

SAINT PAUL

PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION

FAMILY HANDBOOK 2023-2024



Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church

Parish School of Religion

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to St. Paul's Religious Education Program for the 2023-2024 school year. We are looking forward to a successful and exciting year! Our goal each year is to provide our students with an enriching religious education experience ... one they can carry forward and share with others in their daily lives. This handbook has guidelines designed to make this a rewarding year for you, as parents, us as educators, and most importantly, for your children. Your support is vital to the success of this program, and it is appreciated! We can work together to share our faith with the future of our Church - our children!

God Bless You!

Susan Streitenberger
Director of Religious Education

ST. PAUL PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Saint Paul the Apostle Parish School of Religion (PSR) provides religious instruction (*catechesis*), formation, and sacramental preparation to children attending public or non-Catholic private schools. With the help of adult and teen volunteers, we serve over 700 children annually. Our materials, methods, and practices follow the *Graded Course of Study* issued by the Diocese of Columbus and approved for use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

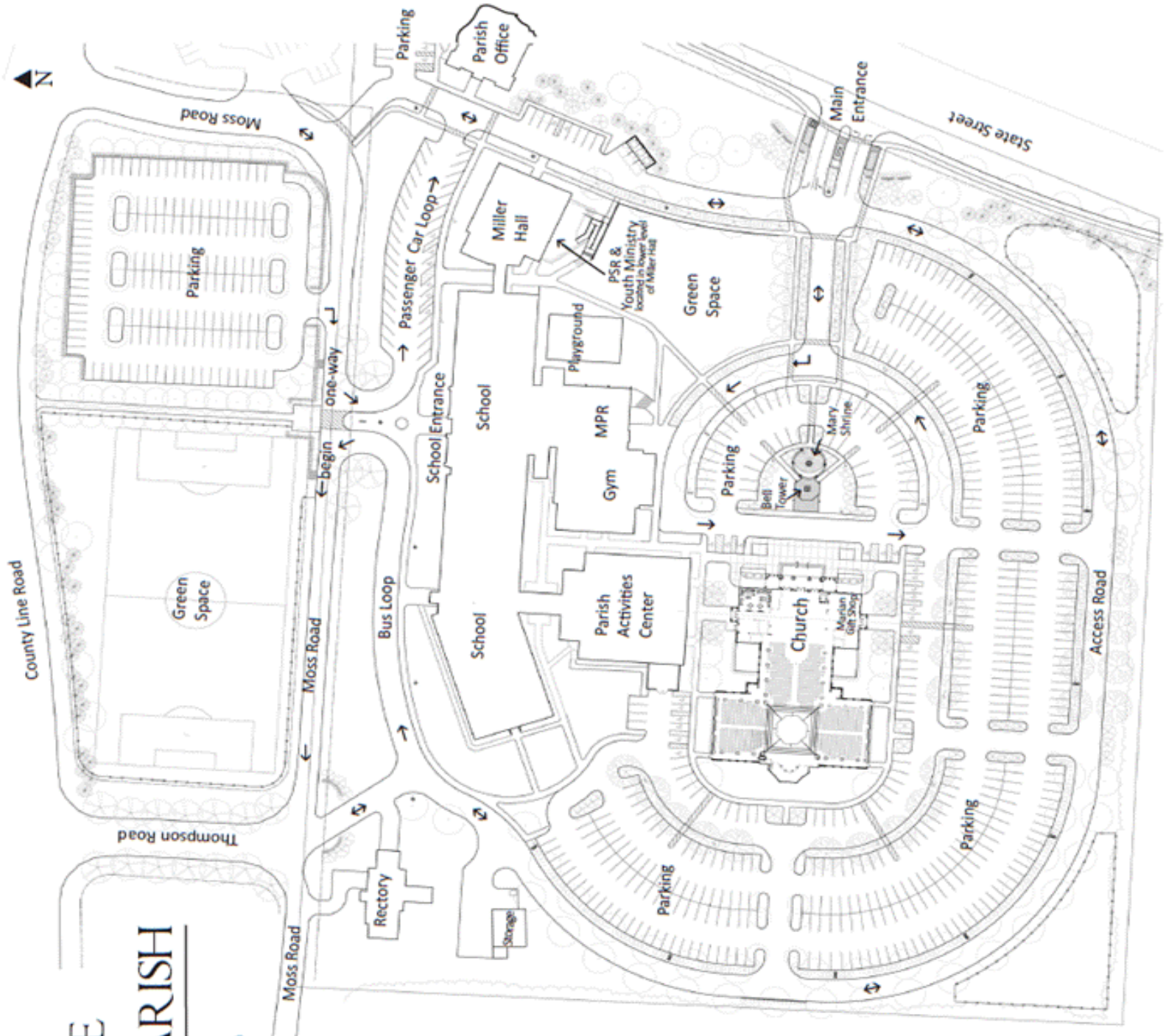
By the promises you made as parents at the Baptism of your children, *you* are the primary religious educators in your families. PSR exists to support you in this vital work, and we are privileged to partner with you and your family. With the commitment of others, we provide the children and youth of our parish a nurturing environment to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and as missionary disciples. A student's attitude towards Mass, the Sacraments, prayer, community service, and commitment to Jesus grows out of your example and your everyday family experiences. In the few hours we have at PSR, we can only hope to spark an interest and enthusiasm you can further develop and nourish in your home. The Church asks that parents, as primary educators of children in the faith:

