

ST AGNES CATHOLIC CHURCH

Religious Education Handbook

School Year 2025-2026





ST. AGNES CATHOLIC CHURCH

ST. AGNES PARISH

REV. MONSIGNOR WILLIAM P. SAUNDERS
Pastor

REV. MICHAEL J. FOLMAR
Parochial Vicar

REV. RICHARD M. MALEBRANCHE
Parochial Vicar

REV. STEVEN OETJEN
Priest in Residence

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Faith Formation Office: 703.527.1129

MISSION STATEMENT

Called by our Lord Jesus Christ, and strengthened by His Word and Sacraments, as faithful Catholics, we strive to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, committed to sharing His love with one another and all in need.

CORE VALUES

Communion: Uniting ourselves with Jesus and other baptized Christians in the Church, which has its source and summit in the Eucharist.

Holiness: Embracing the "light, love and limitless possibility" communicated by the Holy Spirit and consecrating ourselves to doing God's will by uniting ourselves to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Joy: Delighting in the peace that comes from knowing God's love and manifesting His love to others in the hope of sharing in His glory.

Service: Promoting the dignity of the human person by sharing our God-given time, talent and treasure with others and in service to the Church.

Discipleship & Formation: Recognizing that conversion is a lifelong process, we commit to fostering a deeper relationship with God, living a fully sacramental life, sustaining our faith through ongoing catechesis and witnessing to the love of God through Jesus in our words, actions and relationships, and passing this on to our children.

Dear St. Agnes RE Parents,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Religious Education program at Saint Agnes Catholic Church.

The Saint Agnes Faith Formation Office is dedicated to support and equip you as the primary educators of your children and reinforce the faith formation they receive at home. Last year, we introduced a monthly Family Faith Formation (FFF) program that invited all members of the family for pizza dinner, a brief catechesis with Monsignor Saunders and fun discussions and activities. These highly popular FFF sessions will feature a series of topics aimed at empowering families to, together, deepen their relationship with God, live and learn their faith, share their faith stories, and strengthen their relationships with each other.

On all other weeks, students will continue their faith formation in class using Word of Life for Grades 1-7. This textbook and online series was created by the Augustine Institute (creators of Formed.org) and Ignatius Press (publishers of Faith & Life). Our 8th Grade students delve more deeply into the Faith through the Chosen Confirmation series by Ascension Press. A Flipped Classroom model is used where students preview the chapters, with their parents, in preparation for their in-person class. Classes are scheduled on Tuesday evenings from 6:15PM-7:30PM. Non-parishioners will need permission from their pastor to receive Religious Education in St. Agnes.

At your child's Baptism, you asked the Church for eternal life for your child. In doing so you accepted your duty to bring them up in the Faith, to keep God's commandments, and witness God's love to your children and neighbors. We commend your commitment to keep that promise by enrolling them in Religious Education. Your example and witness to your own love for Christ by living a faithful sacramental life, praying as a family, attending to your own personal faith formation and making God the first priority in your life is immeasurable.

This priority of "God First" is the reason why participation every year in Religious Education is essential. Our Sacramental preparation program is typically a two year preparation to ensure the children and their family are spiritually prepared and committed to First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. **Please note that an additional registration is required for sacramental year students, including students currently studying in a Catholic school.**

For students who were unable to receive the sacraments at the usual time or have not previously or consistently received religious instruction, we offer a Special Sacraments class on Sunday mornings to act as introductory or "bridge" class to regular Religious Education.

This RE Parent-Student Handbook explains our program, philosophy, and expectations. We pray that as we accompany you and your child in this spiritual journey, we may all be blessed with the grace of Jesus Christ, ever Present in our midst and especially Present in the Most Holy Eucharist.

Blessings,

Lisa Orosa

Lisa Orosa

Director of Faith Formation

dff@saintagnes.org

703.527.1129



OUR MISSION & VISION

At St. Agnes, we believe in the inherent dignity of every person, created out of love and for love, in the image and likeness of God.

