

***St. Brendan Parish
North Olmsted, Ohio***

Parish School of Religion Handbook

Information Sheet

Religious Education Office

Mary Oldja, Director of Religious Education

Patty Quinn, Religious Education Office Secretary

Address: St. Brendan Parish
Religious Education Office
4242 Brendan Lane
North Olmsted, OH 44070

Phone number: (440)777-3702

Email address: stbrendanreo@yahoo.com

Classes are held for grades 1-8: **Sunday morning session: 10:15-11:15am**
Monday evening session: 7:00-8:00pm

Dear PSR Families,

We look forward to working with you this academic year! Be sure to refer to the PSR class schedule—classes meet most weeks throughout the months of September through May.

The first class is for all students AND parents. The teachers and I look forward to meeting with everyone! We will meet in the Gym for the first class. Each family is to attend only on the day of your chosen PSR session.

*The “Called to Protect” lessons take place in November. Look for more information in the weekly emails and the **“Called to Protect” by Praesidium Policy.***

Parents and siblings are encouraged to join us for the Advent and Lent Prayer Services as well as the Closing Program during the final class of the year.

Be sure to contact the Religious Education Office if your child will be absent from class.

If you ever have any questions, please feel free to contact the Office.

~Mary and Patty

General PSR Information

Student Emergency Medical Form

On rare occasions your child may become ill during class and require emergency care. Therefore, a completed Emergency Medical Form is required for EACH PSR STUDENT. Any student without an emergency medical form on file or an incomplete form on file will NOT be permitted in class until a completed form is received.

If your child does become ill during class, the Religious Education Office staff will contact you at the phone number/s indicated on the form. Please be sure to list a phone number where you can be reached during PSR class.

PSR Fee and Payments

The PSR fee is: \$80 per student; \$240 family maximum. When registering for PSR, all families are given several different billing options:

- 1 Paid in full at the time of registration.
- 2 Paid in full by September 30th.
- 3 Paid in two installments (September and November).
- 4 Paid in three installments (September, November, and January).
- 5 Paid in four installments (September, November, January, and March).

Because of the flexible billing process, all PSR fees must be paid IN FULL by the final day of PSR classes. Any family not paid in full by that time will be contacted by Mary Oldja.

The fee should not be a deterrent to religious education classes. Scholarships are available; contact the Office to apply for a scholarship. No student will be denied a spot in a PSR class due to issues with payment of the PSR fee.

Cash, checks (made out to St. Brendan Parish) and credit card payments are accepted; contact the Office for a credit card form.

Materials

Each student will receive a religion text book for their grade level. For the convenience of the students, teachers send home one chapter each week. In addition to the weekly text, the *Benziger Family Life* book, which presents a total respect for life as a gift from God, will be used in the 5th grade classes during the winter.

Pencils, pens, crayons, paper, folders, and all other supplies are provided by the Religious Education Office.

Report Cards

A report regarding your child/children's attendance and teacher's evaluation will be available twice a year (first semester report cards will be in the family folders the first class in January; second semester report cards will be mailed home the week after the final PSR class). Information from both report cards is recorded on each student's permanent record card in the Religious Education Office. Questions or concerns should be directed to the teacher or Mary Oldja.

Featured Class

Each week, one PSR class is featured in the Religious Education Room and in the parish bulletin. All are encouraged to stop in the Religious Education Room and check out the students' fabulous work!

Sports Program

St. Brendan Parish offers a variety of sports for the youth of the parish through the Patriot Athletic Club (PAC). All PSR students are invited to participate in any of the sports programs offered. Regular attendance at PSR classes and weekend Mass is required to participate in any of the sports programs.

Servers

All students that have reached the 5th grade are invited to become Mass servers. We encourage the youth of our parish, both girls and boys, to assist in the celebration of Mass. Training sessions will be offered periodically during the year. Look for more information in the weekly emails and the parish bulletin.

Volunteering for PSR

At times, as need arises, we may ask for volunteers to become teachers, classroom aides, hallway monitors, and substitute teachers. Any person working directly with children under the age of 18 (which includes all paid and volunteer PSR staff at St. Brendan Parish) are VIRTUS trained (attend a diocesan presentation "Protecting God's Children;" read and agree to the diocesan guidelines for the protection of children; complete a background check; and participate in monthly, ongoing education in protecting children). If you are interested in volunteering for PSR as a teacher, aide, hallway monitor, or substitute teacher, contact the Office for more information.

