

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT CATHOLIC CHURCH



PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Grades K-8

PARENT HANDBOOK

2025 – 2026

WELCOME

Formal catechesis in a religious education program is only one aspect of a young person's lifelong faith formation. The formative process begins at birth. Most of the religious attitudes and values that children acquire come from their parents and home life.

– Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo

Welcome to St. Gregory the Great's Parish Religious Education Program! We are excited to be working with you, as parents, to help your children grow in their faith. In presenting your children for Baptism, parents accept the privilege and responsibility “to bring him/her up in the practice of the faith” (*Rite of Baptism for Children*). We are happy to work with you to fulfill this promise. St. Gregory the Great Parish provides a religious education experience for all children from kindergarten through 8th grade in our Parish Religious Education Program as well as high school students, young adults and adults. Join us for some wonderful experiences as we grow in our Catholic faith!

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Saint Gregory the Great's Parish Religious Education Program is:

- To spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in union with all people through teaching, worship and witness
- To hand on the Catholic faith to the students and support the efforts of their parents, who are the primary educators
- To foster a knowledge of Jesus Christ and the development of a personal relationship with Him
- To instill in our students the necessary practices that will develop within them a strong Catholic culture that is essential to a Catholic identity
- To lead our students to be confident and faithful disciples of Jesus, who know and live their Catholic faith.

STAFF

Sr. Emily Faubion, IHM – Director of Religious Education

SrEmily@stgregorysva.org

Janet Ficca – Coordinator of Religious Education K-8

janet@stgregorysva.org

Margie Lamb – Religious Education Assistant

marjorie@stgregorysva.org

Church Office: 757-497-8330

PREP Cell Phone: 757-770-8951

DIOCESAN RESOURCES – Office of Christian Formation (804) 359-5661

Website with parent resources: <https://richmonddiocese.org/office/christian-formation/>

Days & Times of PREP Classes

Classes are held each Tuesday from 6:15 PM until 7:30 PM beginning on September 30th.

Fees

The fee is \$50.00 per student with a maximum of \$100 per family. The fee is non-refundable.

There is an additional fee of \$50.00 for those children preparing to receive Sacraments.

If the cost of the PREP program is a problem for any family, please call Janet Ficca or Sr. Emily, and payment arrangements can be made. What is most important is the children being able to grow in their faith and we are happy to work with families to make that possible.

The fee must be paid (or arrangements made with Janet or Sr. Emily) before your child starts classes.

Payment may be made by cash, check or credit card. To pay using a credit card, go to the church website at: www.stgregoryvabeach.org. Click on the *DONATE* tab. Choose *Religious Education K-8* to add your payment. If you have a student in a Sacraments class, you must also choose *Sacramental Fee K-8*. If you need further assistance, please call the church office at 757-497-8330. Checks should be made out to St. Gregory the Great Church.

Adult Faith Formation Opportunities During Prep

Each Tuesday evening, Deacon Darrell and the Spanish Faith Formation Team invite parents to join them for adult faith formation while the children are in class. Classes in Spanish will be held in the Martin Robert Room. Deacon Darrell will hold the classes in English in the Chapel. This is a wonderful opportunity to grow in faith as a family!

Curriculum

The Diocesan curriculum plan is based on scripture and the teaching of the church and seeks to support families in their mission as “primary educators in the faith” (GDC 255). In supporting the Diocesan curriculum for religious education, we will be using materials from Our Sunday Visitor.

Arrival Procedure For Children Attending Prep Classes

Children may enter the building for class starting at 6:00 PM. Parents are asked to have their children here on time. Children in grades K-5 must be walked to their classroom by a parent or adult guardian. Families may enter the school building through the main door (by the flagpole). All other doors will be locked and not monitored to let students in. Parents are asked to leave the hallways by 6:15 PM (when classes begin) for the safety of all students and to limit interruptions to the classes.

