

# ST. COLUMBKILLE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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HELPING EVERYONE TAKE THEIR NEXT STEP  
TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS

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## PARENT HANDBOOK

**2026-2027**

Website: [www.saintcolumbkille.org/education-formation](http://www.saintcolumbkille.org/education-formation)

Follow us on Facebook: St. Columbkille Religious Formation

## St. Columbkille Mission and Formation Office

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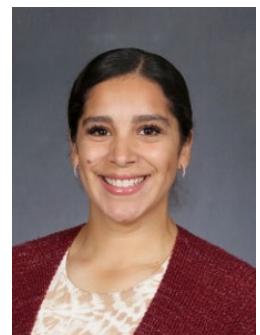
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# ST. COLUMBKILLE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MISSION

## Religious Education (RE) Program for the Children of Registered Members of St. Columbkille Parish

**Recognizing that parents are their children's first teachers of the faith, our Religious Education program aims to:**

† **Proclaim** and teach God's Word by guiding families to a deeper understanding of our Catholic faith, Jesus' love for us and the traditions and history of the Catholic Church

† **Celebrate** the Sacred Scriptures by assisting families with spiritual development and prayer when we celebrate Mass together as a community

† **Serve** one another by nurturing relationships with families, the parish, and our community

**We encourage parents – as the first teachers of the faith – to attend Mass with their children each week, and to pursue their own continuing faith formation to equip themselves to walk alongside their children as they grow in their understanding of Christ and His Church.**

"We need His help, His strength, His blessing, His mercy and His forgiveness. It takes simplicity. To pray as a family, simplicity is needed.... As a family you can pray the "Our Father" around the dinner table. That's not difficult to do, it's easy. Praying the rosary together, as a family is very beautiful and it gives strength. Also praying for one another: A husband praying for his wife and a wife for her husband. Parents praying for their children and children for their parents and grandparents. Praying for one another." -Pope Francis.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE HOURS:

The Religious Education Office is open: Monday-Friday, 7:30 AM – 3:30 PM during the school year. Summer hours may vary.

### CLASSES OFFERED:

- Religious Education classes are for registered parishioners who have baptized students in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- For student parishioners ages 7-12, who have not been baptized by age 7, we offer OCIC (Order of Christian Initiation for Children) on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 PM – 6:45 PM. We also offer OCIT, for teen parishioners, same time/day.
- For student parishioners who are baptized but did not make their First Reconciliation and First Communion in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, we offer OCIC-Communion classes on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 PM – 6:45 PM.

### CLASS TIMES:

#### 9-Month Religious Education Classes

Wednesdays – 5:30 PM – 6:45 PM. RE Calendar of Class Dates may be found on the parish website. Students must be registered parishioners.

**Summer Religious Education classes** (Kindergarten -- 8<sup>th</sup> grade) are offered the first two weeks of June from 8:00 AM -- Noon, Monday through Friday. Students who attend Summer RE must be registered parishioners of St. Columbkille by April 1<sup>st</sup> and are only allowed one absent day, one late arrival, OR one early dismissal day during the two weeks of class.

### HOMESCHOOL:

This option is only offered during the 9-Month session. Families who wish to homeschool their child in Religious Education should contact the Religious Education Office for information at 402.339.0990.

### CALENDAR

The RE calendar is published annually, listing days of attendance, holidays, meetings and activities. Dates and events are subject to change as necessary and notice will be provided as soon as possible. Calendar and program information is also available on our website at <https://www.saintcolumbkille.org/education-formation>.

### CELL PHONE CARRIER

We ask for your cell phone carrier on the registration form for possible use of texting through the parish database program.

# REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

## 9-MONTH PROGRAM RE FAMILIES

The September – May Religious Education class registration begins in late March/early April. Priority for class assignments is given by the date the **completed registration forms and payment** are received in the RE Office.