The goal of St. Agnes Religious Education is to provide opportunities for students and families to have a profound encounter with our Trinitarian God, our Abba Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Sunday liturgies, the Sacraments, the Word of God and joyful service to become intentional disciples and ambassadors for Christ.

By living a grace-filled life, nourished by prayer, strengthened by the Sacraments, and transformed by the Word of God, our students and families are empowered to grow in the Faith, deepen their relationship with God, and live out their mission to be the loving and courageous presence of Jesus Christ in a world in need of hope.

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."

- St . Catherine of Siena

Saint Agnes Religious Education 2025–26 Highlights

Supporting both the child and family in growing in their love for Christ and their lifelong journey of intentional discipleship.

Robust Curriculum

Using Word of Life by Augustine Institute for Grades 1–7, and the Chosen Confirmation series by Ascension Press for 8th Grade, St. Agnes RE provides a rich and engaging faith formation that is relevant to the times.



Flipped Classroom Model

Students prepare at home and review the lessons with their parents to allow for creative and engaging exploration in the classroom with the catechist.



Family Faith Formation

The first session of each month (except December and May) are allotted for Family Faith Formation days, where families come together to learn, discuss and engage in meaningful activities that celebrate the Faith.



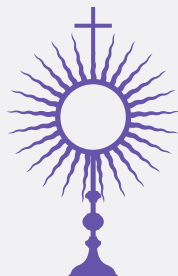
Priest Visits

Students are encouraged to get to know our priests and learn directly from their wisdom, knowledge and experience through classroom visits from St. Agnes priests.



Prayer & Sacramental Grace

Children are given opportunities to encounter the Living God through prayer, adoration, and avail of the Sacrament of Confession.



Sacramental Preparation

Offering a readiness model for sacramental preparation, students and their families are prepared mentally, spiritually and practically. Through prayerful reflections, spiritual retreats, service opportunities, a robust curriculum and engaging family activities, our students learn to live out the sacramental life and witness to the beauty of the Faith.



Celebrate the Life of the Church

Catholics love to party! Celebrate the liturgical seasons of the year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, May Crowning & holy days with meaningful activities.



Service as a response to God's love

Students and families are able to put their faith into action and mirror Christ's love to others through various charitable service opportunities throughout the year.



Tuesdays, 6:15PM–7:30PM
Contact Lisa Orosa at dff@saintagnes.org for more info.



PROGRAM DETAILS

St. Agnes Religious Education

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents have the primary responsibility of raising and training their children in the Faith, as they had promised at their child's Baptism. Through their lived example of faithful participation in the sacramental life of the Church, the practice of virtues and prayers, and their own lifelong discipleship, parents exercise the greatest influence on the faith of their children.

St. Agnes Religious Education strives to support parents through a formal, structured and organized program of catechesis and formation for both students and parents.

In addition to helping their children prepare for RE classes, ***parents are expected to participate in the monthly Family Faith Formation (FFF) class offered on the first RE session of each month*** (except in December and May). These sessions offer families a chance to grow together in the Faith and meet other families to create a community of encouragement and support. A pizza dinner, engaging discussions and fun activities make this a monthly family event to look forward to.

For Special Sacraments students, a parent or a grandparent is required to attend the class with the student. They must be fully engaged in class and committed to reinforce lessons at home.

THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM MODEL

The Flipped Classroom model allows children to learn at home (with their parents' supervision) through online lessons and/or textbook activities to help them prepare for class. This frees up time in the classroom for the catechist to provide more in-depth instruction, creative exploration and opportunities for meaningful activities and liturgical celebrations.

ADORATION, DEVOTIONS & CONFESSIONS

St. Agnes students will be given several opportunities to grow in prayer and encounter Christ through participation in Holy Hour, Confessions and other seasonal devotions. Families are encouraged to take part in these activities, as well.

PARISH PARTICIPATION

Several organizations in St. Agnes promote a sense of belonging and community through the joyful exercise of their own charisms. Through intentional collaborations with these organizations, parishioners will find more areas for support, encouragement, service and friendship.

