

**St. Robert Bellarmine Roman Catholic Church**  
**Children's Religious Education Program**



**2023-2024**  
**Parent Handbook**

## **Parish Program of Religious Education Statement**

St. Robert Bellarmine Parish Religious Education program is committed to fostering the growth of the spiritual lives of both adult and youth. Through prayer, worship and moral and sacramental preparation, we are guided by the Holy Spirit to teach them to develop a deeper and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is our priority to inspire them to become lifelong, practicing Catholics through active participation in liturgy, the sacraments and living in community as one body in Christ Jesus.

## **Parish Mission Statement**

The parish of St. Robert Bellarmine thrives as a spirit-filled community of diverse individuals and families deeply committed to selfless love and personal sacrifice. As good stewards of God's gifts, we strive to be a caring and compassionate congregation dedicated to doing whatever is needed to enrich our community.

## **Parish Vision Statement**

We, a diverse Catholic community of God's people at St. Robert Bellarmine, honor our sacred traditions, warmly embrace our many cultures and generations as we nourish in faith and share in the enrichment of God's love through fellowship, liturgy, prayer and the Eucharist. As we dedicate ourselves, together with our clergy and religious, to deepening our commitments to God and to each other, we intend to review and enrich parish programs which are designed to educate and serve the spiritual, temporal and social needs of our community.

## *St. Robert Bellarmine Children's Religious Education Classes*

### *Curriculum*

We follow the designated curriculum established by our Diocese. This year, we will be using the diocesan approved program, "We Believe" by Sadlier. We offer classes from K-8 in which students learn about their faith by studying Scripture, Church Doctrine, Liturgy, prayer and build up their relationship with God. Each year builds upon the previous one. These classes are necessary as they provide a firm and complete foundation in the faith.

### *Classes (In-Person Classes with Occasional Online Sessions)*

#### **In-Person Classes:**

Regular attendance is essential for a child to learn. Doors open at **9 am** for students on Sunday morning. Except in cases of illness or a serious issue, students should be present and on time for all classes. Please make sure that your child has a good breakfast before arriving for classes. Children learn better when they have eaten a good breakfast. **Food and drink are NOT permitted in classrooms.** Please let us know if your child has a special medical condition so that we can make the necessary accommodations. **Please note that we are not authorized to administer medications to children during class or Mass.**

Your child should come to class with their religion workbook, pen or pencil and a two-pocket folder each week. Please check the inside of the folder when they arrive home for notes, homework and calendars.

**Children are not allowed to bring toys, electronic games, iPods etc. to class. They will be taken from the children and returned only to parents at dismissal. Cell phones must be on silent mode during class and Mass time. St. Robert Bellarmine Parish is not responsible for lost or stolen items.**

### **Online Classes/Sessions:**

While we primarily conduct in-person classes, there may be occasions where we need to conduct sessions online. In such situations, the following expectations will outline what it means for your child to be considered 'present' during each online class or session:

- Students **AND** parents must participate in video classes through ZOOM or Google Meet with the catechist at the appointed time. Parents must be present with their children during each class.
- Video cameras must be turned on to ensure that all students and parents are visible during the class meetings.
- Students should be online 5 minutes before the scheduled video classes begin as the catechists will be locking the video classrooms for the safety of the students. Children arriving to class after the scheduled time are considered late and will need to send a message to their catechist to open up the video room temporarily to allow the student in.
- Students are expected to complete their assignments before the next class session.
- We encourage families to make an effort to attend the Mass in person either on Sundays or during the Saturday Vigil.

## *Class Attendance*

### **Lateness:**

To maintain an effective and undisturbed learning environment, it is crucial for students to arrive on time for class. All classes will begin promptly at the scheduled time. Please note that **three (3) instances of lateness will be considered as one (1) unexcused absence.**

### **Absences:**

If your child will be absent from class, we kindly request that you inform us. You can reach the religious education office at (929) 379-7652 to leave a message or email us at [srbfaithed@gmail.com](mailto:srbfaithed@gmail.com). Please provide the reason for the absence, and we will update the attendance records and notify the catechist accordingly. **If you fail to notify us, the absence will be considered unexcused.**

**IMPORTANT: Students are allowed a maximum of three (3) unexcused absences for the school year.** If your child experiences a serious illness, we request a doctor's note upon their return to the program. **In cases of excessive absence, a thorough discussion will take place among the Director of Faith Formation, the Pastor, the parent, and the teacher, and it may be necessary for the student to repeat the year.**

## **Mass Attendance**

Attending Mass is an essential part of our faith and an integral component of our Sunday program. **All children are required to attend Sunday Mass.** We kindly request that the reverence and solemnity of the Mass be respected. To facilitate this, we ask that children come to class dressed appropriately for Mass.