Sometimes, teachers will ask for parents/guardians to help in class with a specific project. The individual teachers will contact parents/guardians if help is needed.

Weekly PSR Email

As a way to share information and save paper, once each week the Religious Education Office will send an email to all PSR families. Announcements, information about PSR, and other things of interest for our families will be shared in these emails. Be sure to read your weekly email; contact the Office if you do not receive our emails.

Family Handouts/Family Folders

The Religious Education Office is making an effort to eliminate using paper where possible. Any handouts that can be sent electronically to our PSR families will be emailed to the addresses provided by parents on the Registration Form. **An email address is required from each registered family!**

Any handouts that cannot be sent electronically will be distributed to families via their family folder. Family folders are available in the first floor hallway 10 minutes before the end of each class. When parents/guardians enter the building to pick up their child/children in grades 1-5, they should stop and pick up all of the items in their family folder. Students in grades 6-8 who do not have younger siblings are to pick up the items from their family folder before exiting the building. Any family who does not pick up their handouts will lose out on learning of or attending special events and activities.

The Sacraments and Mass

Holy Family Program

The Holy Family Program is the sacramental preparation program for parish 2nd graders and their families. Information is mailed to all families in August with details of meetings and events for the year and announcements are made periodically in the bulletin. Contact the Religious Education Office for more details.

Confirmation Preparation

At St. Brendan Parish, student parishioners who are in the 9th-12th grades prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Preparation sessions and a retreat take place at the parish in the fall and winter; Confirmation Mass takes place in the winter. Contact the Religious Education Office for more details.

Sacraments and Mass

In our religious education program we stress the importance of meeting the spiritual needs of our children today. We attempt to assist our young people to participate fully in the Sunday Liturgy. We feel this participation provides a meaningful link between the classroom and the parish community. Both religion class and weekend Liturgy need to be attended. We encourage families to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. There are some opportunities for the Sacrament during class time; however, these times are limited. Our children should form the habit of celebrating Reconciliation regularly during their formative years.

Parish Policy of Students Attending Mass

A twofold goal of St. Brendan School and Parish School of Religion is (1) to enhance the student's religious knowledge of the Catholic Church and (2) to draw the student closer to God by experiencing the Sacramental faith commitment of the entire St. Brendan community. These components are inseparable.

The Catholic Church holds the Eucharist to be the preeminent Sacrament of the Church, the heart and soul of the Assembly. It is presumed a student attending our religious programs is also attending Sunday Mass.

In the Parish School of Religion, dedicated teachers spend many hours preparing lessons and projects to draw students closer to Christ. If students are not worshipping at the weekend Masses, the goals of the parish are not being met.

Sunday worship is a significant factor in the religious formation of your child. Biweekly, the student will have the opportunity to answer a series of questions to demonstrate actual participation at Sunday worship. Failure to adequately meet St. Brendan's religious goals for students means the forfeiture of extracurricular activities.

In such cases, the pastor will seek a conference with the student's parents to determine the reason for not participating in Sunday Liturgy. If such conference does not produce a remedy, a second conference will discuss the implications of the lack of progress. If no progress can be made, the pastor will bring the matter to the Parish Staff, who will determine whether the student should remain part of the parish day school or PSR program.

Grades five through eight in the Day School and PSR will be affected by this policy.

PSR Policies

Attendance Policy

Due to the limited number of classes, regular attendance is encouraged. We understand that occasionally your child/children will be absent from class (if a child is ill, please use your best judgment before sending them to PSR). **Parents/Guardians MUST inform the Religious Education Office if your child/children will be absent from class (by phone at (440)777-3702 or email at stbrendanreo@yahoo.com).** A representative from the office will email parents if their child/children are not in their PSR class when attendance is taken and the office was not informed of the absence.

If a student has two consecutive absences and the office has not been notified of these absences, the family will be notified that the child is not maintaining regular attendance. If this notification does not result in a conversation between the parent/guardian and Mary Oldja, a letter will be mailed home. After two more consecutive absences without notification (total of 4 consecutive absences without notification) occur, the office assumes that the student will no longer be attending their PSR class; the student will be withdrawn from PSR and a letter of notification will be mailed home.