1. Attend Mass regularly and pray regularly as a family.
2. Encourage prompt and regular attendance at every PSR Session.
3. Check with your son or daughter weekly for written notices from the Catechist or letters from the DRE.
4. Volunteer your services if you can. Our volunteer Catechists recognize the importance of Jesus Christ as central to their lives and value the community experience of faith.
5. Review what your son or daughter has done in the session.

This Family Handbook aims to provide you with the policies, guidelines, and procedures designed to help accomplish our goal of providing quality religious education within a safe environment, relevant service opportunities, and community expressions of faith and practices to keep our classes running smoothly. By registering for PSR, you acknowledge these policies, and by understanding them, you help us in our ongoing ministry to our students and their families.

ST PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH CAMPUS MAP

← Parish Athletic Fields
(located a few hundred feet west
of the parish on Moss Road)



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS A PRIORITY

PSR assists parents in carrying out their Baptismal responsibility as “first educators” of the Catholic faith to their children. This includes those parents who choose extracurricular programs for their children that may, on occasion, conflict with PSR class sessions. Parents are *strongly urged* to review our Attendance Policy and exercise good judgment in planning their children’s schedules.

If outside activities will be a known conflict, parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the Director of Religious Education to discuss the options available to them to complete PSR for the current year at St. Paul. A family should never feel that they must leave their parish to have their needs for religious education met, and so a reasonable solution will be sought that is mutually beneficial to all parties.

CONTINUING FAITH FORMATION AND EDUCATION FOR PARENTS

Each year you have children attending PSR; we recommend that you attend at least one adult faith formation and/or adult education program. If you have a child in grade 2 or 8, your sacrament preparation meetings will fulfill this. In other years, you can participate in bible study, retreats, missions, and other parish-sponsored programs and speakers. We will inform you about learning opportunities through the parish bulletin and PSR Flocknote.

FAMILY PSR EVENTS

We will offer several religious events and prayer services throughout the PSR school year. Please check our communications and plan on joining our PSR community for these special celebrations. Family participation is encouraged.

PSR CLASSES

WEDNESDAY Grades K – 5, 4:45-6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY Grades K – 5, Sacramental Prep, 6:45-8:00 p.m. and Special Needs, 7:00-7:45 p.m.

WEDNESDAY Grades 6-8, 6:45-8:00 and Sunday Parent/Youth evenings on October 8, 2023, December 10, 2023, March 3, 2023, and April 28, 2024.

