

Parish School of Religion In-Person PSR Handbook

St. Brendan Parish
North Olmsted, Ohio

Revised July 2023

Religious Education Office Staff

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Religious Education Office Contact Information

Address: St. Brendan Parish
Religious Education Office
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**PSR classes are held on Mondays from 7:00-8:00pm for students in 1st-8th grades.
Home School PSR is also available.**

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 Mondays from September through early May. There are several class dates where parents are to attend PSR with their child:

- *September 18, 2023 – Opening Meeting for students and parents*
- *December 18, 2023 – Advent PSR Family Event*
- *March 25, 2024 – Lent PSR Family Event*
- *May 6, 2024 – Closing Meeting for students and parents*

Be sure to contact the Religious Education Office if your child will be absent from class either by phone or email.

If you have any questions, contact the office.

~Mary Oldja and Nancy Yantek

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.

PSR Fee and Payments

The PSR fee is: \$80 per student; \$240 family maximum. All PSR families are offered the following billing options:

- 1) Paid in full at the time of registration.
- 2) Paid in full by September 30.
- 3) Paid in two installments (Sept & Nov).
- 4) Paid in three installments (Sept, Nov & Jan).
- 5) Paid in four installments (Sept, Nov, Jan & Mar).

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. Cash, checks (made out to St. Brendan Parish) and credit card payments are accepted. 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.

Materials

Each student will receive a weekly lesson pamphlet; a supplemental *What the Church Believes and Teaches Handbook* (Pflaum Publishing) is also supplied. In addition to the weekly lessons, the *Benziger Family Life* book, which presents a total respect for life as a gift from God, will be used in grade 5 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 are sent home in January; second semester report cards are mailed 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.

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.

Altar Servers Ministry

All students that have reached the 5th grade are invited to become altar servers at the weekend liturgies. We encourage the youth of the 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.

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.

Weekly PSR Email

As a way to share information, once each week (typically on Fridays) 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 or to update your email address.

The Sacraments and Mass

Holy Family Program

The Holy Family Program is the sacramental preparation program for parish children in grades 2 (and older) and their families. Information is mailed at the start of the academic year with details of meetings and events for the year and announcements are made periodically via email communication. Contact the Religious Education Office for more details.

Confirmation Preparation

At St. Brendan Parish, high school aged parishioners (grades 9-12) 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.

The 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.**

For PSR, dedicated volunteer 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 students may 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. This policy affects students in grades 5-8.

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, keep them home). **Parents/Guardians MUST inform the Religious Education Office if your child/children will be absent from class: by phone - 440.777.3702 or by email - stbrendanreo@yahoo.com.** A representative from the office will call parents if their child/children are not in their class when attendance is taken and the office was not informed of the absence.

If a student has two consecutive absences that the office has not been informed of, 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), the staff assumes that the student will no longer be attending PSR; 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 Home School PSR is offered; contact the office for more information.

Student Drop Off/Pick Up Policy

DROP OFF: At 6:45pm each Monday, the St. Brendan School doors will be open for all PSR students. Parents are to enter the parking lot and drive toward the Church, follow the loop in front of the Church (between the Church and the Prayer Garden), and pull into the car line along the sidewalk in front of the School building. When the family's car stops at the School doors, students should exit their vehicle and enter the building. A staff member will be standing at the door each week at arrival time. The door will be closed and locked at 7:00pm. Any students who arrive late are to ring the School doorbell and wait for a staff member to meet them at the door.

PICK UP: Parents are to see the information above to join the car line. At 7:50pm, a PSR volunteer will visit each car in the line to collect the family's dismissal card (passed out at the Opening Meeting on the first day of PSR). At 8:00pm, the bell will ring and students will line up in the first floor hallway according to the order of the dismissal cards. Students will be dismissed in groups of three families at a time. Please pull up to the St. Brendan School doors and wait patiently as the staff and PSR volunteers indicate where you are to stop your car to pick up your children. Dismissal cards will be sent home with the students as they leave the building. If you are in need of additional cards, contact the Religious Education Office.

Weather Conditions/PSR Cancellation Policy

At times attendance becomes difficult due to weather circumstances. 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 evening classes; St. Brendan-no evening religious education. If you are unsure if classes are meeting you can always call the office - 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 and/or St. Brendan School 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, 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 unless permission to do so is given by the teacher for a specific activity or lesson. If a student is caught using a cell phone while in class without permission to do so, 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; 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. We are excited to continue "Called to Protect" and look forward to better equipping students and their parents 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.

The "Called to Protect" lessons by *Praesidium* are a permanent part of the PSR curriculum. Students participate in a 3-part grade specific lesson after a parent meeting is held. The lessons are available for parents to review upon request. Parents are offered the option to 'opt out' of the lessons. Information, including dates of the parent meeting and student lessons, is shared with all PSR families in the fall.

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

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 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.

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. 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." (ORC 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.

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 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 and 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 (ORC 2151.421). The Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately if there is any "reason to believe" (ORC 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 (ORC 2907.05), Sexual Battery (ORC 2907.03), Rape (ORC 2907.02), Importuning (ORC 2907.07), Voyeurism (ORC 2907.08), Public Indecency (ORC 2907.09) or Felonious Sexual Penetration (ORC 2907.12) as examples. In each of the above examples, the Department of Human Services and the police will be contacted immediately.

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.