

Dear friends in Christ,

It is my distinct pleasure to offer greetings to you and your beautiful family as part of the Religious Education Program here at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish. If you haven't experienced it yet, you will soon find that our catechetical program is one of the friendliest and engaging, as well as one of the largest in the Archdiocese. We make it our day-to-day business to care for our children in a safe environment, as if they were our own....because In Christ, they are!

We want you to feel welcome at all times in our midst, and I know Louise Frangella and Sara Koshofer, Coordinators of Religious Education, the office staff, and their many dedicated catechists and aides, will try hard to be as helpful as they can to assist you in fulfilling your duty as the *primary educators of your children*. This is especially important as you take the necessary time to show your youngster/s how to live a good Christian life. Allow our catechists to *fan the flame* of Catholic religious expression (e.g., prayer, values and responsibilities) you practice at home. This is how Christian lessons will be cemented in daily life. As you know better than I, children watch and are affected by, everything we do. So let your Catholic values shine and nourish them every day.

Along with Fr. Rajan, Fr. Lodi, our deacons, and our lay leaders, I look forward to seeing you in our school hallways and in our church pews, especially at Sunday Mass, where we are able to become what we receive; that is, the Body of Christ. Folks, there is nothing more serious and rewarding as the celebration of the Eucharist; keep it at the center of you family life.

May God Bless you richly and warmly always. Let's have a great year together!

Monsignor Thomas P. Sandi
Pastor

The Charity of Christ Compels Us...

*“ In this atmosphere of prayer
and awareness of the presence and
Fatherhood of God,
the truths of faith
and morals should be taught,
understood and deeply studied
with reverence,
and the
Word of God
should be read
and lived with love.
In this way Christ's truth will
build up a family community
based on the
example and
guidance of parents
who penetrate the
innermost depths
of their
children's hearts
and leave an
Impression that the
future events in their lives will not
be able to efface.”*

Statement of the Pontifical Council on the Family

Our Mission

L. SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Preparation for the reception of the sacraments (First Penance, First Eucharist and Confirmation) takes place within the context of our stated mission. Of course, receiving these Sacraments is not an end in itself but a means by which we continue to live the Christian life—to *be* Christ in our world. Our Religious Education Program is a critical part of children’s journey of faith, during which they and their families are prepared to receive vital sacramental grace. Ordinarily, a minimum of two years of preparation are required for reception of the sacraments. Specific preparation for the individual sacrament usually includes additional family sessions, rites and prayer services designed to enhance the understanding and community aspect of the sacrament.

M. SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS

As a part of the *Archdiocese* of New York we at Seton are fully committed to providing and monitoring a *Protecting God’s Children* program to ensure that every person who has regular contact with our children has had an **Archdiocesan background check and a suitable Safer Spaces training**. There are no exceptions. We are committed to creating and maintaining a truly rich environment for Religious Education and excellent spiritual formation at all times.

N. SAFETY and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Please be assured that our catechists, aides, monitors and office personnel have been briefed on emergency procedures for fire drills, lockdowns, lockouts and evacuations. In case of an emergency requiring evacuation you will be notified as soon as possible by either phone or through the news media.

O. TUITION

We take particular pride in that our RE program runs on an annual budget which is supported solely from student tuition. Tuition must be paid at registration. If absolutely necessary, arrangements for budget payments may be made by contacting the RE Coordinators or Registrar. Tuition is essential to the operation of the parish program, but no child should be kept out of class because of a parent’s financial difficulties.

The mission of the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Religious Education Program is to journey in faith with children and families and transmit the Christian message with excellence and love so that, by growing in “intimacy with the person of Jesus Christ”, a new generation will live lives that transform society and the Kingdom of God will grow stronger.

We shall maintain the Lord’s presence among us by transmitting the Gospel as the Catholic Community has received it, understands it, celebrates it and communicates it. We shall always keep in mind that this is the gift of God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

Parent's Prayer of Blessing

God our Father let your peace settle within our hearts. Give us strength and wisdom as we care for our children. Show us how to raise our families with patience and tenderness. Give us strength during the times of greatest difficulty, and help us recognize the little joys that are part of each day. May we continue to grow in wisdom, understanding and grace under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord Amen.

Parental Role

Parents have the primary responsibility for the religious development of their children. How children pray and worship God, and how they relate to others, depend on the values which they experience before they begin formal religious education. These are values that grow mainly because of the faith environment of the home.

The Eucharist, the center of our life of faith, is the central pivot of religious education and growth in faith. A primary purpose of our Program is reinforcement of a Eucharistic spirituality. We expect that, as the entire parish community comes together to worship and celebrate God's overwhelming love and mercy around God's Word and Altar Table on Sundays, you and your children will be present. This is the most sacred act we do as Christians. There is no substitution for the nourishment of Jesus' Body and Blood supply for the soul!

Tasks of Religious Education

The role of the parish catechetical program is described at length in the *General Directory for Catechesis*. This document outlines six tasks of Catechesis that every catechist strives to incorporate in the year's lessons: promoting knowledge of the faith, liturgical education, moral formation, teaching to pray, education for community life, and missionary initiative. Everything we require of you and your child is related to our Mission Statement and the accomplishment of these six tasks.

This handbook has been prepared to provide both a framework for understanding the intentions and policies of our program, and useful information for parents. Please keep it available throughout the year.