If regular attendance in class unexpectedly becomes a problem for your family, please remember that we do offer a Home School PSR option; contact the Office if you would like more information.

Student Drop Off/Pick Up Policy

Please be aware of the movement of traffic in the parking lot before and after class. Parents/Guardians are welcome to walk their child/children into the building; however, this is not mandatory. When dropping off students, parents/guardians are to pull their car up to the school entrance and students may exit the car **ONLY** where an adult is standing. Doors will be open 15 minutes before the start of class. Please note that classes begin at 10:15am on Sundays and 7pm on Mondays; students should be dropped off at class in a timely manner. The School doors will be locked at the start of class; anyone arriving late needs to ring the School doorbell to gain entrance to the building.

When picking up students, **ALL PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST PICK UP STUDENTS IN GRADES 1-5 AT THE CLASSROOM DOOR AT THE END OF CLASS.** Please note, students in grades 1-5 **WILL NOT** be allowed to exit the classroom without adult supervision (older siblings in PSR grades 6-8 are **NOT** allowed to pick their younger siblings up from the classrooms). Upon entering the building to pick up their child/children, parents/guardians should pick up their family handouts from their family folder (see **Family Handouts/Family Folders** for more information). Please note that classes end promptly at 11:15am on Sundays and 8pm on Mondays; students should be picked up in a timely manner.

Students in grades 6-8 are permitted to walk to and from St. Brendan for PSR class if parents/guardians allow this and notify the office by letter or phone call. Please advise these students to be alert while walking in or near the parking lot. Please note, there is no place within vision of the Religious Education Office for bicycle storage; for the safety of all students, we ask that bicycles not be ridden to PSR class.

Change of PSR Session Policy

All students are to attend the PSR session on the day indicated by their parents/guardians on the registration form. Any student who needs to switch PSR sessions will only be allowed to switch with the permission of Mary Oldja; parents/guardians are to explain the situation and a decision will be made as to whether the switch is permitted.

Weather Conditions/PSR Cancellation Policy

At times attendance becomes difficult due to weather circumstances. Since we have so many PSR families we are unable to contact each personally; in the event of PSR cancellation due to weather the local television and radio stations will be notified with an alert such as: St Brendan PSR-canceled; St. Brendan PSR-no morning/evening classes; St. Brendan-no morning/evening religious education. If you are unsure if classes are meeting you can always call the office at (440)777-3702. In the case of winter weather and classes are not canceled, parents/guardians should use their best judgment when deciding to travel to St. Brendan. Please note: Monday evening PSR classes will be canceled if the North Olmsted City Schools are closed during the day due to inclement weather.

Severe Weather Policy

In the event of severe weather where the National Weather Service issues a warning to those in North Olmsted to “seek shelter immediately,” all PSR students and staff will move to a central, safe location in the building. Weather permitting, a staff member will meet parents at the School doors. Students will be released to parents after being signed out with a staff member.

NO STUDENTS WILL BE RELEASED FROM THE BUILDING DURING SEVERE WEATHER: (1) without parent permission or (2) until a St. Brendan Staff member (such as Mary Oldja, Patty Quinn, Fr. Tom Woost), after receiving information that the severe weather threat is over, releases students and staff back to the classrooms or out of the building.

Parents are encouraged to wait inside the building with their children until the severe weather threat is over. All who are in the building are asked to be patient, remain calm, and keep quiet during severe weather threats.

Cell Phone Policy

Students are not allowed to use cell phones during class. If a student is caught using a cell phone while in class, it will be confiscated and held in the Religious Education Office. Confiscated cell phones will be released to parents/guardians at the end of class time; students are NOT permitted to pick up their own confiscated cell phone.

“Called to Protect” by *Praesidium* Policy

The Diocese of Cleveland has instituted “Called to Protect:” the most up-to-date and comprehensive safe-environment training program with content and teaching methods that use the latest research and multi-media training to ensure effectiveness. We are partnering with *Praesidium*, one of the national leaders in abuse risk management, to train parents, youth, young children and staff on how to prevent child sexual abuse.

The Office for the Protection of Children intends to utilize this engaging material as a supplement to the curriculum for children in the schools or parish schools of religion, and as a help especially to parents and families. We will continue to use VIRTUS with its unparalleled database management.

