

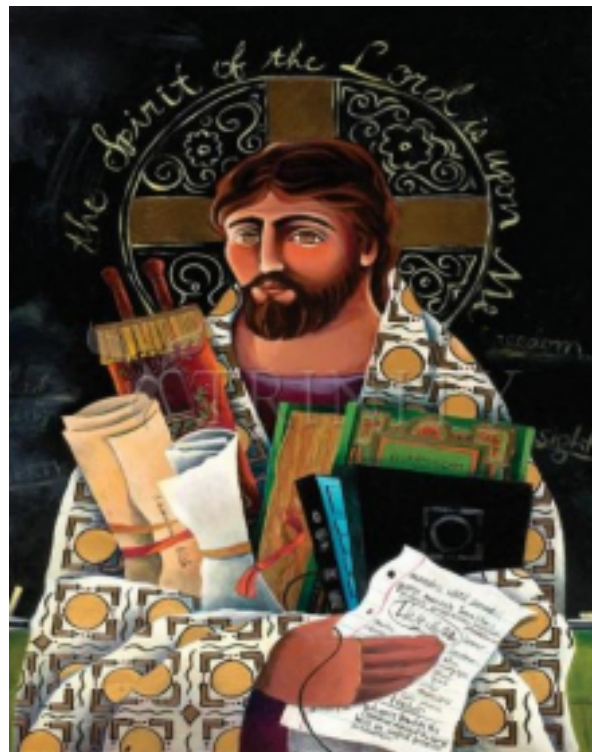
Saint Margaret Mary Religious Education

123 North 61st St.

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Website: <https://www.smmomaha.org/faith-formation/youth>



“Christ the Teacher” by Brother Michael McGrath

Parents’ Handbook

Table of Contents	2
MissionStatement	3
Family/Parish Partnership.....	3
Staff Contact Information	4
What You Need to Know When Coming to Class.....	5
Before and After Class Supervision.....	5
Absences and Tardiness.....	5
Early Dismissals.....	5
Religious Ed Memo (RE Weekly)	5
Dress Code	5
Building Security Procedures.....	5
Health Awareness	5
Communicable Diseases	6
Parental Concerns and Procedures	6
Volunteer Parents/Visitors	6
Dismissal Procedure	7
Parking	7
Discipline	7
Suspension	7
Curriculum	7
Calendar.....	7
Circle of Grace	7
Resources	8
What You Need to Know in Case of an Emergency	8
Evacuation Procedures	8
Security Plan	8
Weather Cancellations	8
Registration Procedures	8
Admissions	8
Enrollment Policy	8
Tuition.....	9
Tuition Refunds	9
Miscellaneous	9
Bicycles, Roller Blades, Skateboards	9
Field Trips	9
Rights of Non-Custodial Parents	9
Required Meetings	9
Special Dates	10



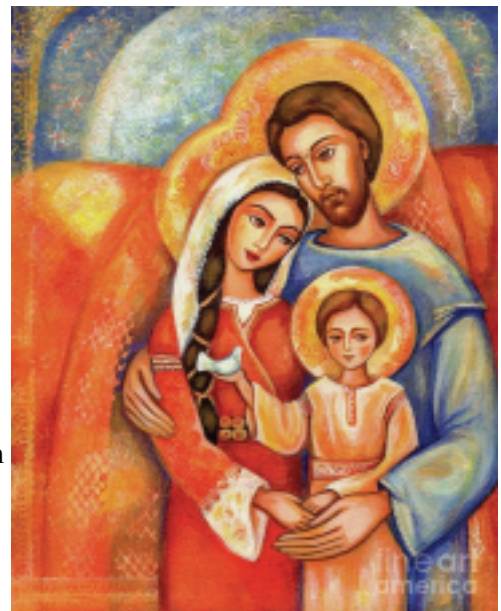
St. Margaret Mary Religious Education Mission Statement

The mission of St. Margaret Mary Religious Education Program is to build a foundation of faith, in partnership with parents, from which our children will continue to learn about God and the Roman Catholic Church.