"Parents always influence the moral development of their children, for better or for worse. It follows that they should take up this essential role and carry it out consciously, enthusiastically, reasonably and appropriately."

- Pope Francis

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICIES

ATTENDANCE & BEHAVIOR

Regular and consistent attendance in RE classes is essential in helping students master knowledge of the faith. Classes run for one hour and 15 minutes: Tuesdays, 6:15 PM-7:30 PM. **Students are allowed no more than 4 absences (excused or unexcused).** Please inform your catechist AND the Director of Faith Formation (DFF) if your child will be absent.

Students are expected to be punctual and prepared for class. Class preparation is primarily done through completion of lessons assigned in Word of Life (Gr. K-7) and Chosen (Gr. 8).

Tardiness can be a serious disruption to the class. With only one class per week, we appreciate your cooperation in getting your child/children to class ON TIME each week.

Students are expected to be respectful towards their teacher, their classmates and their environment. If a student consistently causes disruption in the class, a parent may be asked to sit in with their child for the duration of RE classes.

EARLY DISMISSALS & INCLEMENT WEATHER

If a child must leave class early, a parent is required to inform the Director of Faith Formation, Lisa Orosa, at drop off or via email so that the child may be brought to the Front Office for pick-up. Students will only be released to those persons listed as authorized to pick up. In case of inclement weather, St. Agnes follows Arlington Public Schools for class cancellations. Please check WTOP for announcements.

DRESS CODE & USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students should dress comfortably according to the weather, but modesty in dress should always be maintained. Articles of clothing with inappropriate images or sayings (drugs, alcohol, profanity, weapons) are not permitted. Short shorts, ripped shorts, leggings, bare midriffs, (girls) or low hanging pants (boys) are not permitted. Pajamas are unacceptable. Hats must be removed before entering the building.

Students and parents who bring cell phones to class must keep these devices turned off and out of sight. Smart watches and similar devices must also be turned off and out of sight. At no time during class are students permitted to use these devices, unless the catechist requires it for a specific activity (ex. Kahoot). Otherwise, all devices must be turned off. Failure to comply may result in the confiscation of these devices with the parents having to pick it up from the RE Office.

EXAMS AND ASSESSMENTS

In compliance with the Arlington Diocesan Standards of Learning, students will be given assessments to measure learning (not their personal faith) and to aid in planning for lessons.

Students are expected to score 70% or higher in their online or written assessments with Word of Life, for both chapter tests and unit tests. Students may retake these tests as necessary. In addition, a midterm and final exam is given to assess a student's knowledge of the subject and prayers. Students must receive a grade of 70% or higher to be promoted to the next grade level.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICIES

CLASSROOM POLICIES

- Students are reminded that all property and possessions found in the classroom are to be left untouched. Desks are not to be moved from their allocated position.
- No food or drink, including chewing gum is allowed in the classrooms because of food allergies.
- Items that could cause injury to a student or others (including dangerous toys) are not permitted in the building.
- Every student has the right and privilege to learn in a classroom where students are well behaved. Similarly, every catechist has the right to teach in such an environment. In the event a student does not exhibit proper behavior, the catechist will call upon the Director of Faith Formation (DFF) to remove the child from the classroom. If the child is unable to refrain from the improper behavior, the DFF will enlist the support of the parents to rectify the situation.
- Students and catechists must comply with the prevailing Center for Disease Control & Prevention and Diocesan guidelines to keep our students and staff healthy and safe.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Students preparing for First Holy Communion and Confirmation are required to have two years of in-person instruction and preparation. Several requirements specific to sacramental preparation are detailed in a separate sacramental packet.

The best preparation to receive these sacraments is through faithful attendance of Sunday Mass and holy days of obligation in person. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic Faith because it is Christ Himself, fully Present in the Eucharist whom we receive and nourishes us. The graces received at Mass are immeasurable and necessary in the life of a disciple. The goal of sacramental preparation is to help one live a fully sacramental life.