Religious Education RE Office Hours:

Monday	9:30AM – 6:15PM
Wednesday	9:30AM – 8:45PM
Thursday	9:30 AM – 8:45PM

Summer Hours:

Monday – Thursday	10:00AM – 3:00PM
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Office Staff

Louise Frangella	RE Coordinator – Elementary School
Sara Koshofer	RE Coordinator – Middle School
Andrew Poulin	Saturday Supervisor
Nick Oliverio	Sunday Supervisor
Martina Norris	Registrar
Ivana Gomez, James Arena	Secretaries

Session Schedule

Saturday	8:30AM –10:00AM
Sunday	7:45AM –11:15 AM Twice monthly
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday	4:30PM - 6:00 PM
Wednesday, Thursday Eve	7:00PM - 8:30 PM

The topics covered in this handbook are:

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| A. Admission Policy | H. Early Pickup |
| B. Arrival, Dismissal, Parking | I. Homework |
| C. Attendance / Absences | J. Program Options |
| D. Calendar | K. Progress Reports |
| E. Catechists | L. Sacramental |
| F. Communication | M. Safe Environment |
| G. Discipline | N. Safety & Crisis |
| | O. Tuition |

A. ADMISSION POLICY

Families registered in St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (SEAS) Parish are encouraged to enroll their children in the program. There is no discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin or handicapping conditions.

Baptismal records (even if baptized at SEAS must be presented at registration to the Registrar.

- Parents of children who have not yet been baptized will be guided in taking the appropriate steps.
- Special classes for children who have not been catechized to receive the Sacraments will be provided.
- Families who wish to transfer from other local churches must become a parishioner of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and be an active member for at least six months before they may enroll. For new families to the area there is no waiting period, but you must register as a parishioner.

B. ARRIVAL, DISMISSAL, PARKING

There is no **parking or standing** permitted in the drive-through/fire lane in front of the school building. Parking **must** take place in the lot. This is extremely important for the safety of the children. Please use the crosswalk area to the left of the school doors when crossing from the parking lot. **Do not cross through the “drop off” traffic. Only the doors between the church and the school are used upon arrival.**

- 1st and 2nd year children must be walked to their classes by a parent, or other adult (in the case of carpool). These children are also picked-up in the classroom 5 minutes before the bell rings. Cars **must** be parked in the lot for this purpose.
- Levels 3 through 8 may be dropped off in the drive through lane. Upper classes are dismissed through the main doors of the school.

C. ATTENDANCE / ABSENCES

Regular and consistent class attendance is necessary for instruction to be effective; every effort should be made to avoid absences.

When a child misses class for any reason, a parent should send an explanatory note with the child to the next class. A parent should see that the student covers work that was missed. When a child has missed four classes or two Sunday classes, even for legitimate reasons, the child will not automatically move up to the next level. Make-up classes or work at home may be required to see that child has learned each year’s curriculum to the best of his or her ability.

D. CALENDAR

The annual Program Calendar is sent home in August. (The Archdiocese recommends a minimum of 30 days of class time.) We Follow the Lakeland School District calendar for seasonal recesses and holiday observances. Classes are not held when the local district is off for these or weather related reasons. Our program is not closed for parent-teacher conferences. Weather cancellations are announced on WLNA-AM (1420), WHUD (FM100.7/www whud.com) and Channel 12 News.

E. CATECHISTS

Catechists are parishioners who pass on the Christian message through word and witness as faithfully as they are able.

Each is expected to be “certified catechists” or working toward Certification through the Archdiocesan Catechist Formation program or other continuing religious education studies. Anyone is welcome to attend these workshops and classes. Information regarding this and other adult education courses may be obtained by calling the office for information.

F. COMMUNICATION

Most important communications will be mailed to your home, so please be sure the office has up to date addresses and phone information. We will attempt to use e-mail when possible. Reminders, changes and cancellations of meetings, etc. and notices about “next week’s class” will be sent home with the student. Please ask your child if there are any handouts. General communications are placed in the bulletin. Re-registration forms are sent home with children near the end of the year. An attempt will be made to keep up the web site (www.seton-parish.org).

G. DISCIPLINE

As stated above, we aim *to transmit the Christian message with excellence and love*, we understand that there needs to be an atmosphere of mutual respect in our classes. Catechists work hard to be prepared for their task, and we expect students to: arrive on time, bringing their books, pencils, folders, etc. and participating appropriately. The program reserves the right to remove a student from the group session:

- If we determine that the student would benefit significantly from individual or smaller group instruction
- If the student’s behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group

Consultations with student, parent/guardian, catechist and RE Coordinators’ will be scheduled to determine the best options for all involved. Verbal abuse or humiliation will never be tolerated on the part of student or catechist. A parent who has concerns about behavior in a child’s class should contact the RE Coordinator.

H. EARLY PICK-UP

The action of children being picked up early is very disruptive, making it difficult for the catechist to keep children engaged. If a child must be picked up before dismissal time, a parent should send a note with the child who will give it to the catechist, who in turn sends it to the office. A parent must come to the office to sign out their child.

I. HOMEWORK

For learning to truly take place, children need to review, use, teach others and integrate into their lives the information they have been given. For this reason, and especially because of the time lapse between classes, catechists are encouraged to require some type of written or practical work to be done between class times. To support their child’s growth, parents need to ask their child(ren) about homework and see that they follow through.

J. PROGRAM OPTIONS

Our goal is to offer multiple ways for families to grow together in their understanding and practice of the Catholic faith, keeping in mind the sundry demands of our current culture. At present, the program offers two classroom options:

- One and one-half hours weekly for grades 1 through 8.
- Three and one-half hours, twice per month on Sunday (this option includes the children attending 8AM Mass).

K. PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress Reports will be sent home with your child mid year in a designated envelope that you must sign and return. At the end of the year your child will receive their Progress Report at their last class.

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