Family/Parish Partnership

The family, or Domestic Church, is essential in passing down our faith. Every family is unique and lives their faith uniquely. Many of these suggestions are natural for families, and others are mere suggestions that you may find helpful. Here are some ideas that parents might find helpful as they witness to their children:

- Give your child a glimpse of God's unconditional love for each of us by loving your child unconditionally. Attend Mass regularly.
- Live the Gospel.
- Eat meals together as a family whenever possible.
- Celebrate rites of passage and memorials (birthdays, baptism dates, weddings, deaths, holy days and religious holidays, etc.) together as a family.
- Try to incorporate service into your regular family activities. This helps incorporate the Corporal Works of Mercy (feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, visit the sick or imprisoned, clothe the naked, bury the dead) into your family's daily life.
- Talk about God and your faith openly, even when you experience doubts and struggles. We all feel this way at times, and it is good for children to know that feeling this way is a natural and healthy part of one's faith life.
- Share when you feel a sense of awe, gratitude, or humility.
- Pray together often. Incorporate Scripture into your prayer life.
- Decorate your home with religious items. Perhaps create a prayer corner or a memorial for loved ones.
- Remember that you are the primary catechists for your children. This is often emphasized as a responsibility, and it is, but it is also a right. You have the right and the freedom to share your faith with your child authentically. See Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 2223 and 2226.



SAINT MARGARET MARY
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE
(402) 558-9119
123 N. 61st St.
Parish Offices: 6116 Dodge St.
Omaha, NE 68132
(402) 558-2255

Parish Office

- Pastor: Rev. Ralph O'Donnell rodonnell@smmomaha.org
- Associate Pastor: Fr. Zachary Eischeid zeischeid@smmomaha.org
- Director of Religious Education: mwalker@smmomaha.org
- Music Director: Peg Lacy placy@smmomaha.org
- Director of Communications: Lisa Manning lmanning@smmomaha.org
- Pastor's Executive Assistant: Mary Kelly mkelly@smmomaha.org
- SMM Parish Office Manager: Mary Kelly mkelly@smmomaha.org

SMM School Office

- School Principal: Ryan Wiczorek rwiczorek@smmomaha.org
- Assistant Principal: Mary Simerly msimerly@smmomaha.org

What You Need to Know When Coming to Class

Before and After Class Supervision

Please avoid arriving before 6:15 p.m. Students may enter through the main entrance anytime between 6:15 and 6:30 and report directly to their classrooms. Students are picked up at 7:45 in the lower circle drive. Catechists and the DRE will walk out with students. Students must tell their catechist before leaving.

Absences and Tardiness

To assure continued quality of religious education for your children, regular attendance is important. If you know that your child will not be able to participate in the Wednesday evening class, please call the office (402 -558-2255) or email mwalker@smmomaha.org at your earliest convenience.

If a student is reported absent from class and we have not been contacted by a parent, a phone call will be made to verify the absence. This is an important safety measure to ensure that students arrive safely. After three (3) consecutive absences, the Director of Religious Education (DRE) will call to offer any assistance that might be needed. If families encounter challenges with transportation or have other conflicts, please call the Religious Ed Office and we will try to find a solution for your family.

Parent Volunteers

To help make the year run smoothly, we are in need of lots of support from parent volunteers. We ask that you sign up for 3 volunteer opportunities as a minimum throughout the year. All volunteers working with children will be asked to go through a safe environment training.

Safe Environment:

<https://www.smmomaha.org/parish-life/safe-environment>. All parent volunteers, please make sure your Safe Environment (SE) Training is up to date. Not sure about your SE status? Contact Jenni Vankat at jimvarner@smmomaha.org. We are here to help!

Training sessions are offered regularly at SMM and around the Omaha area. [Click here for SE training sessions](#). In accordance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth, the Omaha Archdiocese requires training for adults who have contact with children in athletics, school activities, Scouts, or other youth activities in our parish. The Archdiocese has expanded the training to include the safety and care of vulnerable adults.

The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Training, Circle of Care, is designed to help volunteers become even more aware and responsible leaders who foster a secure, joy-filled atmosphere for our children and vulnerable adults.



An important part of Safe Environment protocol is Circle of Grace Curriculum. Circle of Grace is the curriculum developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha in response to the USCCB's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Circle of Grace is mandated to be taught yearly to all children in archdiocesan schools and in religious education and youth ministry programs in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Early Dismissals

Due to the limited nature of our Religious Education Staff, please avoid picking up your child early. However, we recognize that life is busy and early dismissals are occasionally necessary. In these instances, please contact the religious education office as soon as possible. The approved adult must come to the main school entrance (northwest entrance of the school) to be admitted. Out of concern for the safety of students, no student may leave early unless supervised by a parent or by an adult approved by the parent.