- Registration for the fall, 9-Month program is announced in the April parish bulletin. To avoid a late fee, registration must be completed by August 19th. There is a late fee of \$25 for registrations received between Aug. 20<sup>th</sup>-Sept.9<sup>th</sup>. **No registrations will be accepted after Sept 9<sup>th</sup>.**
- Registration is on a first come, first served basis.
- Register early. Class sizes are limited, and **we need volunteers to help teach classes or be a classroom aide please.**
- Please check schedules for other activities your child is involved with during the year before registering for classes. **Students may only miss 3 classes in the 9-month session since we meet only one time per week for 75 minutes.**
- All families must be registered parishioners at St. Columbkille Parish. Families that have been parishioners for less than 12 months must attend the Columbkille 101 class.
- All registration forms need to be completed prior to a student being placed in the Religious Formation Program.
- Each student will be placed at the grade level that he/she attends in public school unless there is a special case designated by the parent/Director meeting to discuss.
- Sacramental year families (grades 2 and 8 and OCIC, OCIC-C and OCIT) will also attend specific sacramental meetings and events as part of their family's journey. Those dates are announced in late August to allow for planning to attend. Make up work is required if a sacramental prep meeting is missed. Call our office to schedule a time to come in and complete the work.

## SUMMER PROGRAM RE FAMILIES

Online registration for Summer Religious Education classes start in late February/early March of each year. Priority for class assignments is given by the date the **completed registration forms and payment** are received.

- Registration is on a first come, first served basis and only for children of registered parishioners.
- Register early. Class sizes are limited and will close when the maximum class size is reached.
- All grade level requirements must be met prior to registering for the next session. For example, confirmation saint reports, confirmation service project reflection papers, etc.
- All families must be registered parishioners at St. Columbkille Parish before March 1<sup>st</sup>. Parents must attend Columbkille 101 if registered in the last 12 months. This must be completed before the Summer RE session begins.
- All parish registration forms need to be completed prior to a student being placed in the Religious Formation Program.
- Each student will be placed at the grade level that he/she attends in public school unless there is a special case designated by the parent/Director meeting to discuss.
- Families that enroll in our Summer RE are invited to participate in our 9-month Formation Program opportunities offered through the parish, such as the Family Advent Festival and the Lenten Prayers and Pasta.
- Sacramental year families (grades 2 and 8 and OCIC/OCIC-C/OCIT) will also attend sacramental preparation meetings and events as part of their family's journey. Those dates are announced in August to allow for planning to attend. Make up work is required if a sacramental prep meeting is missed. Call our office, 402.339.0990, to schedule a time to come in and complete the work.

As we seek to become more like Jesus, Faith Formation opportunities help individuals to grow deeper in their own faith. Some examples of Faith Formation in our parish would be Alpha, Come and See, Spirituality Alive, Bible studies, etc. We encourage our families to experience our parish through formation and service opportunities. Periodic notification of such offerings will be sent to parents so they may attend what they feel will grow their personal faith.

## TUITION

Registration fees will be reviewed and established annually by the Finance Committee. Parents/guardians will be informed about registration fees prior to the beginning of the Religious Formation year. Tuition will be \$150 per student.

- If the registration fee cannot be paid in full at the time of registration, please see Suzanne Brown, Coordinator of Religious Education, for payment arrangement options. A \$25 deposit per student is required at time of registration for the Sept – May program. Call for more details.
- 100% of the fee is refundable before September 15<sup>th</sup> for the 9-Month program.
- The cost of materials students receive at the first class consists of 20% of the fee. This amount will not be refunded after the first class.
- Refunds will be determined based on the date of official notification to the RE Office.
- Please note --- Sacramental fees are not included in registrations fees.

## CLASSROOM SIZE

Our 9-Month program classes are led by catechist volunteers. Many classes have catechist leaders and aides. Our maximum number of students in each classroom is 15 if there is only one lead. If the classroom has both a lead and an aide, the maximum number of students is 20. **Please consider volunteering during the Nine Month session to receive free or reduced tuition as well as to help the parish! See the registration form for details. We need more parents to volunteer as lead catechists and catechist aides for these classes. You will learn and gain so much in your own faith life! Safe environment training is required and is offered by the Archdiocese of Omaha. Call our office, 402.339.0990, to volunteer and get assistance with registering for a Safe Environment class. Buddy up with someone else and co-teach a grade!** We also need parking/drop-off/pick-up aides and an office aide who can attend each Wednesday evening to help in the RE Office during class time.

The Summer Religious Education classes are taught by certified teachers. The maximum number of students in each classroom will not exceed 24.