**We strongly encourage parents to accompany their children to Mass.** During Mass, children will be seated with their class but are also welcome to sit with their families. **If you prefer to sit together as a family, we recommend arriving at the church before the 11 am Mass begins.** Once Mass has commenced, children will not be allowed to change seats, as it is considered disrespectful and disruptive to the priests and congregation. If you arrive late, please join and sit with the class. We kindly request that parents refrain from taking children out of Mass early. **If you attend Mass at a different time or parish, please pick up your child at 10:45 am before we enter the Church.**

Parents picking up their children after Mass must wait until the priest has left the Sanctuary. As per our guidelines, all children must be picked up inside the church premises. Children are not permitted to go outside and search for their parents. **If your child has permission to walk home unescorted or will be picked up by someone other than yourself, please indicate this in the registration form. Kindly include the person's name, contact information, and submit the 'Walk Home Permission Slip' located in the parent handbook (the last page).**

If you attend Mass at a different time or parish other than the 11 am Mass on Sunday, we kindly request that you provide the current bulletin for that week, signed by the priest.

## **Child Lures**

As mandated by the diocese, we will be conducting annual child safety sessions known as Child Lures for all students. These sessions are designed to educate our children about potential dangers, teach them how to stay safe, and provide guidance on what actions to take in cases of abuse. **Attendance for these sessions is mandatory.**

The sessions will be organized by grade, and each grade has a designated session date. If your child is unable to attend the session scheduled for their grade, alternative sessions will be available on different dates. Please note that attending the alternative session means attending a session designated for a different grade. The specific details and dates of the alternative sessions will be communicated to you in advance.

**It is important to notify both myself and your child's catechist if your child needs to attend an alternative session.** We prioritize the safety and well-being of our students, and these Child Lures sessions play a crucial role in equipping them with the knowledge and awareness necessary to protect themselves. Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring that your child participates in the appropriate session, whether it is the designated session for their grade or one of the alternative sessions provided.

If you have any further questions or concerns about the Child Safety Sessions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## *Parent Faith Formation*

We are delighted to introduce our Parent Faith Formation program, an integral part of our commitment to nurturing the spiritual growth of our community. This program is designed to provide parents with the necessary support and resources to deepen their relationship with God and develop a profound understanding of the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Faith.

**Throughout the year, we will offer a series of eight sessions**, each led by different speakers, scheduled on the first Sunday of every month from October until May. **These sessions will conveniently take place during the period when your child attends Religious Education classes.** As your child learns and grows, you will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions and explore various topics that are essential to our faith journey. Together, we will delve into subjects such as prayer, the Mass, Scripture, and other relevant aspects of our Catholic heritage. These sessions aim to provide practical insights and guidance on living out our faith in the modern world.

We want to emphasize the importance of your involvement in this program, particularly if you are a parent of a child who is currently preparing for First Communion (2nd grade) or Confirmation (8th grade). **It is mandatory for parents of children in these sacramental preparation programs to participate in the Parent Faith Formation sessions.**

We are excited to embark on this faith journey together, delving into the depths of our beliefs and uncovering their practical implications for our lives. May this program ignite spiritual growth within us, propelling us towards a life abundant with love, compassion, and a deepened connection with God.



## **Christmas Pageant**

Our annual Christmas pageant is a significant event in our Religious Education program, commemorating the birth of our Lord. It is an integral part of our curriculum and considered a regular class. **Therefore, it is mandatory for all students to attend, regardless of their participation in the pageant itself. Please save the date for the pageant, which will take place on a specified Saturday. Regular classes will continue as scheduled on the following day (Sunday).**

For students who are not taking part in the Christmas pageant, alternative projects will be assigned. These projects offer options for writing or drawing. We kindly request that you encourage your child(ren) to complete the designated project at home and submit it by the specified date, which will be communicated in advance. These projects will be prominently displayed on portable walls during the Christmas pageant, adding to the festive atmosphere and showcasing the creativity of our students.