Dismissal Procedure After Class

Class is over at 7:30 PM. Parents of children in grades K-5 must come to the classroom to pick up their child. All parents are asked to complete, and keep updated, the list of anyone who can pick up their child. If someone other than a parent comes to pick up a child, they will need to show identification before the child is allowed to go with them. If there are any custody issues the latest court documentation must be on file for the directives to be followed.

Any child who has not been picked up by 7:40 PM will be brought to the school office. No child will be allowed to wait outside for a parent. If a child is not picked up by 8:00 PM and parents have not notified us about an emergency, Child Protective Services may be called.

Parents are expected to keep control of their child(ren) when moving to their car for safety.

Communication

Phone: During PREP class hours, parents may contact the staff on the Religious Education Program cell phone at 757-770-8951. At all other times, please contact us through the Church office at 757-497-8330.

Email: will be an important means of communication. Please be sure to keep your primary email up to date with us.

Flocknote: is our primary means of communication. We will be uploading your email & phone number into this app so that you will receive timely texts and emails should an emergency or important notice need to be sent.

Bi-Monthly Newsletters: Every other month we will send out a newsletter by email beginning mid-September for Sept/Oct. Hard copies will also be distributed to your students.

Cancellation Of Prep Class

We will follow VBCPS for weather closings. There may be additional cancellations that occur for reasons that are unique to Saint Gregory's campus. Should regular PREP classes be affected because of weather or other emergency issues, the staff will make every effort to notify catechists and parents about any cancellation. An email and/or text message through Flocknote will be sent to notify catechists and parents about any cancellation of classes. Please make sure your current phone number & email address is provided. If a parent does not have email access, please notify the staff so we can make other notification arrangements.

Children's Health Issues

Parents are required to fill out the medical information form for their children. If anything changes for your child during the year, please notify Janet Ficca, our Coordinator of Religious Education immediately. If your child is sick and misses the day of school, then assume they are also not well enough to attend Religious Education class. Children should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school and this applies for our classes as well.

Building Safety

In the event there is a situation where the buildings need to be secured from an external or internal threat, an announcement over the loudspeaker will be made or the alarm will be activated.

In the event of a building security issue, all exit doors will remain closed and locked. **NO ONE WILL BE ALLOWED INTO THE BUILDINGS UNTIL THE SITUATION IS RESOLVED – THIS INCLUDES PARENTS.** When the situation is resolved an announcement will be made. If time allows, we will send email or text alerts to the parents.

Parents are not allowed in the hallways during class time.

The restrooms in the PREP class hallways may not be used during class time by parents or siblings not in the program. You may use the Church restrooms, accessed through the main Church entryway.

NO FOOD OR DRINK ITEMS are allowed in the classroom due to allergies our children, or our school's students, may have.

Children's Behavior Issues

The Parish Religious Education Program is a partnership between the Church and the family. Please talk with your child(ren) about the importance of their faith formation and the reasons they are attending these special classes. Parents will be notified if a child's behavior is disruptive. If a child is repeatedly disrupting a class, they will be brought to the school office to meet with the PREP Coordinator. A meeting will be held with parents to discuss disruptive or disrespectful behaviors to make sure that all students benefit from their faith formation opportunity.

The following are not allowed on the premises and could result in immediate dismissal from the program: any form of weapons, real or play; any illegal substance, drugs, or tobacco; any language or behavior not representative of our Catholic faith.

Cell Phone Use

Cell phones must be silenced and put away during class time. If a student is using a phone during class without permission, it will be taken and given to the PREP Coordinator and only returned to a parent.

Attendance

Please see the calendar for the schedule of classes for the year. If children are absent from class for 3 weeks in a row, parents will be called, and they could be dropped from the roster. Please notify the Coordinator or Assistant if there is a reason for absence.

For children preparing for Sacraments, it is especially important that they attend consistently. **Children who are preparing for Sacraments may only miss 3 classes for the year.** Missing more than 3 classes will cause a delay in receiving the Sacraments. Illness and family emergencies will be taken into consideration.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Is my child ready to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist?

