

# Sacred Heart



## **PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK**

**2023-2024**

**UPDATED**

## **What is Summer-Session Parish Religious Education?**

The Summer-Session Program is an intensive (5 day) Religious Education Program designed as an alternative model to the traditional weekly program. Each day your child will work on a different unit of the curriculum and complete their level text in the week. Our students will also engage in faith-based group activities.

## **What happens after the Summer-Session Program?**

It is important that the children remain connected to the parish community after the Summer-Session Program ends. Families are required to attend/complete a minimum of five (5) activities during the year. An Activities Monthly Calendar will be emailed and will be posted on the parish website under the PREP forms page. By this design, it is our hope that all our families will grow deeper in their love of God and their practice of our Catholic faith.

## **What is required for the sacrament levels now that the parish is following a Summer-Session model?**

In addition to Summer-Session and Parish Activities, the sacrament levels are required to attend preparation classes which will provide special instruction. Class dates are listed in the back of the handbook and posted on the parish website under the PREP forms page. In 2023-24 the Sacrament class is the Penance/First Holy Communion – Level 2 class.

Confirmation for Level 7/8 will be in the 2024/25 PREP year. This means that Confirmation Level will not attend preparation classes during school year for 2023-24.

## 2023-2024 Calendar for PREP

### Summer-Session

**Monday, June 19-Friday, June 23, 2023, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

**Catechetical Sunday Mass: September 17, 2023, 10:15 a.m.**

**Sacrament Preparation Classes** will meet in the Parish Hall from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on the following dates:

### First Penance Preparation Classes

January 21, 2024

January 28, 2024

February 4, 2024

February 11, 2024

N .B. Parents are requested to bring their child to **First Penance** to a Church of their choice approximately one month before the reception of First Holy Communion.

### First Holy Communion Preparation Classes

March 10, 2024

March 17, 2024

April 14, 2024

April 21, 2024

**First Holy Communion Retreat, Saturday, April 27, 2024, Noon to 3:00p.m.** Students will have the opportunity to go to confession.

### First Holy Communion Sunday, April 28, 2024, 10:15 a.m. Mass

Confirmation is celebrated every other year at Sacred Heart.

Confirmation for Level 7/8 students will be in the 2024/25 PREP year.

**Monthly Activities Calendar is emailed and posted to the parish website <https://unitedinthesacredheart.com/prep/forms>**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	.	Page 5 - 7
Registration and Fees	.	Page 7
Enrollment and Placement	.	Page 8
Non-Custodial Parents	.	Page 8 -9
Children with Special Needs	.	Page 9
Communication	.	Page 10
Absences	.	Page 10 - 11
Arrival and Dismissal Procedures	.	Page 11 - 12
Car Line Procedures	.	Page 12 - 13
Monthly Sacrament Classes	.	Page 13
Summer-Session Lunch and Snack Procedures	.	Page 13
Supplements to Classroom Education	.	Page 14
Textbooks and handouts		
Homework Assignments		
Service Initiative		
Religious Activities	.	Page 15
Sacraments	.	Page 15 - 16
Discipline	.	Page 16
Dress Code	.	Page 17

Prohibited Items	.	Page 17
Cell phones	.	Page 17
Health and Safety	.	Pages 18 - 19
Fire Safety and Disaster Preparation		
Health Concerns and Medications		
Child Abuse		
Covid-19 Best Practices		
Mask Policy		
Weather Emergency and Cancellations	.	Page 20
Right to Amend	.	Page 20
Catechists	.	Page 21
Tentative Calendar	.	Page 22



## Catechists:

Level 1:	Joan Koeck
Level 2:	Michelle Efthimiadou
Level 3:	Linda Moser
Level 4:	Barbara JanFrancisco
Level 5/6:	Briana Wisniewski
Level 7/8:	Brenda Turner

If you and your children are not participating in Mass and the sacraments, real conflicts may arise between the doctrine that is taught in religion class and what is practiced at home. Please celebrate our Catholic faith with your children. It is a lifetime gift.

## EVERY CHILD IS A CHILD OF GOD

As parents and catechists, it is important to share these faith messages with your children to foster a sense of well-being and self-esteem:

God loves you and so do I.

God believes in you and so do I.

God will be with you in every situation. God will help you and care for you. God listens to you and so do I.

God cares for you and so do I.

You are unique and important to God, and you are unique and important to us too.

## WEATHER EMERGENCY AND CANCELLATIONS

An e-mail will be sent to parents and guardians in the event a PREP class or activity is cancelled due to inclement weather or other situations.

When it is necessary Sacrament Preparation classes will move to a Zoom Class due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances. The announcement will be made by email which will contain the Zoom meeting link.

## RIGHT TO AMEND

The pastor and the program coordinator reserve the right to amend this handbook as necessary.