PSR for younger students incorporates a variety of learning styles that include but are not limited to classroom prayer, discussion, hands-on activities & games, and music (both formal and informal). PSR for older students incorporates a community-building style of learning that includes small group prayer and discussion, service opportunities, guest speakers, and clergy involvement.

We are committed to partnering with parents and guardians to develop households where faith is shared and lived with vigor. Our goal is to provide a place where our students learn to live their faith and understand it, where they can experience Catholic identity, integrate Catholic values, and express Catholic beliefs.

Sacramental Preparation for Youth

Wednesdays: 6:45-8:00 p.m.

Students who have not begun Religious Education classes by Grade 3 will be entered into a program to be intensely focused on the Sacraments, Church history, and saints. This class is intended for those baptized Catholics who have never received formal religious formation or students who are converting from another faith tradition.

PSR for Students with Special Needs

Wednesdays: 7:00-7:45 p.m., multi-age

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) stated in 1995, “By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling.” We strive to offer appropriate classroom-based religious education regardless of a student’s abilities or needs and work with families to place all students in our classes.

A Special Needs class for children is available during the Wednesday session. A parent/guardian or relative usually accompanies the student in the class. Please contact the PSR Staff with any questions about Special Needs screening or PSR classes for those with a current IEP (Individual Education Plan) in their school system.

PSR HOME STUDY PROGRAM

Grades 1, 3 – 7

The PSR Home Study program is available for Grades 1, 3 - 7 for those families who wish to work with their children at home rather than place them in a weekly Religious Education class. This option can be helpful for students with behavioral difficulties.

Those who choose this option should indicate they want their child in Home Study when registering for PSR and complete a *Home Study Application Form* (Standard PSR tuition applies). Home Study families whose applications have been approved will be given the expectations, materials, and requirements at a **mandatory Parent-only Meeting in the fall**. Families applying for the Home Study program must complete online assessments to remain in good standing. Please contact the PSR Office for more information.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

A week-long camp in June. Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Vacation Bible School at St. Paul is a summertime camp that brings together Catholic families in a fun, dynamic and memorable week. The entire family is encouraged to participate.

Children in kindergarten through fifth grade are divided into multi-aged crews and are led by youth volunteer crew leaders in grades 8th – 12th. 6th and 7th-grade students participate in a part service, volunteer, and fun faith-building program designed specifically for their age. Adult volunteers participate by leading interactive stations or as group leaders. Music, interactive Bible stories, hands-on activities, service projects, games, and faith sharing are part of the week.

Registration kicks off in March. Our program takes place on the St. Paul campus.

REGISTRATION

Registration forms were given to currently enrolled PSR families. Additional fillable PDF registration forms and tuition rates can be accessed on the parish website. Paper registration is available in the PSR office.

Tuition per student on June 5 or before

Kindergarten: \$200.00

Grades 1, 3-7, Sacrament Prep Class, and Home Study: \$200.00

Grades 2 & 8: \$220.00

Tuition per student on June 6 or after

Kindergarten: \$225.00

Grades 1, 3-7, Sacrament Prep Class, and Home Study: \$225.00

Grades 2 & 8: \$245.00

Tuition cap is \$600.00 per family. Deadline for registrations is August 31, 2023.

No family will be denied participation in PSR classes for financial reasons. Contact the PSR office to make payment arrangements or for financial assistance.

Volunteers who commit weekly as catechists (teachers) and childcare workers have all tuition waived. Aides, hall monitors, and office assistants will pay \$80 per student up to three students.

Prompt registration for classes is critical to ensure desired session. Our program relies on many volunteers to teach classes. If we do not have enough volunteers, some grade levels may close for in person registration and be Home Study only. Registration is first come, first serve.

FOOD ALLERGY/SENSITIVITY ISSUES

PSR students' known or diagnosed food allergies and/or dietary restrictions should be noted on the Registration in the Medical Section of the student's PSR *Registration Form*. Parents are also advised to notify their child's PSR catechist as soon as possible.