## CURRICULUM AND CLASS EXPECTATIONS

### CURRICULUM

We are constantly looking at the curriculum and resources that best meet the objectives of the Archdiocese of Omaha's standards for Catechism of the Catholic Church. The texts and resources may be updated from year to year.

Our curriculum....

- Helps to meet the needs of the students and families as they grow in the knowledge of their faith and live as disciples of Jesus.
- Is an innovative religion curriculum that empowers students and their families to answer the call to discipleship.
- Teaches Scripture, Doctrine, and Liturgical celebration through its spiral structure.
- Challenges children to integrate faith and life through activities and faith choices.

NOTE: The Homeschool program is only offered during the 9-Month School Year session. Please call Suzanne Brown, 402.339.0990, to discuss before registering.

### ATTENDANCE

To ensure quality Religious Education for your child(ren), attendance is expected. If a child cannot attend class, a phone call to the RE office, 402.339.0990, or email [smbrown@saintcolumbkille.org](mailto:smbrown@saintcolumbkille.org), from the parent is expected prior to the absence and before class begins. If we have no prior notice, we assume that the child should be in class. We will email or call to determine the child's safe whereabouts. This policy is for the safety and welfare of the child(ren).

**NOTE : Students must be in their classrooms when class begins for this 9-month session. Drop child(ren) off no earlier than 10 minutes before class begins. Any student who is late (not in their classroom when the bell rings) will need to report to the RE Office at the main school doors for a tardy slip.** No student may leave the premises during class time or during a parish activity without a parent being present in the office. Students will not be dismissed early with notes—a parent must come to the RE office and pick up the student at the main school entrance.

Since attendance is of utmost importance, absences must be kept to three or less during the 9-Month program. We understand that situations arise and some absences from illness are unavoidable; however, for students to receive the instruction for their current grade, they need to be in class. Please keep student(s) from missing class due to extracurricular activities as, if they also experience illness, this can contribute to absences more than the 3 absences allowed during the 9-Month session. If absences continue to be a concern, the Director may request that students repeat their current grade level. Parents of students who miss more than 3 days may need to meet with the Director of RE to go over make up work to be completed at home in a two-week time frame or move to homeschooling.

**Summer RE students may only miss, arrive late or leave early once during the program and may not miss the last class day unless permission is granted in the case of special circumstances. This is to be discussed 3 or more days before missing with the Director and the parent. Any students missing more than 1 class day will automatically be removed from the summer program and required to repeat the grade level during the next available program (9-Month program, Sept – May), homeschooling, or the following summer as selected by the parent.**

## **BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE**

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

- Respect yourself, others and things
- Contribute positively to the learning environment
- Follow parish and classroom procedures

Classroom disturbances will not be tolerated. Class time is short and very precious. Catechists will handle matters immediately to help students learn how to use correct behavior and remain in the classroom learning environment. The catechist will give one verbal reminder to help the student choose appropriate behavior. If the student misbehaves again, the catechist will send the student, with a completed Discipline Form, to the Director. After a conference with the Director, the catechist will decide if he/she wants the student to rejoin the class. A copy of the form will be sent home for a parent signature—the form should be returned by the next class.

If the student is sent to the office a second time, or this is an ongoing problem from week to week, the student will remain in the RE Director's Office and parents will be contacted and asked to meet for a conference. Students may not be allowed to attend classes without a parent present. Further problems will automatically require a parent to be present for the remainder of the year's classes.

If a student chooses to put him/herself or others in danger, immediate action will be taken.

1. Physical/psychological danger – fighting, rough play, and/or throwing objects that could harm someone or property; bringing dangerous or illegal items such as weapons, knives, matches, lighters, smoking material (including e-cigarettes), drugs, etc., to any area of the parish property; physical or psychological threats, intimidation, force or injury; leaving the parish grounds without permission; using normal objects in a dangerous way.
2. Abuse in tone, gesture, or word-harassment of any kind; any unwanted behavior that makes others feel unsafe or uncomfortable, intimidation/bullying; disrespect in action, tone, or gesture after repeated correction, profanity, and vandalism.
3. Out of control behavior or willful misbehavior toward a catechist, aide, staff member or another student; being unable, incapable or unwilling to listen or follow instructions; repeated violations of classroom rules.