“Called to Protect” lessons by *Praesidium* are a permanent part of the PSR curriculum. In November, students participate in 3 lessons after parent meetings have been held (at the end of these meetings the lessons will be available for parents to review). Parents are offered the option to ‘opt out’ of the lessons by form. Information, including dates of the parent meetings and student lessons, will be mailed to families in the fall.

We are excited to continue “Called to Protect” each year! We look forward to better equipping students and their parents to prevent child sexual abuse.

Code of Behavior Policy

Our vision of a formal religious education program is one of a classroom or learning community that offers support and encouragement to the faith life of our young people, as well as giving information and teaching religious truths. We can offer the best environment when our students and teachers work together to discover and know the message of Jesus as presented in our Catholic tradition. A spirit of trust and mutual care is a basis for our program. We trust in our parents as the primary religious educators of their children. We trust in our teachers, who offer, as adults, to share their wisdom and information to the best of their ability, with the children in their class. Finally, we trust in our children to open their minds and hearts to the person of Jesus and to His message.

We feel an atmosphere of respect and appropriate behavior is essential for the best climate to be present in our classrooms and hallways. If a student is disruptive in class or on school premises, we feel the parent/guardian should be informed so that we may work together to help the student benefit from our program.

In light of our goal of having the best possible program for our students, we are outlining a code of behavior policy. We would consider these kinds of behavior inappropriate:

- not entering the building or classroom promptly at the beginning of the session
- disrespect shown to supervisory adult, such as a hall monitor, a teacher, etc.
- disrespect shown to classmates and other students
- leaving the classroom or building without permission
- disruptive behavior or language
- inappropriate clothing (offensive sayings and images, gang insignia, etc.)
- playing with toys during class

If a student demonstrates any of the above kinds of inappropriate behavior, this sequence of responses will be followed:

For the first offense, a conversation between the student and one of the PSR administrators will take place. Hopefully, this conversation will clear up any misunderstandings on the student's part of his/her expected behavior and responsibility. We hope that in most cases this would be sufficient to correct the situation. If there is a second offense, we will contact the parent/guardian to help generate some possible options to improve the situation. If a third offense occurs, a conference will be initiated, including the student, the parent/guardian, the PSR administrator, and any other significant person such as a teacher, parish priest, hall monitor, etc. This conference hopefully will result in a clear understanding of the difficulty, and the possible options to correct the situation. A written summary of the agreed upon solution will be prepared and given to each of the people involved in the decision. We are hopeful that a solution can be found that will benefit the student, the adult involved, and the entire program.

If, at any point in this process, the parent/guardian feels they would like to meet with the PSR administrator, teacher, etc., they are welcome to do so. We also encourage our teachers and/or parents/guardian to call one another if they feel a direct conversation is the best way to help a situation. We hope that with good communication and trust in one another, our children will benefit, and that our young people will carry on our Catholic traditions and spirit of Christian commitment.

THE DIOCESAN POLICY ON AIDS AND YOUTH GANGS ALONG WITH THE PREGNANCY POLICY IS ON FILE
IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE.

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy

St. Brendan Parish is firmly committed to providing a safe, positive learning and working environment for everyone in the PSR program. For this reason, and in keeping with the goals and objectives of Catholic education, St. Brendan PSR Program expressly prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence in the school environment. This policy re-emphasizes the personal dignity of the individual and fosters positive sexual attitudes and respect for others.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment includes the following specific instances: verbal sexual abuse; disseminating obscene or sexually explicit material, whether in the form of music, written lyrics, pornographic pictures or other literature, or having such material in one's possession in the school, on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities; obscene or sexually explicit graffiti anywhere in the school or on the school/parish grounds; continuing and unwanted written or oral communication directed to another of a sexual nature; spreading sexual rumors/innuendoes; obscene T-shirts, hats or buttons; touching oneself sexually in front of others; obscene and/or sexually explicit gestures; and any other inappropriate behavior of a sexually explicit or obscene nature that demeans or offends the recipient. The above list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but is intended to provide guidance as to what may constitute sexual harassment.

Isolated, trivial incidents are not sufficient to constitute harassment and will be handled according to the student behavior code.