If you are struggling to make Sunday Mass the foundation and priority in your family's life, please contact our Religious Education Office to discuss how we can help you.

In addition, spiritual retreats, service opportunities and Confirmation Sundays are planned to help students reflect more deeply into the great gift of the sacraments they are to receive and to learn how to fully live out their faith amidst the challenges of the world today, and grow in their relationship with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING

All program employees, staff and volunteers who have direct contact with children are subject to a background check, completion of a VIRTUS seminar and compliance with the Diocesan Office of Protection of Children & Young People (OPCYP).

St. Agnes Religious Education program participates in and adheres to the Safe Environment Training Program – Circle of Grace. This program provide age appropriate lessons on the topic of personal safety. Catechists in the program are responsible for administering these lessons, the curriculum for which is provided by the Arlington Diocese.

THE CURRICULUM & STANDARDS OF LEARNING

TEXTBOOKS & OTHER RESOURCES

Kindergarten through 7th Grade will use the **Word of Life series by Augustine Institute and Ignatius Press**. Students will receive both a textbook and access to online text and activities. Students are expected to complete their lessons and receive an assessment grade of 70% or more.

All students must complete lessons prior to attending class in order to receive the benefit of the Flipped Classroom model.

8th grade will use **Chosen: Your Journey towards Confirmation by Ignatius Press**. Students are expected to fully engage in the discussions to get the most out of the class. Once a month, students and a parent are expected to participate in Confirmation Sundays, where they participate in discussion-based activities with young adult leaders to help them learn how to live the Faith in today's world. For these sessions, we will use **Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School by Ascension Press**. In addition, 8th graders are expected to review key concepts learned in previous years in order to prepare adequately for a comprehensive Confirmation exam in the Spring. The Confirmation Exam and interview will help determine the readiness and willingness of the candidate to live out the Faith fully and "to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope." (1Peter 3:15)

HEALTH, LEARNING DISABILITIES & OTHER CHALLENGES

If your child has a learning disability, behavioral or health related problem, please indicate this on the registration form. All information will remain confidential but will be passed on to the catechist for their reference in teaching your child.

PRAYERS TO MEMORIZE

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1st grade | The Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Guardian Angel Prayer |
| 2nd grade | The Act of Contrition |
| 3rd grade | The St. Michael's Prayer |
| 4th grade | The Act of Faith, Act of Hope, and Act of Charity |
| 5th grade | The Apostles' Creed, and Hail Holy Queen |
| 6th grade | The Divine Mercy |
| 7th grade | The Angelus and Memorare |
| 8th grade | The Come Holy Spirit prayer |

"Catechesis is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and on-going conversion. Through word, worship, service and community, it seeks to lead all God's people to an ever deepening relationship with God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."

(Echoing the Gospel for Catechists, Diocese of Grand Rapids)

