

St. Joseph Catholic Church

Parish School of Religion (PSR)



Parent & Student Handbook

2025-2026

Faith Formation Office

440.238.5555 ext. 107 or 108 (ext. 109 after 4:00 pm on Wednesday only)

Website: www.sjohio.org/ministry/psr

Faith Formation Staff

Director of Faith Formation	Linda Zvoncheck	440.238.5555, ext. 107 lzvoncheck@sjohio.org
Office Assistant	Moirra Cohen	440.238.5555, ext. 108 mcohen@sjohio.org

Faith Formation Office Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Wednesday	9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.
Friday	9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

During regular office hours the PSR Office is located in the Church building. You can visit us by coming to the Main Office of the church. On Wednesdays during PSR, we are located in the Sts. Joseph and John school building (12580 Pearl Road) inside Door “O”. Please enter and exit the school building using only Door “O”.

We ask that all correspondence either be mailed to the church address at 12700 Pearl Road, Strongsville, Ohio 44136 or dropped off during PSR in the school building PSR Office.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- PSR classes are for students in grades 1 through 8 who do not attend a parochial school.
- PSR classes are held in Sts. Joseph and John Interparochial School building, on Wednesdays, October through April, from 6:45 – 8:00 p.m.
- Use only Door “O” to enter and exit the building for PSR.

PROCEDURES

- Radios, toys, snacks, candies, and general reading materials are not to be brought in to class. Eating, drinking, or chewing gum are not allowed in the school building.
- Any behavior or articles brought to the classroom that hinder instruction will not be tolerated.
- Damage to other people’s property will not be tolerated.
- **Electrical devices are to be kept out of sight and turned off during class time. Students violating this provision will have the device confiscated. Confiscated items may be picked up by the parent/guardian in the PSR Office, right inside Door “O” after class.**
- Students must wear clean clothes to PSR. Cleats or other sports practice clothes are not to be brought into the building.
- Parents and visitors are not permitted in the building without the knowledge of the Faith Formation/PSR Office staff. If you would like to visit your child’s class, arrangements should be made through the Faith Formation/PSR Office at least one day before class.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is important that students be regular and punctual in attending PSR. Students are expected to attend ALL PSR classes. While sickness or an occasional conflict may occur, PSR should be the primary commitment for the family on Wednesday evenings. Please call our office or email the Director of Faith Formation if your child will be absent from a PSR class. Once a student has missed three or more classes, the parent should call the Director of Faith Formation to discuss continual conflicts or problems with attendance. At that point, options, including additional classes and home schooling, can be implemented in order to provide the student with proper catechesis.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL OF STUDENTS

Please be aware of the traffic pattern that is in place during PSR. A map of the traffic pattern is available on the website (www.sjohio.org/psr). Also, for the protection of your children, we ask that parents bring first and second graders to their classrooms at the beginning of each class. The children in Grades 1 and 2 also need to be picked up at their classrooms after class.

Children and parents are to enter and exit the building only through Door “O”. This is the only entrance that will be unlocked before and after classes.

The entrance door “O” will be unlocked 5 minutes before dismissal. For the safety of your children and so that classes are not disrupted by noise in the hallways, the doors will not be opened prior to that time. PLEASE WAIT IN YOUR CARS IF YOU ARRIVE EARLY.

Please be on time to pick up your children. Any child not picked up on time will be brought to the PSR Office right inside Door “O” to wait.

EARLY PICK-UP PROCEDURES

If you need to pick up your child/children before the end of a PSR class, please send in a note with your child and have them give it to his/her teacher stating the time that you will be picking them up. Parents are to come to the PSR Office inside Door “O” to sign out their child. All children being picked up early will be dismissed only from the PSR Office.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

If Strongsville City Schools are closed during the day because of inclement weather, our Wednesday evening PSR classes are automatically cancelled.

If we cancel classes, we will do our best to email you. Please check your email if the weather is inclement. Additionally, we will notify the local TV stations by 2:30 p.m. You can check TV channels 3, 5 and 8 for cancellation information.

Unfortunately, even later in the day, our weather can deteriorate rapidly. In the case of inclement weather, parents need to determine for themselves if coming to class is safe. We support you in your decision.

DRESS CODE

Our dress code is similar to that of Strongsville City Schools. Our guidelines stress the health and safety of the student. Many of the articles of clothing that can be purchased in stores unfortunately are not appropriate as PSR or school attire.

- Pants are to be worn at waist level.
- No pajama type pants.
- Shorts and skirts are to be of appropriate length—no shorter than mid-thigh.
- Chains, hats, and sunglasses are not permitted.
- Shirts: no bare belly/bare midribs, halter, tank/low-cut tops and see-through or holes in clothing. Shoulder width on tops is to be 2 inches.
- T-shirts—the inappropriate wording on t-shirts is not appropriate for school wear. Any alcohol/drug/tobacco related expressions and those which are suggestive in their wording are not permitted.
- Shoes, not slippers or flip-flops, should be worn at all times.
- The sweatshirt hoods are not to be worn on students' heads during class.