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Please feel free to e-mail the CRE with any questions.

## INTRODUCTION

The Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) at Sacred Heart Parish supports parents/guardians, the first teachers of the children in the ways of faith. Parents/Guardians and our parish catechists together teach children about our Catholic faith by helping them to learn the catechesis necessary for their faith formation as they grow in their relationship with God and the parish family.

Parents/Guardians contribute to their child's Catholic faith formation by being living witnesses of the faith themselves. This includes not only teaching about God and our faith traditions, but also bringing their child with them regularly to Sunday Mass. Thus, what is learned in the PREP classroom is reinforced at home.

Our Mass times are as follows:

Weekend Masses

Saturday Vigil Mass

4:00 p.m.

Sunday Masses

8:00 a.m.

10:15 a.m.

Weekday Mass & Holy Days

8:00 a.m. (Monday through Saturday)

Holy Day schedule posted in parish bulletin

## Holy Days of Obligation

January 1, the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God  
Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter, the solemnity of the Ascension  
August 15, the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
November 1, the solemnity of All Saints  
December 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception  
December 25, the solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

This Handbook contains certain policies and procedures for Sacred Heart PREP. Policies and procedures may be changed as needed and applied as circumstances dictate. In the event of such a change, parents/guardians will be given prompt notification and provided with an addendum, if necessary. Please contact the Coordinator of Religious Education if there are questions.

Students and parents/guardians must accept and abide by the policies and procedures contained in this handbook in order for the student to attend the program.

Sacred Heart Parish moved its program to a Summer-Session format in 2022-2023. PREP Summer-Session is an intensive week-long program where the entire textbook is completed in a week. A certificate of completion for the textbook level work will be issued at the end of Summer-Session. During the school year all PREP families are expected to participate in a minimum of five (5) activities at Sacred Heart. A Certification of Level completion will be issued in May. A PREP Family Activities Calendar listing the activities is provided each month and can also be found on the parish website under the PREP forms page. Sacrament levels RCIC, 2, and 8 students will be given special instruction and are to attend preparation classes. A sacrament level class calendar is in the back of the handbook and on the parish website under the PREP forms page.

**Students are to continue their formal religious education uninterrupted through Confirmation, which is celebrated at Sacred Heart Church every other year. Our next Confirmation will be held in the 2024-25 academic year.**

**Children baptized in a church other than a Catholic church** may be enrolled in PREP if it is their desire, and the desire of their parents/guardians, to enter the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church requires anyone over the age of 7 who is baptized in another Christian faith to make a Profession of Faith and receive Confirmation and First Eucharist at the same Mass. Two years of class attendance is required.

## **COVID-19 Best Practices for Parish Religious Education Programs in-person Instruction**

August 29, 2022

As in the past, the OCF is represented on the Catholic Schools Coronavirus Task Force which makes policy or gives guidance in accordance with the CDC guidelines and strategies which best protect the students both in Catholic Elementary Schools and PREP in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Although the Coronavirus is still present and contagious, the availability of new treatments, vaccines and testing have changed the protocols from even a year ago. Lessons were learned during the pandemic, and the following best practices should be followed:

- Children or adults exhibiting symptoms of COVID should not attend PREP. He/she:
  - may not return to PREP before the 6<sup>th</sup> day from the day of the positive test.
  - is required to wear a mask if within the 6–10-day period from the day of the positive test.
  - children or adults who come into close contact with a positive case may attend PREP with a mask.
  - please communicate to parents/guardians via email or letter.
- Ventilation reduces the risk of spreading germs and contaminates through the air. To the greatest extent possible, open windows and doors.
- Hand Washing: washing hands can prevent the spread of infectious diseases – reinforce hand hygiene to the greatest extent possible.
- Emphasize covering coughs and sneezes to help keep individuals from getting and spreading infectious diseases, including COVID-19.

### **MASK POLICY**

As of June 11, 2021, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, in accordance with the Philadelphia Department of Health recommendations, declared that in parishes and institutions in the City of Philadelphia, there is no requirement for face coverings or masks. The Archdiocese also declared that “the non-use or use of a face covering, or mask is not to be imposed unilaterally in churches throughout the Archdiocese.” Thus, those who wish to wear a mask may wear a mask and those who do not wish to are not required to wear a mask.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

## FIRE SAFETY AND DISASTER PREPARATION

PREP catechists have directives in case of fire, shelter in place, and lock down. The safety of your children is very important to us. This is the reason why it is important for a cell phone number from a parent/guardian to be on file.

## HEALTH CONCERNS AND MEDICATIONS

Health concerns should be brought to the attention of the program coordinator at the time of registration. Catechists and other PREP personnel do not dispense or administer any medications. If there is a case of great need, arrangements can be made according to the usual professional education standards.