## **SUSPENSION**

St. Columbkille 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 Coordinator 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 (at the parent's cost) to continue the child's religious education at home until the student is approved to return to class.

## **DRESS CODE**

A student's choice of personal appearance and hygiene should be left to the good judgment of the student and his/her parents or guardians. The administration of the RE program has the responsibility to help develop values which contribute to a positive learning environment. As such, the development of good taste in personal appearance should be a cooperative effort between the home and program.

The following dress guidelines will be followed:

- Students may wear jeans, athletic pants, or sweatpants.
- Students may wear shorts that are modest in length (no more than 7" above the top of the kneecap) and no words on the seat.
- Clothing may not have rude or offensive wording or that promote weapons, violence, etc.
- No pajamas may be worn.
- No off the shoulder, crop style, bare midriff shirts, tank tops or spaghetti strap style shirts are allowed

Violation of the dress code will result in students being sent home to change. Repeated violations may result in a conference with parents and/or suspension.

## **CATECHIST LEADERS AND AIDES**

Catechists are stewards who willingly share their time and talents to educate our students. Catechists and teachers are provided opportunities to grow in their faith formation and learn new methods of catechesis through faith opportunities offered at St. Columbkille and through the archdiocese. St. Columbkille parish offers many faith formation opportunities throughout the year that catechists and parents are invited to attend.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

Through our Baptism, God calls us to be good stewards of the gifts of time, talent and treasure given to us. A Christian steward is "one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends to them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others and returns them with increase to the Lord."

Students and families are asked and encouraged to share their gifts with our parish and community as often as possible. Each family will have opportunities to participate in parish service during the year. The RE Office will email families about opportunities that arise throughout the year. In addition, the parish bulletin, website and Facebook page will also give information regarding upcoming service and stewardship opportunities. Becoming a steward in our parish is an excellent way to build community and develop faith-centered relationships with others.

## **LITURGY OF THE MASS**

We expect families to regularly attend Sunday mass. Students receive instruction on the liturgy of the mass. Throughout the RE year, students will also attend family events in the church for Advent and Lent. If a class night coincides with a Holy Day of Obligation, students will attend mass with their families.

"As members of the Christian community, all are called to participate actively in the liturgical prayer of the Church. Religious Education therefore must involve the student in his/her faith community and in that community's liturgy. Liturgy itself educates, it teaches, it forms community, and it forms the individual. It makes possible worship to God." (*U.S.C.C.B., "Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education"*)

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING (SET)**

As required by the Archdiocese of Omaha and directed by the U.S. Catholic Council of Bishops 'Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People', all clergy, lay ministers, paid staff and volunteers over the age of 19 who have access to children must take Safe Environment training and complete a background check before being allowed to work with children. Dates and forms to register for Safe Environment Training (SET) are available in the RE, Parish and School offices. Safe Environment certification is good for 6 years. If you need recertification, it can be completed on-line through the Archdiocese of Omaha's Learning and Training Center at <https://archomaha.org/safe-environment>. Stewards must complete recertification prior to their current certification expiration. There is not a "grace period" for Safe Environment certifications. If certification is allowed to lapse, individuals will not be able to work with children until they are recertified by the archdiocese. For additional information on Safe Environment training and certification, please contact the Director of RE.

## CIRCLE OF GRACE

Circle of Grace is a safe environment program developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha in response to the 'Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People'. Its focus is on educating and informing youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others. Circle of Grace is mandated to be taught yearly to all children in archdiocesan schools, religious education programs, and youth ministry in Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Through the Circle of Grace program, adults assist children and youth to recognize that each of us lives within a Circle of Grace that holds our very essence in body, mind, heart, soul, and sexuality. Through the Circle of Grace program, children and youth are taught to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated.