Due to allergy and food safety concerns, **food is never permitted in our classrooms**. Many students with life-threatening allergies use these classrooms throughout the day; for this reason, we ask you not to bring in treats or snacks of any kind. Occasionally, food may be served in other locations on the St. Paul campus.

If a PSR student preparing for a Sacrament has a food allergy and/or there are concerns about contact with the physical components of Sacraments (water, wine, unleavened whole wheat bread, perfumed oil), the PSR Office should be notified as soon as possible. PSR staff will work with parents to accommodate a student's needs. Severe allergy cases may warrant the reception of sacraments in an acceptable alternate format or the reception of that Sacrament at an alternate date/time.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION POLICY

At St. Paul, **First Reconciliation and First Communion are generally celebrated in Grade 2, and Confirmation is celebrated in Grade 8**. Students work with special materials and have requirements for each Sacrament (Rehearsals for First Communion and Confirmation, Saint Projects, and a retreat experience for Confirmation). Parents **are required** to attend Sacrament Parent Meetings and Rehearsals and provide additional information about their students.

Our policy is that students are eligible for consideration for a Sacrament if they have been registered for Religious Education **in at least the two immediate years** before the reception of Sacraments. In keeping with this policy, consideration for class enrollment in Grade 2 is given first to students who have completed Grade 1 religion classes before entering second grade. Consideration for class enrollment in Grade 8 is given first to students who have completed Grade 7 religion classes.

It is necessary for students preparing for a Sacrament to attend classes regularly, complete all assignments, and participate fully in the process of the program. For students with excessive absences or missing assignments, a

conference between the director, catechist, parent, and child, as appropriate, will be required to assess the readiness of the student to receive the sacrament. Parent involvement is integral to the success of sacramental preparation programs.

There will be formal parent meetings per sacramental year which one parent must attend, while both parents are strongly encouraged to attend. The parent meetings will communicate more detailed guidelines and expectations for students preparing for First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation.

TRANSFERRING FROM/TO ANOTHER PARISH

Students who have attended another Catholic parish program and registered for PSR at St. Paul must provide documentation from their former parish to verify prior religious Education, which will be credited to them. Those permitted to transfer into PSR during the year will have their tuition pro-rated.

Religious Education credit will be granted only for work that follows a *Graded Course of Study* (a curriculum recognized by the student's former diocese or the Diocese of Columbus and the student's former parish). PSR cannot accept prior work if it does not follow the Diocese of Columbus Department of Religious Education and Catechesis standards. Students registering at another PSR may request transcripts from this Office for previous work, which will be sent to that program's Director.

ATTENDANCE POLICY (GRADES 1 – 8)

Our parish allows children to attend PSR *each year* to support the Baptismal responsibility parents bear as first teachers of the Catholic Faith to their children. As our curriculum is based on a *spiral scope and sequence*, students engage in age-appropriate coursework each year as a part of their ongoing Religious Education. In classes directly involving preparation for the reception of Sacraments (Grades 2 and 8), regular attendance ensures the success of class-based communication, group discussion, reflection, and community-focused action. Most of our students make this progress year after year, and the benefits testify to the faith lives of the families in our parish community.

If a student must be absent from PSR class, parents are asked to notify the PSR Office (not the Catechist), stating the student's name, grade, classroom number, and reason for the absence. The student should then submit the work covered in the missed class before the next scheduled class ends. Each student is given a Class Syllabus at the beginning of the school year to keep track of topics, complete missing assignments at home and assess their progress throughout the year.

FAMILY PSR EVENTS

Throughout the PSR school year, we will offer several religious events and prayer services. Family participation is encouraged. Please check the calendar and plan on joining our PSR community for these special celebrations.

ASSIGNMENTS AND HOMEWORK

Students may be asked periodically to complete an activity or assignment outside of class to help them grow in faith. Please help ensure that these assignments are completed and support the learning by going over the assignment with them whenever possible.

