INTRODUCTION TO THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Religious Education at St. Elizabeth Seton Parish is grounded in the belief that the faith formation of the young is the primary responsibility of the parent/guardian. It is presumed, however, that catechists, parish staff members, and the faith community of St. Elizabeth Seton will support parents and guardians in fulfilling this responsibility through formal catechesis, sacramental celebration, social action, prayer, and the example of their lives. The purpose of this formation is to foster Christian spiritual growth in “our” children, so as to prepare them to live out their baptismal call to discipleship, as members of the Catholic Church, in dialogue with an increasingly complex and plural world. The essence of this program lies in its enthusiastic embrace of gospel-values and the heritage of the universal Catholic faith.

Children enrolled in the Religious Education program are understood to be unique individuals who come to us with differing levels of development, various gifts and talents, and widely diverse backgrounds. Our inclusive method of faith formation for all children addresses—by means of challenging and attainable lessons—the multi-faceted approaches through which each child will best assimilate faith and spirituality. If required, adjustments to the curriculum can be made based upon the articulated or observed needs of each child and after appropriate consultation between the Director of Religious Education, the child’s catechist, and the parents/guardians.

The St. Elizabeth Seton Religious Education program strives to be a welcoming and nurturing place for Christian and spiritual growth for the entire community—students, parents, catechists, and the parish-at-large. To be successful, it must in turn rely on catechists, parents, and parishioners to be models for the students of the priority for life-long faith formation and spiritual growth that we are teaching them to value.

This Family Handbook is designed to guide you in providing the best possible faith formation experience for your child(ren) in a safe and nurturing environment. Please refer to it often as a reliable source of information and your first resource in having your questions answered. The guidelines provided here are intended for the common good in keeping with the requirements of the local community, the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the State of Illinois.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

- To affirm each child is good and beloved of God.
- To invite each child into deeper relationship with God.
- To foster a desire in each child to follow the teachings and example (mind and heart) of Jesus.
- To emphasize the life-long importance of personal spiritual growth and faith development.
- To create a community of respect and compassion where relationships can be formed and all are able to learn and grow in friendship, trust, and prayer.
- To celebrate the living faith of the Christian community, especially through the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation.
- To articulate the religious truths of our Catholic tradition, as they apply to the lives of young people today, through stories and Scripture.
- To encourage each child to understand, develop, and choose to act on the gospel values of social justice and care for all.
- To promote gospel values in conscience formation and moral decision-making.
- To develop heart-felt respect for creation and all people of the world as unique revelations of Divine Love.

CURRICULUM

In order to achieve these objectives, the Religious Education program utilizes various faith curriculum texts published in conformity with the four foundations of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (creed, sacrament, morality, and prayer). These are endorsed by the USCCB’s committee for use in parish religious education programs and reflect the recent changes in the Roman Missal. Activities, prayer opportunities, and media are also used, along with a variety of methodologies, in our experiential approach to catechesis. Additional information concerning the RE curriculum can be accessed by going to the Religious Education web pages http://steseton.com/#/religious-education/program-information and then scrolling down the page to “Textbook Information”. 