We warmly invite all family members, including older/younger siblings and grandparents, to attend and witness the Christmas pageant. Your presence will enhance the joy and spirit of this special event. Thank you for your attention to these details. We appreciate your support in making the Christmas pageant a meaningful celebration of our faith.

## **Children's Lenten Adventure**

During the Lenten season, we are excited to offer the Children's Lenten Adventure, a special program aimed at helping our children walk with Jesus during the 40 days of Lent. Each year, we select a unique theme that engages and inspires our young participants.

The Children's Lenten Adventure consists of four sessions, scheduled on consecutive Fridays. While we strongly encourage attendance at all four sessions, we understand that scheduling conflicts may arise. If your child(ren) cannot attend all four sessions, you have the flexibility to choose the days that work best for you.

Please be aware that there will be an additional fee associated with these sessions, which will be communicated to you in advance. It is important to note that participation in the Children's Lenten Adventure is optional. However, we strongly encourage you to consider sending your child(ren) in these sessions. They will not only have an enjoyable experience and partake in various activities but also learn valuable lessons that deepen their relationship with Jesus throughout the Lenten season.

We firmly believe that the Children's Lenten Adventure offers a unique opportunity for our children to grow in faith and establish a closer connection with Jesus. We urge you to seize this enriching program for the benefit of your child(ren). Thank you for your support and consideration in making the Children's Lenten Adventure a meaningful experience for our children.

### *Living Stations of the Cross*

The Living Stations of the Cross is an annual event presented by our 8th and 7th grade students. This meaningful occasion takes place on Good Friday night, where our students passionately reenact each station, allowing us to prayerfully reflect on the profound journey of Christ's passion and ultimate sacrifice.

**This year, the Living Stations of the Cross will be considered one of our regular classes.** We strongly encourage you to attend this remarkable event with your children. It provides a valuable opportunity for our students to deepen their understanding of this beautiful prayer as they follow in the footsteps of Christ during His crucifixion.

The Living Stations of the Cross serves as a powerful reminder of the immense love and sacrifice of our Lord. Through this enactment, our students and the entire community are able to witness and experience the transformative events of Jesus' journey to Calvary.

We extend a heartfelt invitation to join us on Good Friday night as we come together for this sacred and educational occasion. May the Living Stations of the Cross serve as a source of inspiration and reflection for all of us. Your support and participation in this significant event are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your commitment to nurturing the faith of our students and fostering a deep connection to the profound mysteries of our Catholic tradition.

### *Emergency Cancellation*

In case of inclement weather or unforeseen class cancellations, we will send out an email notification. Please let us know if you cannot receive email – a phone call will be placed to you instead. If you are uncertain as to whether or not classes are being held, call the Faith Formation office at (929) 379-7652. A message will be placed on the answering machine as soon as a decision is made to cancel classes.

### *Disciplinary Issues*

Parents will be informed if a child's behavior is disruptive or uncooperative. **We have zero tolerance for bullying.** Please contact the Faith Formation office with all concerns.

### *Parents' Role*

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it states “Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents” (CCC, 2226).

One of the basic tenets of the educational process is that **parents are the primary educators of their children.** Our children rely on all of us to teach them through our words and by our actions. If you expect the Catholic Church and Faith to be important to your children, it must be first be important to you. This means that on Sunday when we take the children to Mass, they should also see you there.

Otherwise, they receive the message that Mass attendance is something **they** must do, but not you. If you are in need of receiving the Sacraments or would like to deepen your own faith, please contact the Director or a Priest.

In addition to attending Mass together, take some time on Sunday or during the week to share meals. Ask your children what they learned in Sunday School. Go through their folders with them and discuss the materials that are sent home. Ask to see their workbooks. By doing this with your children, you will reinforce what they have learned.

And pray with your children. Teach them to develop a personal relationship with God by showing them how to pray, whether it be by memorizing our basic prayers or by just saying what is in your heart at the time. Faith formation is a lifelong journey. It is ongoing and does not end with the reception of Sacraments. It is our hope that you also continue your own religious development.

## ***St. Robert Bellarmine Sacramental Preparation***

Sacramental preparation is a very important part of Faith Formation. It is through the Sacraments that we meet God and our faith is nourished. To receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion, a person must first be baptized. If your child is not already baptized and registered in our program, please contact the Director or a Priest.