CELL PHONES

The use of cell phones and other electronic devices by the child is not permitted during PSR unless this is directed by the Catechist as part of the educational process. Cell phones brought into the place of the Religious Education session should be turned off. Children in need of contacting a parent must ask the Catechist's permission to go to the Religious Education Office to place the call.

DRESS CODE

Dress during PSR classes should be appropriate and respectful. Sometimes, students will go to church, and proper clothing should be worn. Students should not wear low-cut blouses, midriffs, short shorts, or shirts with inappropriate words or graphics, hoods, or hats.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES, GRADES K - 8

ENTRANCES AND EXITS TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING

Wednesday classes

- The front door (by the flagpole)
- The doors in the glass hallway between Miller Hall and the school building
- The west door of the school by the Rectory

Sunday student/parent nights

- Klinger Center doors closest to the church

These doors will be opened 15 minutes prior to the start of class. The doors at the west bus loop, leading to the Klinger Center, are *only for students or parents with mobility issues*.

ARRIVAL

Students enter through the above listed doors. Please check in with the Hall Monitor at the central table (between the School Office and the Gym) if you enter after the start of class.

DISMISSAL

In order to maintain a safe flow of traffic for children and families, all students must be picked up from their assigned classrooms by a parent or other authorized adult. Please park your car and enter the School building through the doors listed above.

Catechists and Classroom Aides will monitor when each student leaves a classroom. Each student must have an authorized adult sign them out after each class. Authorized adults can be listed on the student's *Transportation Information Form* (see below).

EARLY DISMISSAL

Releasing students early from class is extremely disruptive to students and classroom progress; therefore, early dismissal is permitted for emergencies only. Parents or responsible adults should enter through the front doors of the School and report to the table in the center hallway in front of the learning commons if early pick-up is necessary.

TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

Included with registration you will find the Transportation Information Form for each student in Grades K - 8. Please include any adult who has your authorization to pick up your student from class. Catechists and Classroom Aides will keep track of who picks up each student each week. This information is kept in the PSR Office.

PARKING

Parking lots are across the street from the School on Moss Road, by Miller Hall in front of the Parish Office, and on the west side of the School building near the Church.

To provide the safest environment possible for our families, we ask the following:

- Please note where there is assigned handicapped parking. Do not park in these designated spots unless you have a state-issued permit and display the permit placard when parking.

- Local fire regulations state that no one may park in the road in front of the School. Traffic must be kept moving on these roads during dismissals.
- **Parking along any part of Moss Road, Thompson or in the Rectory driveway is *never permitted* during PSR classes.**

WEEKLY PSR COMMUNICATION VIA FLOCKNOTE

As a way to share information, once each week the PSR Office will send an email to all PSR families via a Flocknote. 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.

Please stay connected with our parish website, weekend bulletins and emails from our PSR staff. We offer a variety of events throughout the entire year, and we would love for you and your family to participate. We are always looking for more opportunities to bring our community together, so let us know if you have any ideas or suggestions.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

We will follow St. Paul School in canceling classes for weather-related events. Even if the weather improves during the day, we will still cancel evening classes. A message will be emailed via Flocknote when classes have been canceled. In the unlikely event that classes must be canceled for any other reason, a message will be emailed via Flocknote to all parents. To check on the status of class when weather may be threatening, parents and/or students can check the PSR section of the Parish website (<http://stpaulcatholicchurch.org>).

SCHOOL SAFETY

St. Paul PSR seeks to provide a safe learning environment for all students. We strive to create an environment where students may learn, and our catechists may teach safely and effectively. Volunteers are trained, and preparatory drills are conducted during PSR class time throughout the year. Parents can expect that when their child is in PSR class, the students will be treated with respect and care. Our goal as a Catholic community is to reflect Gospel values.