THE CURRICULUM & STANDARDS OF LEARNING - Diocese of Arlington

| GRADE | GOALS | THEMES |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 1 st | To give the child a basic introduction to God, the life of Christ, prayer. | Introduction to the Trinity (emphasis upon Jesus) The plan of salvation and how the child fits into that plan – knowing, loving, and trusting God. Mary, angels, saints; Basic prayers |
| 2 nd | To prepare students for Confession and Holy Communion and help them appreciate God's love as manifested in these two sacraments | Preparation for reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion; Divine law and salvation history; God's mercy and love; Ten Commandments, Creation and Redemption; Order of the Mass and prayer |
| 3 rd | To show the student's membership among God's chosen people and role of the family as an important segment of God's entire family – the Church | God's plan of salvation from Creation to the Incarnation and Redemption to the birth of the Church at Pentecost and our life in the Church; Importance of Confession, Holy Communion and Mass; Importance of prayer and love of God's law |
| 4 th | To help the students understand their purpose in life and to come to an awareness of God's plan in history and society to lead all to Heaven, our true, eternal home. | God's plan of salvation from sin (salvation history) Our participation in God's plan and how God assists us through His word, law, and the Church |
| 5 th | To help fifth graders acquire a solid and specific knowledge of God and His church through knowledge of the Creed and by making theological distinctions to avoid errors that lead to a loss of love of God. | Thorough study of the Creed and the basic tenets of Catholicism Emphasis on an understanding of theological definitions through the words of the Gospels, the prophets, and the prayers of the church |
| 6 th | To nurture a love for God's law and a love for the Holy Mass as our most perfect prayer to God. Students will also be formed to develop a sense of deep reverence and love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. | God's law (especially the Ten Commandments) as the blueprint for a life of love; Emphasis upon the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, especially in the Mass; The interaction between God's law and His gifts of grace given to the faithful to fulfill His law |
| 7 th | To assist the student in learning to treasure the seven sacraments as indispensable to a full Christian life of love and truth. To understand the nature of grace in the soul and its relationship to the life of virtue, reason, and faith. | Grace as our link with God and His gift to bring us to eternal life with Him; Grace through the seven sacraments Grace through revelation (prophets, Incarnation, the Church) Grace and the life of virtue |
| 8 th | To help the student know and love the Church as Christ's Body and the Magisterium as the definitive voice of Christ on earth manifested in the person of the Pope. The student will also be formed to trust and be strengthened by the Church to face the confusion of secularism in modern-day society with greater confidence. | Church history – from its founding by Christ and its birth in the Holy Spirit; The four marks of the Church – one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church Fathers, Doctors of the Church, the saints, and the role of the religious and laity in the Modern Age. The structure of the Church – hierarchy, the role of the Magisterium (teaching charism) vocations to the single, married, and religious life |

Faith, moved by divine grace and cultivated by the action of the Church, undergoes a process of maturation. Catechesis, which is at the service of this growth, is also a gradual activity."

(General Directory of Catechesis #88)

St. Agnes Religious Education Calendar* 2025-26

(*may be subject to change)

| DATE | RE CLASS | FAMILY FAITH FORMATION | SPECIAL EVENT |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|---|
| 02Sep2025 Tue | Intro class | Welcome | |
| 09Sep2025 Tue | RE #1 | | |
| 16Sep2025 Tue | RE#2 | | |
| 23Sep2025 Tue | NO CLASS | | *Diocesan Pilgrimage |
| 30Sep2025 Tue | NO CLASS | | *Diocesan Pilgrimage |
| 05Oct2025 Sun | | | Confirmation Sun #1 |
| 07Oct2025 Tue | | FFF#1 | |
| 14Oct2025 Tue | RE#3 | | |
| 18Oct2025 Sat | | | 7 th Grade Retreat |
| 21Oct2025 Tue | RE#4 | | *No APS – Diwali |
| 28Oct2025 Tue | RE#5 | | |
| 02Nov2025 | | | Confirmation Sun #2 |
| 04Nov2025 Tue | | FFF#2 | *No APS – GP |
| 11Nov2025 Tue | NO CLASS | | *No APS – Veterans Day |
| 18Nov2025 Tue | RE#6 | | |
| 25Nov2025 Tue | RE#7 | | |
| 02Dec2025 Tue | RE#8 | | |
| 07Dec2025 Sun | | | Confirmation Sun #3 |
| 09Dec2025 Tue | RE#9 | | |
| 16Dec2025 Tue | | FFF#3 – Nativity Pageant | |
| 23Dec2025 Tue | NO CLASS | | *Christmas break |
| 30Dec2025 Tue | NO CLASS | | *Christmas break |
| 06Jan2025 Tue | | FFF#4 | |
| 11Jan2025 Sun | | | Confirmation Sun #4 |
| 13Jan2026 Tue | RE#10 | | |
| 20Jan2026 Tue | RE#11 | | |
| 27Jan2026 Tue | RE#12 | | Midterms |
| 01Feb2026 Sun | | | Confirmation Sun #5 |
| 03Feb2026 Tue | | FFF#5 | |
| 10Feb2026 Tue | RE#13 | | |
| 17Feb2026 Tue | RE#14 | | Confirmation Exams #1 |
| 24Feb2026 Tue | RE#15 | | Confirmation Exams #2 |
| 28Feb2026 Sat | | | 1 st Penance Retreat for Parents |
| 01Mar2026 | | | Confirmation Sun #6 |
| 03Mar2026 Tue | | FFF#6 | |
| 10Mar2026 Tue | RE#16 | | |
| 17Mar2026 Tue | RE#17 | | |
| 21Mar2026 Sat | | | FIRST PENANCE |
| 24Mar2026 Tue | RE#18 | | |

