeveless, a white sweater, shawl or other appropriate shoulder covering should be worn during the Liturgy of the Holy Mass. Girls may wear white socks or white tights with their dress shoes also.

(Note: We do not *require* a white dress or a veil. The Catholic Church no longer requires females to cover their heads upon entering the church and during the Liturgy of the Holy Mass. It is acceptable, if girls chose to wear nothing on their head. If your child does not possess a dress, a nicely coordinated and appropriate shirt and pants combination is fine also. Additionally, if your child doesn't possess "dress" shoes and there is no plan to buy them, they are encouraged to wear their best shoes (no jeans, tennis shoes, flip-flops or sneakers please).

Girls are not permitted to wear gloves while receiving Holy Communion. While they look beautiful in pictures, they are not appropriate for receiving the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Christ. Reception of Holy Communion must be with both bare hands.

As a brief reminder, if your child brings a purse, prayer book or rosary with them, we ask you to hold on to them (in the pew) – to eliminate the possibility of them coming forward with them, while also trying to receive their first Holy Communion. In other words, they need to come forward with empty and bare hands please. *

The Sacrament of First Communion will be conferred on Sunday at the 10 a.m. Mass on the **Solemnity of Corpus Christi** (Sunday, June 22, 2025)

* When will a priest or deacon bless a child's religious items? Statutes, prayer books, crosses, necklaces, rosaries or other religious items may be blessed before or after the Divine Liturgy of the Mass.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Celebration of the **Sacrament of Confirmation** (for those under the age of 18)

(Sacrament Preparation/Catechesis is separate from and in addition to, parish R.E. classes)

As primary educators of their child(ren), **parents/guardians** have the first and most important influence (as the *Domestic Church*) on the faith formation of their child(ren). The best and most fruitful catechesis process involves first the parents/guardians, supported and supplemented by systematic catechesis by catechists in the parish.

The Sacrament of Confirmation confers a *spiritual character* upon the recipient. By the new and special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the baptized continue and perfect their path of Christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit and are more closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and more firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to Christ and so spered and defend the faith (Canon #879).

Prerequisites for Candidacy: (published by the Bishop of the Diocese of Colorado Springs)

- ❖ At least one parent/guardian should be a practicing, active and registered member of the St. Michael Parish.
- ❖ Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation requires the candidate to have previously received the Sacraments of [Reconciliation,] Baptism and Holy Eucharist.
 - As proof of the reception of these foundational sacraments, a current baptismal certificate (issued within the last 6 months) needs to be provided to the St. Michael Parish. (Note: If your child was baptized at the St. Michael Parish, please check with the parish's main office to verify that there is an entry in the parish's baptismal registry. If this is verified, no further action by the parent/guardian is necessary. If, however, the baptism occurred at another church, the parent/guardian is responsible for requesting/obtaining a baptismal certificate for the St. Michael Pastor/Parochial Administrator.)
- ❖ The parent/guardian and the child are expected to actively participate in Sunday Liturgy of the Mass every week. Parents/guardians must also attend a brief orientation and initial preparation class for the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- ❖ The Parent/Guardian and the Sponsor must be practicing and registered Catholics, attending weekly Mass on regular basis, and be in good standing with the Church.
- ❖ The candidates (expected to be confirmed in the 8th grade) must have participated in the previous year's RE program and be enrolled in this year's RE program, and be participating in the parish's sacramental preparation process for the reception of Confirmation. They must participate in all communal dimensions (retreats, catechesis,

etc.) in the sacramental preparation process and any other requirements determined by the Parish Pastor.

- ❖ Candidates must choose a suitable sponsor, who will accompany them during the sacramental preparation process and after the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, which meets the following requirements:
 - Have been chosen by the candidate personally and have a significant relationship with the candidate;
 - Have attained the age of sixteen (16);
 - Be a fully initiated, confirmed, practicing Catholic participating in Sunday liturgy; leading a life of strong moral character and faith; and not bound by any canonical penalty imposed or declared; (i.e., be in good standing with the Church); and
 - Is not the mother or father of the candidate.
- ✓ If your child has never attended RE classes or did not attend RE classes last year, we welcome you to enroll your child in this year's (2024-2025) RE program, to reenroll in next year's (2025-2026) RE program, and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation during 2026.

* Since the sacraments are a communal celebration, sacramental preparation should occur in a communal liturgical celebration, so we can initiate the child(ren) into the practicing Catholic Church and local community. We are here to help you deepen your child(ren)'s understanding of the Church's rich teachings by providing weekly classes and numerous opportunities to grow spiritually and morally. Bringing your child to class helps us do a better job to ensure active involvement in liturgical celebrations, as well as teaching children to turn to Christ and the Church to receive His sacramental graces, mercy, forgiveness and strength.

Please note that more than two (2) absences from sacramental preparation classes may jeopardize their preparation and may cause a delay (i.e., postponement) of their reception of the sacrament(s).

GUIDELINES FOR THE SACRAMENT CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES' DRESS ATTIRE

(Received from the Diocese of Colorado Springs Office of the Bishop)

While the Church greatly respects the uniqueness and individuality in each of its members, it holds that modesty is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and that “*Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person.*” (CCC, #2521-2525)

It is the spirit of fostering respect for each other and for the sanctity of the Sacrament of confirmation, that we set forth a code of dress consistent with the Church’s view of modesty for the solemn beauty of this occasion.

Remember: The manner of one’s dress shows self-respect, respect for one another, and respect for the Church’s liturgy and occasion.

Gentleman – Dress in good taste is essential and should be appropriate for important life occasions (Church, banquets, and special occasions): Dress shirt with collar and tie a (sports coat or suit jacket is optional). Shirts should be tucked in, and pants fitted at the waist with a belt. Shoes should be appropriate for the outfit and church environment. [Please no jeans, t-shirts, flip-flops or dirty, tennis shoes.]

Ladies – Dress in good taste is essential and should be appropriate for important life occasions (Church, banquets, and special occasions, but not formal or semi-formal). Shoulders must be covered. No plunging or revealing necklines. No bare mid rifts. Skirts and dresses should fall in length below the knee and not be tight or suggestive. Pant suits or full-length pants with an appropriate top are acceptable. Please no shorts or capris. Shoes should be appropriate for the outfit and the church environment. [Please no jeans, t-shirts, flip-flops or dirty, tennis shoes.]

Ladies are not permitted to wear gloves while receiving Holy Communion. They look beautiful in pictures, but they are not appropriate for receiving the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Jesus, the Christ. As a brief reminder, if they bring a purse, prayer book or rosary with them, we ask you to hold on to them in your pew – to eliminate them having to hold them while also receiving the anointing with Sacred Chrism for the Sacrament of Confirmation or later, Holy Communion. In other words, they need to come forward with empty and bare hands.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated on a date selected and scheduled by the bishop himself. As soon as it is announced, it will be disseminated and announced accordingly.

When will the bishop, priest or deacon bless a child’s religious items? Statutes, prayer books, crosses, necklaces, rosaries or other religious items may be blessed after the Liturgy of the Mass.