STUDENT CONDUCT

Catechists encourage students by setting a Christian example and through positive reinforcement. No catechist volunteer is expected to deal with behavior that is not Christian or conducive to learning. Please help us by discussing the importance of a positive Christian learning environment.

If a student exhibits a behavioral problem (i.e., excessive talking, off task, inappropriate comments), the behavior will be addressed by the catechist in the classroom. If the problem behavior persists, the PSR Office will contact the student's parents. If the behavior continues to disrupt the classroom, a meeting with parents and the Director of Religious Education will be scheduled.

If a student exhibits a significant behavior problem (i.e., bullying, verbal or mental abuse), the PSR Office will notify the student's parents immediately. Depending on the severity, a plan for meeting about the behavior or removing the student from the classroom will be established.

Basic and effective classroom rules also exist in the PSR classroom:

1. This classroom/activity is a safe place. Violence/bullying is never tolerated.
2. When a Catechist or Classroom Aide talks, everyone listens.
3. Respect is shown toward everyone.
4. Inappropriate language is never tolerated.

DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS HARASSMENT POLICY

1. Harassment can take many forms. Harassment can occur at any parish activity, and/or can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at programs sponsored by the parish at other locations. It does not include compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability or other protected characteristics.
2. It is the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a spiritually enriching environment in all programs and activities, free of all forms of harassment and intimidation. No participant, volunteer adult leader, or parish staff member – male or female – should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unsolicited and/or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical.
3. Conduct which constitutes sexual harassment is prohibited. Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Offensive sexual flirtations, advances, propositions;
 - b. Continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual or gender-based nature;
 - c. Explicit or degrading sexual or gender-based comments about another individual or his or her appearance;
 - d. The display or circulation of sexually explicit or suggestive writing, pictures or objects;
 - e. Any offensive or physical conduct which shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of gender or sex;
 - f. Graffiti of a sexual nature;
 - g. Fondling oneself sexually or talking about sexual activity in front of others;
 - h. Spreading rumors about or categorizing others as to sexual activity.
 - i. Sexual harassment is not limited to conduct that is sexual in nature – it also includes harassment that is based on gender. Gender-based harassment, which is also prohibited, is conduct that would not occur except for the sex of the person involved. An example would be referring to a woman by or as a female body part, or a demeaning sex-based term, or treating people differently because of their gender. The same prohibitions apply with regard to inflammatory or offensive comments or behaviors which are based upon race, color, age, religion, disability, or national origin. In short, working relationships between employees and volunteers must be based on mutual respect.
 - j. Sexual harassment also includes the taking of, or refusal to take, any personnel or other action on the basis of a person's submission to or refusal of sexual overtures. No person should so much as imply that an individual's "cooperation" or submission to unwelcome sexual activity will have any effect on the individual's employment, assignment, compensation, advancement, development, program evaluation, participation in parish programs or activities, or any other condition of employment or achievement.
 - k. Not all physical conduct is necessarily considered sexual in nature. (For example, a coach hugging a student after an accomplishment, a youth minister consoling an adolescent with an injury or physical conduct during athletic events would not be considered sexual conduct.) However, peer-based sexual harassment is a form of prohibited conduct where the harassing conduct creates a hostile environment.
4. A sexually hostile environment can be created by a parish employee, volunteer, youth participant, or visitor to the parish activity.

5. Any person who believes that he/she is subject to unlawful harassment or intimidation must contact the (a) program administrator (b) pastor, or (c) diocesan director of religious education. A complaint must be filed in writing. In the event that an individual alleges harassment by a director of religious education, or a pastor, the individual may file the complaint with the diocesan director of religious education. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and the person initiating the complaint will be advised of the outcome of the investigation.
6. Where it is determined that harassment has occurred, the appropriate authority will take immediate disciplinary action against any program administrator, volunteer, or staff engaging in harassment. The response shall take into account the individuals and circumstances. Such action may include, depending on the circumstances, disciplinary measures up to and including termination of services.
7. No retaliation against anyone who reports harassment will be tolerated. The Diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.