Allegations of sexual harassment (as defined above) are to be reported to the teacher and the principal or to the appropriate program director. Parents of both the offender and the victim will be informed of the allegations. The matter is to be kept confidential by all parties involved, and every effort will be made to protect the alleged victim from retaliation. The parents of both the offender and the victim are obligated to cooperate in remedying the situation.

If the allegations are substantiated, disciplinary actions will be taken. These will depend on the nature, frequency and severity of the action, the ages of the offender and victim, the history of similar actions by this individual, and the circumstances in which the harassment occurred. Possible disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, any or all of the following:

- verbal warning/reprimand and apology to the victim,
- a parent/student/principal conference,
- written warning/reprimand & parent notification,
- detention or removal from selected school or program activities,
- behavior/probation contracts, possibly requiring professional intervention,
- suspension,
- expulsion.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE: Sexual violence is handled separately because of its potentially criminal nature. If an incident of sexual violence occurs, the principal, pastor or other school authority or program personnel are required under state law to report the incident (O.R.C. 2151.421). The Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately if there is any "reason to believe" (O.R.C. 2151.421) that sexual abuse or violence has occurred involving a child less than eighteen years of age. The Diocesan Legal Office will be contacted immediately in these situations.

Generally, sexual harassment should be construed as sexual violence when: the recipient is physically touched without his/her consent in a sexual manner; is expressly threatened or perceives a threat of physical harm for purposes of the offender's sexual gratification; or is the victim of sex offenses under Ohio law, including Gross Sexual Imposition (O.R.C. 2907.05), Sexual Battery (O.R.C. 2907.03), Rape (O.R.C. 2907.02), Importuning (O.R.C. 2907.07), Voyeurism (O.R.C. 2907.08), Public Indecency (O.R.C. 2907.09) or Felonious Sexual Penetration (O.R.C. 2907.12) as examples. In each of the above examples, the Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately.

Weapons Policy

St. Brendan Parish School of Religion follows the proposed policy of the Diocese of Cleveland. This policy expressly prohibits the use, possession, sale or discharge of any weapons or explosive devices in the school/parish, on school/parish grounds, or at school/parish-sponsored activities (home groups). This policy shall apply to all students, participants in parish programs, teachers, administrators, and other personnel in the school or parish.

This policy includes, but is not limited to:

- any firearm, or look-alike weapon
- knife
- deadly weapon
- explosive or incendiary device.

As defined by state law, a deadly weapon is "any instrument, device, or thing capable of inflicting death, and designed or specifically adapted for use as a weapon, or possessed, carried or used as a weapon." (Ohio Revised Code 2923.11A) Firearms shall include any loaded or unloaded gun of any caliber or type. This prohibition also includes any pistol, rifle or other device that uses air or gas propelled projectiles.

Violations of this policy will warrant:

- notification of the police

Or may warrant:

- immediate suspension
- exclusion from a parish program
- signing by parents and student of a probation contract that includes all the conditions of the student's retention in the program.

Student Threats

Whenever an individual believes that his/her personal safety has been put in jeopardy or challenged, a threat has occurred. Under the following conditions a threat is a misdemeanor according to the Ohio Revised Code.

ORC 2903.21 aggravated menacing occurs "when an individual knowingly causes another to believe that the offender will cause serious physical harm to the person or property of that person or a member of his/her immediate family."

ORC 2903.22 - Menacing occurs "when an individual knowingly causes another to believe that the offender will cause physical harm to the person or property of that person or member of his/her family."

If any of the above events occur the police will be called.

The pastor, administration and staff of St. Brendan Parish School of Religion believe that all employees, volunteers, and students are entitled to work and study in environments that are Christ centered and free of harassment. Our PSR Program will not tolerate harassment of any type. If harassment occurs, the appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Disciplinary action may include suspension or expulsion.

Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, verbal or written taunting; bullying; other offensive, intimidating, hostile or offensive conduct; jokes, stories, pictures, cartoons, drawings or objects which are offensive, tend to alarm, annoy, abuse or demean an individual or group.

WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO COVER ALL EVENTS AND OCCURRENCES WHICH MAY ARISE DURING THE YEAR. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES DEVELOP. IN THIS EVENT, THE MATTER WILL BE ADDRESSED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PASTOR AND THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.