- Has your child been baptized and reached the age of reason (2nd grade or above)?
- Is your child interested in making Reconciliation and receiving Holy Communion?
- Is your child able to distinguish between mistakes or accidents and deliberate wrongdoing?
- Does your child participate in the Sunday Mass according to his/her ability?
- Does your family make attending Mass a priority on Sundays and Holy Days?
- Do you as parents celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist?
- Does your child relate to Jesus as one who forgives and who loves and cares for him/her?

Parish Registration

Families must be registered members of St. Gregory the Great Church in order to prepare for and receive the Sacraments with us. The Diocese of Richmond prefers and encourages families to prepare for the Sacraments at the parish where they will be celebrating them regularly. If your family is registered at another Catholic Church, a letter of permission is needed from the pastor granting permission for your child to prepare for the Sacraments at St. Gregory instead of your home parish.

Reconciliation (Confession)

“Since the family is intimately involved with the formation of a child’s moral conscience and ordinarily integrates the child into the wider ecclesial communities, parents should be involved in the preparation of their children for this sacrament of Penance, so that they can affirm and reinforce frequent participation in the sacraments. They orient the child toward God and encourage continual growth in the understanding of God’s mercy and love.”

– National Directory for Catechesis

Parent Workshop And Children's Retreat

This *workshop* for parents and *retreat* for children are *mandatory*. There are no make-up sessions.

This year the retreat is scheduled for Saturday, January 31, 2026, from 9:30 AM until 12:30 PM.

Families will meet in the Church Commons to check in beginning at 9:00 AM. We will start the morning together with a prayer service in the Church, then students will be dismissed to the retreat and parents will attend the workshop.

Celebration Of The Sacrament Of First Reconciliation

Students will celebrate their **First Reconciliation** on **Saturday, February 21, 2026, at 10:00 AM**. We will begin in the Church with a prayer service, then students will be called in groups to confession.

Eucharist (Holy Communion)

In obedience to Christ's command, "Do this in memory of me," the church has continually celebrated the Eucharist. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. (1 Cor 11:26). This action sustains us as the Christian faithful.

Forms needed: PREP registration form; Eucharist registration form; Baptism certificate.

Parent Workshop And Children's Retreat

The *workshop* for parents and the *retreat* for children are mandatory. There are no make-up sessions.

This year the retreat is scheduled for Saturday, March 21, 2026, from 9:30 AM until 12:30 PM.

Families will meet in the Church Commons to check in starting at 9:00 AM. We will start the morning together with a prayer service in the Church, then students will be dismissed to the retreat and parents will attend the workshop.

Rehearsal For First Eucharist (Holy Communion)

The rehearsal for First Holy Communion will be on Friday, April 17, 2026.

Children whose last name begin with A - L will practice from 5:30-6:30 PM.

Children whose last names begin with M - Z will practice from 6:45-7:45 PM.

Celebration Of The Sacrament Of First Eucharist (Holy Communion)

The date is Saturday, April 18, 2026.

Children whose last name begin with A - L will celebrate at the 10:00 AM Mass.

Children whose last name begin with M - Z will celebrate at the 1:00 PM Mass.

A reception will be held after each of the Masses – families are invited.

OCIA 4 Kids

(Order Of Christian Initiation of Adults and Children)

"The Rite of Christian Initiation is designed for adults (and children of catechetical age) who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully."

- OCIA Introduction 1

Forms needed: PREP registration form; OCIA form; birth certificate if never Baptized; Baptism certificate if Baptized in another Christian faith; Godparent/Sponsor form.

Adults and children of catechetical age (age 7) who have not received the sacrament of Baptism or who were Baptized in another Christian faith, may enroll in the OCIA process. The OCIA process will prepare them for full membership in the Catholic faith through Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation.

Families must attend the mandatory Reconciliation and Eucharist retreats.