Religious Ed Memo

The RE Memo is a newsletter that is emailed weekly to communicate Religious Education program information to families. Hard copies are available on request.

Dress Code

A student's choice of attire and grooming is left to the good judgment of the student and his/her parents or guardians, but attire should not distract from the learning environment.

Building Security Procedures

Students are expected to report to the auditorium upon arrival. Students playing on the playground before class must be supervised.

The school doors are locked at all times to promote a safe learning environment. All parents and visitors must sign in at the main entrance.

Health Awareness

Please notify the Religious Education Office and your child's catechist if your child has a health problem that we should be aware of to better facilitate his or her religious education. This includes allergies, hyperactivity, diabetes, seizures, hearing problems, and medication. If your child has an action plan for a medical need, we should have a copy of it in the R.E. Office along with the supplies that are specified in the action plan (EpiPen, medication, etc.).

Please do not bring any snacks with nuts or peanut butter.

Communicable Diseases

Students with a condition that may be passed on to others in the classroom should remain at home until the student is no longer contagious.

This includes but is not limited to...

1. Chickenpox-students may return after pox has scabbed.
2. Fever-students should remain home until 24 hours after a fever breaks.
3. Infections-students should be kept home for a minimum of 24 hours after starting on antibiotics.
4. Vomiting-students should remain home until 24 hours after an episode.
5. Diarrhea-students should remain home until 24 hours after an episode.

Some conditions may require a doctor's attention and note before returning to Religious Education classes.

Parental Concerns and Procedures

A parent who has a question or concern regarding a situation involving a student is invited to follow these procedures:

1. Contact the student's catechist to discuss the situation and work with the catechist to arrive at possible solutions. While our catechists are experienced, they are not trained teachers. Bringing attention to a concern is often all that is necessary to resolve a problem.

2. If the concern cannot be resolved with the catechist, the parent is invited to conference with the Director of Religious Education. After discussing the situation with both parties, the Director of Religious Education will act as a facilitator, making every effort to resolve the problem and initiate reconciliation between the two parties.
3. If resolution and reconciliation have not been achieved after discussion with the catechist and the Director of Religious Education, the pastor may be asked to assist in the resolution and reconciliation of the problem.

Volunteer Parents/ Visitors

Visitors are welcome to visit the classrooms. To ensure the safety of our children, we require each parent, volunteer, or visitor to sign in at the main entrance.



Dismissal Procedure

The dismissal bell will ring at 7:45 p.m. Each catechist will walk his or her class to the lower circle for dismissal. If a child is to leave with someone other than his or her parent/guardian, the Religious Education Office must be notified. Out of concern for the safety of the children, children will not be permitted to leave with adults other than their parents/guardians unless the Religious Education Office has been notified by a parent or an approved adult.

Discipline

Students in the St. Margaret Mary Religious Education program are expected to follow these rules:

- Rule #1-Respect Yourself, Others, and Things.
- Rule #2-Contribute to the Learning Environment
- Rule #3-Follow Parish and Classroom Procedures

To help students learn how to choose correct behavior, a student is given a verbal reminder to choose correct behavior. If the student misbehaves again, the catechist should confer with the student to help the student make better choices and become a working member of the class. The student can then rejoin the group.

If a student chooses incorrect behavior a second time, the student is sent to the R.E. Office to conference with the DRE. If the student is sent to the office a second time in a year, parents of the student may be contacted and asked to attend classes with their child.

Suspension

St. Margaret Mary reserves the right to suspend in-class instruction to a student if there is reason to believe that attendance at class could place the student or others in danger of physical or emotional harm. Suspension will be at the discretion of the Pastor and Director of Religious Education and could be due to events that occur outside of class and/or off the premises. The student and parents will be supported with materials to continue the child's religious formation at home until the student is approved to return to class by the Pastor.

Calendar

The calendar is published annually in the RE directory, listing days of attendance, holidays, and activities. Dates and events may be subject to change as necessary. Timely notice of changes will be provided whenever possible. Calendar and program information is also on the St. Margaret Mary website.

Resources

Religious Education uses a variety of resources to teach our faith. Grades 1-5 uses Finding God by Loyola Press. Grade 6 uses the curriculum from Be My Disciples and Ascension Press's Bible Timeline for youth.. Grade 7 and eight use *Chosen* by Ascension Press.