## DROP OFF/PICK UP

Students in K-2 must enter/exit through the **East doors of the school building**. These students will be walked out to the drop off/pick up zone by a catechist. Parents pick up along the curb next to the school sidewalk OR park along another street/lot and walk over to get your child. **K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Students are not allowed to cross the street to the opposite side of Monroe Street to leave. This is for the safety of everyone.**

Students in grades 3-8 will enter/exit the building through the **Main School Doors** (The school entrance faces South). **They are picked up in the North (Lot #4) or South (Lot #5) Jefferson street lots.**

**\*\*\*Please follow this traffic flow -----North Jefferson lot (Lot #4) exits North towards the church. The South Jefferson lot (Lot #5) exits south towards downtown Papillion.**

**Again, no one picking up from RE should be driving past the school parking apron area where an adult will cross students. This is for safety. Please follow the directives above. Do not park in the lot with the garage across from the school as that is not an RE parking area. North (Lot 4) or South (Lot 5) Jefferson Street parking lots ONLY. Thank you!**

## EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

### DISMISSALS FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER

Should icy or snowy weather occur, the RE program observes the school closing policies of the Papillion/La Vista or Omaha Public/Catholic Schools. If any of these schools cancel classes for the day, or close during the day due to bad weather, we will not hold RE classes that evening. Occasionally, because of deteriorating weather during the day, we may cancel RE classes late in the afternoon or early evening—even if the schools held classes that day. Any announcements to close evening classes will be sent by email and/or posted on the Religious Formation Facebook group page. **Please follow or join the Facebook page if you use Facebook. Thank you.**

Parents should also use their discretion as to whether it is safe for their children to attend class.

### FIRE/SEVERE WEATHER HAZARDS, ALARMS, DRILLS

Students who are caught pulling the fire alarm will be turned over to the authorities and subject to suspension or expulsion. Catechists are provided with instructions on how to lead the children in emergency situations. During emergency situations, silence and order will be maintained at all times. In the case of a tornado or weather-related emergency, all students, catechists and others present will be held in designated safe areas of the building until the all clear is given.

**In the event of an emergency, parents will need to check with the RE Office before any child can be released. Students cannot be released directly by the catechist without first verifying departure with the office.**

- Directives are posted in each classroom for exiting the building or finding safe shelter in the event of a fire or tornado.
- All catechists are versed in the proper procedures for emergencies.

- In the case of a tornado warning, all students and staff will go to designated areas and take cover until the warning is lifted.
- No personnel will remain in the office to answer telephones or buzz in visitors. The RE Office phone system (402.339.0990) will record any incoming messages. No one will be in the office to open doors.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to take shelter for their own safety. We encourage parents/guardians to allow students to remain with the shelter at St. Columbkille Education Center while the warning is in effect.
- St. Columbkille is not responsible for any injury occurring to parent/guardian or student choosing to leave the building during a tornado warning.
- Personnel will remain at St. Columbkille until parents have claimed all children.

### **NO NUT POLICY**

Allergy safety is important for student safety. It is the policy of the St. Columbkille Education Center to eliminate or minimize the risk of exposure to nuts for our students and to have a plan in place to respond to an emergency. This policy is both a safeguard to our 5-day school students and our RE students.

To help minimize the risk of exposure to nuts for our students, we will:

- Not allow foods of any kind to be consumed in the classroom. If catechists would like to have a treat with their students, they must reserve the lounge area within the school or share a snack outside (if the weather permits).
- Catechists will know they are not to offer any foods that contain nuts.
- Parents are discouraged from bringing in treats that contain nuts or were packaged where nut products are prepared.

**\*\*\*Parents are encouraged to have any allergies noted on the registration form on file so the RE personnel can communicate with the classroom catechists.**

### **SICKNESS OR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS DURING CLASS TIME**

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 let the RE Office know immediately.**

The RE Office will **not** dispense any medications. Any medication a student would need should be dispensed before or after class at home. ***The Director of Religious Formation must authorize exceptions to this policy.***

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. Children will not be allowed to walk home if sick or injured.

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.

### **SAFETY/SECURITY PLAN**

St. Columbkille wants every student to be safe and accounted for when under our supervision. All students who attend our RE program will enter at the door for their grade level --- K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade enter at the east side of the building, 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> as well as OCIT, OCIC or OCIC-C Students enter at the South facing main school doors. For the safety of everyone in our building, the doors are closed and locked promptly at the time classes begin. If your student is not in the building for the start of class, he/she must come to the main school doors—they face south and the entrance is located by the flagpole. Catechists begin class as scheduled and are in their rooms teaching so the doors must be secured.