St. Agnes Religious Education Calendar* 2025-26

(*may be subject to change)

| DATE | RE CLASS | FAMILY FAITH FORMATION | SPECIAL EVENT |
|----------------------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 31Mar2026 Tue | NO CLASS | | Spring break-APS |
| 07Apr2026 Tue | NO CLASS | | Spring break-SAS |
| 14Apr2026 Tue | | FFF#7 | |
| 21Apr2026 Tue | RE#19 | | |
| 25-26Apr2026 Fri/Sat | | | Confirmation Retreat |
| 28Apr2026 Tue | RE#20 | | |
| 02May2026, Sat | | | FHC Retreat |
| 05May2026 Tue | RE#21 | | Confirmation Rehearsal |
| 06May2026 Wed | | | Confirmation Mass |
| 10May2026, Sun | | | FHC MASS #1 |
| 12May2026 Tue | RE#22 | | Finals |
| 17May2026, Sun | | | FHC MASS #2 |
| 19May2026 Tue | | FFF#8 | May Crowning/Party |

LAST DAY TO REGISTER FOR ST. AGNES SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

- Fri, Sep. 12, 2025 - Year 1 (7th Grade) & Year 2 (8th Grade) Confirmation
- Fri, Sep. 26, 2025 - Year 2 (2nd Grade) First Communion

DEADLINES FOR SACRAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Year 1 (7th Grade) & Year 2 (8th Grade) Confirmation students are expected to submit Mass Journals (MJ) and Offertory Envelopes by the end of the month. Service Logs for both grades are also required. Saint Report & Sponsor forms are only due for Year 2 (8th Grade) students.

Year 2 (2nd Grade) First Communion students are expected to submit Mass Journals (required) and Faith Bingo (optional) by the end of the month. Penance & Communion workbooks are meant to be completed at home with a parent.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| • October MJ & envelopes due | : October 28 |
| • November MJ & envelopes, 8th Gr Confirmation Saint Report due | : December 02 |
| • December MJ & envelopes, 2nd Gr Penance WB due | : January 06 |
| • January MJ & envelopes due | : February 03 |
| • February MJ & envelopes, 8th Gr Confirmation Sponsor forms due | : March 03 |
| • March MJ & envelopes, 2nd Gr Communion WB; 8 th Gr Service Logs due | : April 14 |
| • April MJ & envelopes, 7 th Gr Service Logs due | : May 05 |

"There is no other real way in which to prove we love a thing than by choosing it in preference to something else. Words and signs of love may be, and often are, expressions of egotism or passion; but deeds are proofs of love. We can prove we love our Lord only by choosing Him in preference to anything else."

- Archbishop Fulton Sheen

HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have read the St. Agnes Religious Education Handbook for 2025-2026 school year.

I agree to

- Abide by the policies and procedures detailed in the Handbook*
 - Attend Family Faith Formation events and other events that require parental participation.*
 - Ensure my student(s) attend classes on time and have no more than 4 absences in a year.*
 - Support my students at home by preparing for RE class through advanced reading and other assignments.*
 - Encourage my student(s) to practice self-discipline and respect for property and respect toward their teachers and classmates.*
 - Commit to a prayer and sacramental life for myself and my children.*
-

FAMILY Name

Children's Names & Grade

PARENT Name

Signature & Date

NOTE: Please submit this page to the RE Office or email a scanned copy to dff@saintagnes.org