We ask for your help in monitoring your children's attire. You will be called and asked to bring replacement clothing if your child is not dressed appropriately.

SACRAMENTAL POLICY

Students must have been enrolled in a Catholic religious education program for at least two years prior to receiving the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation. Students enrolled during the sacramental years of second and eighth grades who have not been enrolled in religion classes for at least 2 years prior will receive the sacraments upon completion of two years of instruction.

VIRTUS TRAINING

As required by the Diocesan Policy regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors, all adult program administrators, catechists, and volunteers have participated in VIRTUS training classes and have submitted their personal information for a background check.

"EMPOWERING GOD'S CHILDREN" PROGRAM

In 2010-2011 we, as a parish and diocese, implemented student programming to enhance the ongoing efforts of the Catholic Church to provide training for adults and children in matters of personal safety, abuse prevention, and the creation of safe environments for children. In 2024, the Diocese adopted "Empowering God's Children" from the National Catholic Risk Retention Group, Inc. and VirtusOnline. This program includes a parent information session and one or two sessions with the children during their PSR class.

Parents will be invited to preview the materials that will be presented to their child/children prior to their being taught these principles in class. Dates for the parent information session will be announced in the

parish bulletin and with emails to the parents.

CODE OF BEHAVIOR POLICY

The pastor, administration and staff of St. Joseph Parish School of Religion believe that all employees, volunteers and students are entitled to work and study in environments that are Christ-centered and free of harassment. Our PSR program will not tolerate harassment of any type. If harassment occurs, the appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Disciplinary action may include suspension or expulsion.

Our vision of a formal religious education program is one of a classroom or learning community that offers support and encouragement to the faith life of our young people, as well as giving information and teaching religious truths. We can offer the best environment when our students and teachers work together to discover and know the message of Jesus as presented in our Catholic tradition. A spirit of trust and mutual care is a basis for our program. We trust in our parents as the primary religious educators of their children. We trust in our catechists, who offer, as adults, to share their wisdom and information to the best of their ability with the children in their class. Finally, we trust in our children to open their minds and hearts to the person of Jesus and to His message.

We feel an atmosphere of respect and appropriate behavior is essential for the best climate to be present in our classrooms and hallways. If a student is disruptive in class or on school premises, we feel the parent/guardian should be informed so that we may work together to help the student benefit from our program.

In light of our goal of having the best possible program for our students, we consider these kinds of behavior inappropriate:

- Disrespect shown to a supervisory adult, such as a hall monitor, a catechist, or any other person, etc.
- Leaving the classroom or building without permission
- Disruptive behavior or language
- Violation of classroom discipline and order

If a student demonstrates any of the listed inappropriate behaviors, this sequence of responses will be followed:

FIRST OFFENSE: *Talk with Student*

A conversation between the student, catechist or one of the PSR administrators will take place. Hopefully this conversation will clear up any misunderstandings on the student's part of his/her expected behavior and responsibility. Our hope is that this discussion will be sufficient to correct the situation.

SECOND OFFENSE: *Phone Call or Email to Parent/Guardian*

We will contact the parents/guardian to help generate some possible options to improve the situation.

THIRD OFFENSE: *In-Person Conference*

A conference will be initiated, including the student, the parent/guardian, the PSR administrator, and any other significant person such as a catechist, parish priest, hall monitor, etc. This conference hopefully will result in a clear understanding of the difficulty, and the possible options to correct the situation. A written summary of the agreed solution will be prepared and given to each of the people involved in the decision. We are hopeful that a solution can be found that will benefit the student, adult involved, and the entire program.

If, at any point in this process, the parent/guardian feels that they would like to meet with the PSR administrator, catechist, etc. they are welcome to do so. Please contact the Faith Formation Office and we will assist in gathering the appropriate parties together. We hope that with good communication and trust in one another, our children will benefit, and that our people will carry on our Catholic traditions and spirit of Christian commitment.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT & SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

St. Joseph Catholic Church is firmly committed to providing a safe, positive learning and working environment for everyone in the PSR program. For this reason, and in keeping with the goals and objectives of Catholic education, St. Joseph PSR program expressly prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence in the school environment. This policy re-emphasizes the personal dignity of the individual and fosters positive sexual attitudes and respect for others.

Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, verbal or written taunting; bullying; other intimidating, hostile or offensive conduct; jokes, stories, pictures, cartoons, drawings or objects that are offensive, intended to alarm, annoy, abuse or demean an individual or group.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

For the purpose of this policy, sexual harassment includes the following specific instances:

- Verbal sexual abuse
- Disseminating obscene or sexually explicit material, whether in the form of music, written lyrics, pornographic pictures, or other literature
- Having such materials in one's possession in the school, on school grounds, or at PSR-sponsored activities
- Obscene or sexually explicit graffiti anywhere in the school or on the school/parish grounds
- Continuing and unwanted written or oral communication directed to another of a sexual nature
- Spreading sexual rumors/innuendoes
- Obscene or sexually explicit gestures
- Any other inappropriate behavior of a sexually explicit or obscene nature that demeans or offends the recipient.

The above list is not meant to be all-inclusive but is intended to provide guidance as to what may constitute sexual harassment.

Isolated, trivial incidents are not sufficient to constitute harassment and will be handled according to the student behavior code.

Allegations of sexual harassment, as defined above, are to be reported to the catechist, the program director and the Director of Faith Formation. Parents of both the offender and the victim will be informed of the allegations. The matter is to be kept confidential by all parties involved, and every effort will be made to protect the alleged victim from retaliation. The parents of both the offender and the victim are obligated to cooperate in remedying the situation.

If the allegations are substantiated, disciplinary action will be taken. These will depend on the nature, frequency and severity of the action, the ages of the offender and victim, the history of similar actions by this individual, and the circumstances in which the harassment occurred. Possible disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, any or all of the following:

- Verbal warning/reprimand and apology to the victim

- A parent/student/principal/Faith Formation Director conference
- Written warning/reprimand and parent notification
- Detention or removal from selected PSR or program activities
- Behavior/probation contracts, possibly requiring professional intervention
- Suspension
- Expulsion

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is handled separately because of its potentially criminal nature. If an incident of sexual violence occurs, the Director of Faith Formation, the pastor, or other parish authority or program personnel are required under state law to report the incident. (Ohio Revised Code 2151.421) The Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately if there is any “reason to believe” (Ohio Revision Code 2151.421) that sexual abuse has or violence has occurred involving a child less than eighteen years of age. The Diocesan Legal Office will be contacted immediately in these situations.

Generally, sexual harassment should be construed as sexual violence when:

- The recipient is physically touched in a sexual manner without his/her consent
- The recipient is expressly threatened or perceives a threat of physical harm for purposes of the offender’s sexual gratification
- The recipient is the victim of sex offenses under Ohio law, including Gross Sexual Imposition (O.R.C. 2907.05), Sexual Battery (O.R.C. 2907.03), Rape (O.R.C. 2907.02), Importuning (O.R.C. 2907.07), Voyeurism (O.R.C. 2907.08), Public Indecency (O.R.C. 2907.09) or Felonious Sexual Penetration (O.R.C. 2907.12) as examples.

In each of the examples, the Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately.

STUDENT THREATS

Whenever an individual believes that his/her personal safety has been put in jeopardy or challenged, a threat has occurred. Under the following conditions a threat is a misdemeanor according to the Ohio Revised Code.

O.R.C. 2903.21 Aggravated Menacing

Aggravated menacing occurs “when an individual knowingly causes another to believe that the offender will cause serious physical harm to the person or property of that person or a member of his/her immediate family.”

O.R.C. 2903.22 Menacing

Menacing occurs “when an individual knowingly causes another to believe that the offender will cause physical harm to the person or property of that person or member of his/her family.”

If any of the previous events occur the police will be called.

THE DIOCESAN POLICY ON AIDS AND YOUTH GANGS ALONG WITH THE PREGNANCY POLICY IS ON FILE AT ST. JOSEPH PARISH.

WEAPONS POLICY

St. Joseph Parish School of Religion follows the weapons policy of the Diocese of Cleveland. This policy expressly prohibits the use, possession, sale, or discharge of any weapons or explosive devices in the school/parish, or school/parish grounds. This policy shall apply to all students, participants in parish programs, catechists, administrators, and other personnel in the school or parish.

This policy includes, but is not limited to:

- Any firearm
- Knife
- Deadly weapon
- Explosive or incendiary device
- Aerosol cans or sprays

As defined by state law, a deadly weapon is “any instrument, device, or thing capable of inflicting death, and designed or specifically adapted for use as a weapon, or possessed, carried or used as a weapon.” (Ohio Revised Code 2923.11A) Firearms shall include any loaded or unloaded gun of any caliber or type. This prohibition also includes any pistol, rifle, or other device that uses air or gas propelled projectiles.

Violations of this policy will warrant:

- Notification of the police.

Or may warrant:

- Immediate suspension
- Exclusion from a parish program
- Signing by parents and student of a probation contract that includes all the conditions of the student’s retention in the program.

WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO COVER ALL EVENTS AND OCCURRENCES WHICH MAY ARISE DURING THE YEAR. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES DEVELOP. IN THIS EVENT, THE MATTER WILL BE ADDRESSED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PASTOR AND THE DIRECTOR OF FAITH FORMATION.

(Reviewed August 2025)