All visitors must check in at the RE Office, entering at the main school doors. No one enters the classrooms until the catechist is present and instead remains in the hallway. Students who are not registered with the RE program are prohibited from attending classes. Parents who are not Safe Environment trained are not needed to walk their student(s) to class but merely bring them to the correct entry door please.

In the event there is information regarding a dangerous visitor, the RE classrooms will be locked down and authorities will be called. All doors to the school remain locked while classes are in session.

Parents may not walk their children to class unless they are a Safe Environment trained parent who is volunteering with RE for that session.

## **OUR POLICIES**

### **CARE OF PARISH EDUCATION CENTER**

Students are expected to respect the education center, classroom and desk. Students who damage or destroy parish and education facilities will be required to make complete restitution. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken for all situations.

### **COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Students with a condition which may be passed onto others in the classroom must be excluded from attending RE classes until no longer contagious. These conditions include, but are 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 without the use of fever-reducing medications.
3. Infections – students should be kept home for a minimum of 24 hours after starting antibiotics.
4. Vomiting – students should remain home until 24 hours after last episode.
5. Covid – stay home until symptoms are gone and/or follow current CDC guidelines.
6. Diarrhea – students should remain home until 24 hours after an episode.
7. Influenza – stay home until symptoms have improved and the fever is gone for a minimum of 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Some conditions may require a doctor's attention and note before returning to RE classes. Please call the office 402.339.0990 for details.

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Students are allowed to bring cell phones to RE classes but use during the class period is not allowed. Phones are to remain silent/off and put away during instruction. St. Columbkille's parish and RE program are not responsible for any electronic equipment brought to RE classes or events. Please do not text your child while they are in class. Call our office instead. Texting them is a distraction for them and for their catechist/classmates. Thank you.

### **HARASSMENT**

Students are expected to conduct themselves as Catholic Christians at all times, free of any harassing behavior toward others. Harassment of another student, school employee, agent or official based on the person's gender, race, color, age, religion, national origin, marital status, or disability is strictly prohibited.

Harassment is defined as any intentionally harmful, demeaning or disparaging acts, words, symbolic representations, or behaviors used by a student or students against others that is disruptive of the spiritual process. This includes, but is not limited to, bullying, verbal, physical, visual or graphic actions such as name-calling, taunting, mocking, slandering, humiliating, teasing, pestering, making derogatory remarks, demeaning jokes or disparaging drawings or notes.

Bullying is further defined to include any intentional, hostile or offensive verbal, written, graphic, demonstrative or physical act that has the purpose of exerting domination over another student, and that is disruptive to the educational process.

### **INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND GESTURES**

The use of abusive, profane or obscene language or gestures is prohibited. Offenders may be suspended or excluded from class and/or school. Abusive and profane or obscene language/gestures include, but are not limited to, slandering or abusing the ethnic background, sex, race, religious preference, or physical appearance of any student or school employee and "fighting words" which by their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite an immediate breach of peace.

## **FIGHTING/OTHER DISTURBANCES**

When a fight occurs, the possibility of injury or damage to other persons or property exists. For the protection of our students, catechists and staff, as well as the parish property, such activities will not be tolerated at St. Columbkille's Education Center. Throwing snowballs, rocks or other objects also creates the possibility of injury, and such activities are prohibited.

If a student chooses to violate this policy, they may be suspended. Repeated violation of this rule may result in meeting with the Director and the Pastor, with the possibility of not returning to the program.

## **EXPLOSIVES, FIREARMS, WEAPONS**

Students are never to bring or possess weapons (fire-crackers, smoke bombs, lighters, matches, homemade bombs, etc.) on school property regardless of whether or not they are intended to be used. The same is true for firearms (including BB, airsoft, and pellet guns), bludgeons, ammunition, knives, or weapons of any kind, whether concealed or not. Students are prohibited from possessing any article that bears a reasonable resemblance to a weapon, such as a toy gun or knife on school property. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion, and if in violation of Civil, State or Federal Law the case can be referred to the proper law authority. Federal Law requires a request for expulsion of 1 year for possession of a firearm in school. The intended use of a weapon or any article, which is capable of causing injury when used in an aggressive or belligerent manner is prohibited. Violation of this policy will result in suspension and/or expulsion and referred to the proper law authorities.