The OCIA process is also available for teen and adult Catholics who received little or no religious education as a child and who now wish to receive the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Schedule of Sessions for OCIA 4 Kids

Tuesday, September 23 – Mandatory OCIA Meeting for Parents and Students @ 6:30 PM

Monthly OCIA Sessions – Sundays @ 12:15 PM in the Youth House

<u>2025</u>	April 19
October 5	May 17
November 9	June 14
December 14	July 12
	August 9
<u>2026</u>	September 13
January 11	October 11
February 1	November 8
March 8	December 13



HELPING YOUR CHILD GROW IN FAITH

Each day can be an opportunity to grow in faith with your child! You naturally offer your love to your child in many ways. Be aware that God's love is all around you. It is never too early to read the Bible aloud to your child, sharing the stories and pictures. Take your child to Mass each Sunday. Pray for your child each day – maybe by greeting them in the morning with a blessing and a sign of the cross on their forehead. As they get older, bless them as they leave for school. Set up a bedtime routine that includes a nightly prayer. Teach your child the prayers that they are learning in PREP. Prayer is an important part of Christian life! Spontaneous prayer, praying in your own words, comes easy to many children. Teach the traditional prayers but also encourage your child to pray their own prayers. Here are the prayers that we will be teaching your children in each grade:

Kindergarten

Sign of the Cross; Glory Be; Lord's Prayer; Hail Mary; Guardian Angel Prayer

Grade 1

Sign of the Cross; Glory Be; Lord's Prayer; Hail Mary; Guardian Angel Prayer

Grade 2

Act of Contrition

Grade 3

Apostles Creed

Grade 4

Hail, Holy Queen, Rosary

Grade 5

Memorare, Stations of the Cross

Grade 6

Nicene Creed

Grades 7 & 8

Prayer to Saint Michael

OCIA

Sign of the Cross, Lord's Prayer, Glory Be, Hail Mary, Act of Contrition



PREP Calendar 2025-2026

September 9	Catechist Meeting – 6 PM to 7:30 PM, Tobias Room
Sept 16	Sacraments Parent Meeting – 6:15 PM in the church
Sept 20/21	Catechetical Sunday – Catechists and CLOW ministers to be commissioned at all Masses
Sept 23	OCIA for Children Parent Meeting – 6:15 PM, Tobias Room
Sept 30	PREP Class #1 – Parent meeting in church
October 7	PREP Class #2 – Opening Mass
Oct 14	PREP Class #3
Oct 21	PREP Class #4 – Food Drive
Oct 28	PREP Class #5
November 4	PREP Class #6 – All Saints /All Souls & Care Package Drive
Nov 11	NO PREP – Veterans’ Day
Nov 18	PREP Class #7 – MS Service Project
Nov 25	NO PREP - Happy Thanksgiving!
December 2	PREP Class #8
Dec 9	PREP Class #9
Dec 16	PREP Class #10
January 6	NO PREP – Catechist Meeting – 6 PM to 7:30 PM, Tobias Room
Jan 13	PREP Class #11
Jan 20	PREP Class #12
Jan 27	PREP Class #13 – Food Drive
Jan 31	First Reconciliation Retreat & Parent Workshop – 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM
February 3	PREP Class #14
Feb 10	PREP Class #15
Feb 17	NO PREP – Shrove Tuesday
Feb 21	Celebration of First Reconciliation @ 10 AM
Feb 24	PREP class #16
March 3	PREP Class #17
Mar 10	PREP Class #18
Mar 17	PREP Class #19 – Parish Mission
Mar 21	First Communion Retreat & Parent Workshop – 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM
Mar 24	PREP Class #20
Mar 31	NO PREP – HOLY WEEK / EASTER
April 7	NO PREP – Spring Break
Apr 14	PREP Class #21
Apr 21	PREP Class #22
Apr 28	PREP Class #23
May 5	PREP Class #24 – Closing Mass & May Procession