What You Need to Know in Case of an Emergency

Emergency information is on file in the Religious Education Office. The information must be kept current at all times. If there is a change in your child's health information (allergies, medications, etc.) or contact information, please inform the RE Office. In case of illness or injury, parents will be contacted by phone and are responsible for arranging the child's transportation home. If the parent cannot be reached, emergency phone numbers will be called to obtain necessary help for the child. In the event of an emergency which requires immediate medical attention, the parent will be notified and the child will be transported by ambulance to the hospital, if necessary, at the parent's expense.

Evacuation Procedures

Catechists are given instruction to provide quick, safe evacuation of the students due to emergencies such as fire, severe weather, or bomb threats. Evacuation procedures are posted in each classroom. During an emergency, parents will need to check with RE staff before any child can be released. Students cannot be released directly by the catechist during any emergency situation.

Security Plan

St. Margaret Mary parish does have a Security Plan in place that is designed to ensure the safety of all its members in the event of an emergency. Security cameras are installed at all entrances and other strategic places on our campus. There are specific building security procedures that Religious Ed classes will follow if needed.

Weather Cancellations

Should icy or snowy weather occur, the Religious Education program observes the school closing policies of Omaha Public Schools. If OPS cancel classes or evening activities due to inclement weather, we will not hold Religious Education classes that evening.

Occasionally, because of deteriorating weather conditions during the day, we will need to cancel RE classes late in the afternoon or early evening, even when OPS has held classes. You will be notified by email and text message if this happens. Parents should use their discretion as to whether it is safe for their children to attend class. The safety of our children is always our primary concern.

Registration Procedures

Admissions: St. Margaret Mary Religious Education Program does not discriminate against students on any basis, including race, ethnic background, religion, or sex. We welcome members of other parishes and other denominations.

Enrollment Policy

All youth in grades one through eight who are living with a registered parishioner and do not attend a Catholic school are invited to enroll in the Religious Education program at St. Margaret Mary. It is encouraged that three, four, and five year-olds also be enrolled in our Sunday School program. All parishioners are encouraged to utilize the parish's religious education programs. Youth not enrolled in a religious education program may be required to attend additional classes to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.

Tuition

The pastor and Finance Committee set tuition and fees.

Tuition can be paid in these ways:

1. Payment in full at the time of registration
2. Pay the deposit fee at the time of registration and pay the remaining fee in a timely manner
3. Work with the DRE and Pastor to arrange a special payment plan

Tuition Refunds

A full refund may be requested at any time prior to the beginning of the Religious Education Program year. Any withdrawals after the first class will have the following deducted from the original tuition payment: the price of instructional material, an administrative processing fee, and a pro-rated fee for tuition for the classes attended before withdrawing. The pro-rated percentage is based on the number of quarters of class the student attended. No refunds will be given after March 1.

Miscellaneous

Bicycles, Roller Blades, Skateboards

A bicycle rack is located on the west side of the school. The parish accepts no responsibility for bikes parked on parish property.

Field Trips

All students must have a written permission from the parent or guardian before attending any activity away from St. Margaret Mary. All Safe-Environment, Archdiocesan, and Parish guidelines must be adhered to at all times.

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents

Non-custodial parents may submit a written request for their children's records and other program information, unless a court order prohibits them from doing so. Program administrators may assume the non-custodial parent has a right to the student's records and other program information unless a court order to the contrary has been provided. Court orders must be presented to the Director of Religious Education by either or both parents. Program administrators do not need permission from the custodial parent to provide records or program information to the non-custodial parent.

Required Meetings & Events

- 2nd Grade
 - First Reconciliation Parent Session
 - First Eucharist Parent Meeting
 - First Eucharist Retreat
 - First Communion
- 7th Grade
 - Confirmation Parent/Candidate Meeting
 - Confirmation Candidate and Sponsor Meeting
- 8th Grade
 - Confirmation Candidate and Sponsor Meeting
 - Confirmation Retreat
 - Confirmation

Other Special Attendance Opportunities for Parents

- Mass and Ice Cream Social
- Living Rosary
- Advent Family Night
- Advent Prayer Service, Nativity Play, & Celebration
- Ash Wednesday Mass
- Lenten Service Project
- Stations of the Cross Play
- End of the Year Mass and May Crowning