## **ILLEGAL DRUGS**

State laws and St. Columbkille's Religious Formation policy strictly prohibit the use, evidence of use, or possession and/or transfer of narcotics, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, look-a-like pills of any type or possession of drug-related paraphernalia anywhere in the Parish Education Center or any Religious Formation program sponsored activity. If students choose to violate this policy, they will be suspended and referred to the appropriate legal authorities.

## **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

State laws and St. Columbkille policy strictly prohibits student's possession or use of alcoholic beverages on parish property or at any parish sponsored function. Students who violate this policy will be suspended, referred to legal authorities and/or required to participate in counseling programs at the expense of the parents/guardians. Repeated violations of this policy may result in expulsion from St. Columbkille's RE program.

## **SMOKING**

State laws and St. Columbkille parish policy prohibit students from carrying and/or using tobacco products on school property or at parish sponsored activities. This includes e-cigarettes. Students who violate this policy are subject to suspension from the program. Repeated violations of this rule may result in expulsion. Parents using like products will be asked to leave the school and/or parish grounds.

## **PARENTAL CONCERNS AND PROCEDURES**

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

***Every effort should be made to resolve questions, concerns and problems at the earliest possible stage in a manner appropriate for Christians. Please follow these steps as listed below.***

1. Contact the student's catechist to discuss the situation and work with the catechist to arrive at possible solutions.
2. If the concern cannot be resolved with the catechist, the parent should then request a conference with the Director of Religious Formation. After discussing the situation with both parties, the Director will act as a facilitator, making every effort to resolve the problem and initiate reconciliation between the two parties.
3. If resolution or reconciliation have not been achieved after discussion with the catechist and Director of Religious Formation, and the parent still feels the issue has not been addressed accordingly, the Pastor will be asked to assist in resolving the situation and achieving reconciliation.

## **SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT**

When any person has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would result in abuse or neglect, he or she has the authority and duty to report the situation to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at 1.800.652.1999. The person making the report should inform the Pastor and Director of Religious Formation of the alleged misconduct. The parish and RE Office cooperates fully in the investigation of these cases.

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Students receive special, intense preparation for Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. This is done in cooperation with the parents/guardians. Students will receive the sacraments only if they are adequately prepared. Families in both the Parish School and Religious Education Program celebrate reception of the sacraments jointly.

Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist is a 2-year program, beginning in first grade. The sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist are received for the first time in second grade.

Confirmation preparation is also a 2-year program, beginning in seventh grade. Candidates in both seventh and eighth grade are required to participate in retreats, special events and complete stewardship hours. The sacrament of Confirmation is received in the eighth grade.

Meetings are scheduled during the year so that parents may review the content of preparation, deepen their own understanding of the sacrament being received, and help prepare their children for receiving these sacraments. Sacramental preparation will involve the family and include activities done outside of class. Make up work of missed classes is required.

**All candidates for sacraments (Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation) must provide a copy of their baptism certificate to the Religious Education Office by October 7<sup>th</sup>.** Baptismal certificate copies can be dropped off in the parish mission office or emailed to [mscuevas@saintcolumbkille.org](mailto:mscuevas@saintcolumbkille.org).

**Children in the third grade or above who were baptized but have not received Reconciliation or First Holy Communion can prepare for the sacraments by attending our OCIC-Communion classes.** Please contact the RE Office for more information.

**For children (age 7 and above) and teens, who have not been baptized can prepare for the sacraments by attending our OCIC classes. Students in 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grades and older will prepare by attending OCIT classes.** Please contact the RE Office for more information.

## **FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION**

Students in the second grade and OCIC-Communion class will prepare and receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

### **FIRST RECONCILIATION**

Student Requirements:

- Students must be baptized
- Students must be enrolled in second grade or OCIC-Communion

Parent Requirements:

- Parents will provide a copy of their child's baptismal certificate to the RE Mission Office by October 7<sup>th</sup>.
- There is an event for all second graders and their parents that will consist of Reconciliation Centers.