Diocesan policy requires that children study for **two consecutive years** before receiving First Communion and two more consecutive years for Confirmation. The youngest grade one can receive First Communion is 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (7yrs old); Confirmation is 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Students who do not begin religious education in grade 1 will be placed accordingly.

Parent meetings are scheduled throughout the year for parents of children preparing to receive the Sacraments. The Diocese of Brooklyn strongly encourages parents to attend these meetings. They were designed to help parents deepen their understanding of the Sacrament that their child is about to receive, to bond with their children on a more spiritual level, and to distribute information that parents will need to plan for these special days.

## Registration

### Religion Program Fees for 2023-2024 school year

We kindly remind you about the registration process and Religion Program fees for the upcoming school year.

#### **For Registered Parishioners:**

Early Registration is available until August 6th, and the fees are as follows:

1 child-\$130;      2 children-\$150;    3+ children - \$165

After August 6th, the regular fee structure will be in effect:

1 child-\$140;      2 children-\$160;    3+ children - \$175

#### **For Non-Registered Parishioners:**

If you are not currently a registered parishioner, the fees for the Religion Program are as follows:

1 child-\$150;      2 children-\$170;    3+ children - \$185

**Note:** If your child is transferring from another program, please submit a letter from the previous program confirming attendance/participation in the program.

***\* Students will not be considered fully registered until the fee and all required forms (a total of 3) are signed and turned in.***

## **Contact Information**

You can always call the Faith Formation office at (929) 379-7652; the rectory @ (718) 229-6465 or email us at [srbfaithed@gmail.com](mailto:srbfaithed@gmail.com). Faith Formation office is closed on **Mondays**.

If you wish to speak to a catechist, please arrange to speak with them before or after class.



**ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE CHURCH**  
**Religious Education**  
56-15 213th Street  
Bayside, N.Y. 11364  
(929) 379-7652, SRBfaithed@gmail.com

## Consent to Online Videoconference Religious Education Classes

Name of minor \_\_\_\_\_

Parish St. Robert Bellarmine Church

My son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ has been asked to participate in Zoom and/or Google Meet videoconferencing for the purpose of St. Robert Bellarmine Religious Education classes when offered. The Religious Education teachers hosting the Zoom and/or Google Meet videoconference will use best practices to secure the videoconference, including (a) requiring a password to enter the videoconference; (b) "locking" the videoconference once all participants are present; and (c) requiring all students to use video when entering the videoconference to confirm they are authorized participants.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby understand and consent to my son/daughter participating in Zoom and/or Google Meet videoconferences for St. Robert Bellarmine Religious Education. I also hereby release the parish and Diocese of Brooklyn from any claims, demands and liabilities whatsoever in connection with the above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address of Parent/Guardian)

**\*If you do not wish to grant permission for your son/daughter to join online video conferences conducted by St. Robert's Religious Education, please contact the Director.**

**(Please return this form upon receipt of this handbook.**

**Without this page, registration will not be considered complete.)**

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## Consent to Photograph, Film or Videotape a Minor

Name of minor \_\_\_\_\_

Parish St. Robert Bellarmine Church

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent to the participation in interviews, the use of quotes, and the taking of photographs, movies or videotapes of my son/daughter as part of his/her participation in the St. Robert Bellarmine Religious Education parish program.

I understand and consent that these photographs, movies or videotapes may be placed on the internet. I also hereby release the parish and Diocese of Brooklyn from any claims, demands and liabilities whatsoever in connection with the above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address of Parent/Guardian)

**\*If you do not wish to grant permission of the participation in interviews, the use of quotes, and the taking of photographs, movies or video tapes of your son/daughter by St. Robert's Religious Education, please contact the Director.**

**(Please return this form upon receipt of this handbook.**

**Without this page, registration will not be considered complete.)**

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## **Acknowledgement Statement**

I have received and read the St. Robert Bellarmine Religious Education Parent Handbook for the **2023/2024** school year.

**Parent of:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Please return this form upon receipt of this handbook.**

**Without this page, registration will not be considered complete.)**

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## Walk Home Permission Slip

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give my child, \_\_\_\_\_ permission to walk home , unescorted, from St. Robert Bellarmine Church after Religious Education classes during the 2023/2024 school year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address of Parent/Guardian)

**(Please return this form upon receipt of this handbook, if applicable.)**