Dates for the Reconciliation Centers will be announced in the fall. **You will select ONE to attend.**

You may attend either of the dates. The centers will take approximately 75-90 minutes to complete. *(Dates will be determined and emailed to parents).*

Students will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a Saturday in January/February at 10am or 12:00pm in the Church. Students will be divided into two groups and families will be notified as to which group time their son/daughter will be making Reconciliation. *Family members are encouraged to receive Reconciliation along with their second graders.*

*(Dates will be determined and emailed to the parents)*

### **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION**

Student Requirements:

- Students must be baptized.
- Students must be enrolled in second grade or OCIC-Communion.
- Students must have made their First Reconciliation.

Parent Requirements:

- Parents will complete a First Holy Communion information sheet.
- Parents will provide a copy of their child's baptismal certificate by October 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Parents will pay the sacramental fee.
- Students will be divided into two groups to accommodate the large number of students receiving the sacrament. The Sacrament of First Holy Communion will be held on a Saturday in February or March at 10am or 12pm in the Church.

**Seating, dress, and pictures for First Holy Communion are explained in the Parent Sacramental Handbook. Please ask questions during the parent sacramental meetings!**

### **CONFIRMATION**

The two-year program for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students aims to develop and deepen the students' relationship with Jesus by making them more familiar with His ministry and teachings.

Confirmation flows from Baptism, which it seals and affirms. Confirmation celebrates the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, in its own unique way and confers on the individual gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Student Requirements:

- The student must be part of the period of candidacy and attend classes by the attendance policy for that session
- The student must complete (2) service projects, a saint report and formation classes in preparation for Confirmation
- The student will attend a retreat during their preparation for the Sacrament in 8<sup>th</sup> grade – St. Columbkille plans a retreat for the students and their parents. If a student is unable to attend our retreat it is the parent/student responsibility to find and attend another retreat at a neighboring parish by contacting their Director of Religious Education and communicating that to our office as well.

### **Timeline for Requirements:**

7<sup>th</sup> Grade – Year One of Preparation

- Candidates must complete 2 ongoing service projects in the areas of Parish and Community, 3 hours each
- Students will be required to compile a one-page typed reflection paper on each of the service projects – projects will be turned into the RE Office upon completion
- Students will complete a saint report on their confirmation name

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade – Year Two of Preparation

- Candidates must be registered in the School, Religious Ed or Youth Ministry Programs
- Candidates and their sponsors must attend the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Day of Reflection Retreat at St. Columbkille or a retreat at a neighboring parish (*Arrangements to attend a retreat at another parish will be set up by the parents/notify our office*)
- Candidates and sponsors must attend the Saturday Confirmation Practice. Dates for practice and Confirmation are given at the beginning of the year, attendance is mandatory – there are no exceptions i.e. athletic practices/games, dance recitals, vacations, extracurricular activities, etc.

**NOTE: Mrs. Sarah Pinkelman is the Sacramental Coordinator. She can answer questions about Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Retreat and Sacramental Prep Meetings.**

**She may be reached at [spinkelman@saintcolumbkilleschool.org](mailto:spinkelman@saintcolumbkilleschool.org).**

*(Sacramental Dates will be emailed to parents when they are set. Please make sure you are allowing the Parish Database to email and text you to keep up to date on Sacramental information.)*

**Parish Participation Hours** – The Parish Participation Hours program was formed in the 2025-2026 school year, due to a widespread decline in ministry participation and leadership. We will continue this program moving forward. This parish led initiative is being reinstated for both RE and School families for the first time since 2020. Service hours are a great way to stay in partnership with the parish community, support catechist teachers and staff, and model for our kids the importance of giving back. We are really excited about this program and how it can enhance our parish community with service as the focus, and to help everyone take their next step to be more like Jesus.

It is important to note that if you aren't Safe Environment Trained, it is essential to receive that training before being able to participate in most activities involving children. Training events are held often throughout the archdiocese. To sign up for that training (or to sign up for trainings held at other parishes) please visit here: [Safe Environment Trainings](#).

We will use an app service called MobileServe, which tracks various events and hours earned. Please send questions about Parish Participation hours and the app to [participation@mystc.org](mailto:participation@mystc.org).

RE Families are asked to complete 10 hours between June 2026-July 2027. You can look for opportunities on the parish website under Education/Formation and then see the Family Participation page under that heading.

Thank you in advance for embracing this additional way we can grow in a culture of service to our St. Columbkille neighbors and to God.

**\*\*\*This handbook may be amended at any time as needed.\*\*\***