Please inform your child's catechist if your child has an allergy to a particular food or substance.

## CHILD ABUSE

All PREP staff and catechists have participated in the Safe Environment Program required by the archdiocese. All PREP staff and catechists are mandated reporters for Child Abuse. Proper authorities will be notified immediately and directly if child abuse is suspected. The program coordinator and pastor will also be notified. All procedures put in place by the archdiocese will be followed.

The archdiocese requires PREP to conduct one class each year on Safe Environment issues. Personal safety lessons are entitled "Kid Talk": Child Abuse Prevention lesson and can be found at: <http://phillyocf.org/safe-environment>. The lesson plan is age appropriate. Parents/Guardians who choose not to have their children attend this annual mandated session are required to give notice in writing to the program coordinator at least one week prior to the date the lesson is taught. Our program teaches this lesson on Wednesday of our Summer-Session.

**Non-baptized children** who are 7 years of age or older may be placed in the RCIA Program for Children (RCIC) but will still require two years of class attendance before receiving the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, First Eucharist).

## REGISTRATION AND FEES

- Families are required to be registered parishioners of Sacred Heart.
- If you are not a registered parishioner but wish to register your child in our PREP class, we will need a written letter of permission from the pastor of your home parish allowing you to register your child in our program.
- If you are not registered here at Sacred Heart or at any other parish, please register at our Rectory as soon as possible.
- A copy of your child's Baptism Certificate, as well as any other Sacramental Certificate is required **at the time of registration**.
- If your child has not been Baptized, PLEASE NOTIFY THE RECTORY AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.
- If your child is transferring to our PREP program from another program at a different parish, please provide a transfer letter.
- If applicable, please provide a copy of the most recent Custody Agreement or Custody Order.
- Please note that if your family is registered at another parish, and your child is eligible to receive a sacrament(s) this year, your child must return to your home parish to receive the sacrament.
- If you would like your child to receive the sacrament(s) here at Sacred Heart, you must provide an additional letter of permission from the pastor at your home parish.

PREP fees for 2023-2024 are as follows: \$100 for one child, \$150 for two or more children. Any concerns, please contact the PREP Coordinator. (An additional late fee will apply for all registrations received after April 30th.) A separate fee is charged for children who plan to receive a sacrament during the year.

In the event a child is dismissed from the program due to excessive absences, lateness, problem behavior, or for any other reason, no refund of registration or material fees will be made to the family.

## ENROLLMENT AND PLACEMENT

The faith formation provided in PREP involves incremental learning; that is, each level builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program consistently from year to year.

A participant who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year will be required to make up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program. For example, a student who leaves the program for a period of one year after completing Level 3 and re-enrolls in the program when he or she is in grade 5 will be placed into Level 4.

A student who returns to PREP after voluntarily leaving the program for two or more consecutive years will be placed in a level that is at least one below his or her current day school grade year. For example, if a student who leaves PREP after completing Level 3 and is re-enrolled when he or she is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the parent/guardian is required to provide home-based catechesis for Level 4 and, upon completion of Level 4, the child is accepted into Level 5.

The program coordinator will work with the parents/guardian to support the above requirements and assure the child's reception of sacraments.

Older children who are just beginning their formal religious education will be evaluated before placement is made.

## NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

Sacred Heart PREP will not become involved in adjudicating the rights of parents in relation to the custody of their children. Therefore, if a parent is separated, divorced, or unmarried, it is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the program coordinator with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. These documents will be requested at the time of registration. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents and/or

## DRESS CODE

Students should be dressed comfortably, but respectfully and modestly. Clothes your child normally wears to school are acceptable. A child wearing clothing that is deemed inappropriate (immodest dress, t-shirts with improper messages or logos) may be asked to leave the classroom and would be responsible for completing any missed work or assignment.

## PROHIBITED ITEMS

Children are **not permitted** to bring things to class which would provide a distraction to themselves or to other children. These items include, but are not limited to: gum, food, beverages, toys, electronic games, beepers, iPods, iPads, or other electronic devices. Such items brought to class will be confiscated by the catechist and retained until the end of class when they are returned to the parent or guardian.

Contraband is never permitted on the premises. Items considered to be contraband include but **are not limited to**: weapons of any kind, legal or illegal drugs, pocketknives, matches or lighters, and alcohol or tobacco products. Children found to be in the possession of such products may be immediately dismissed from PREP and, depending upon the contraband seized, proper legal authorities will be notified.

## CELL PHONES

Students who bring cell phones to PREP sessions are NOT to use them during teaching times unless they are directed to use them in conjunction with the lesson. Students will be asked to place phone screen side down or put them in a pocket during lessons. **Cell phones should be silenced during PREP.**



It is also archdiocesan policy for **two consecutive years of preparation** to immediately precede the reception of a sacrament. As an example, before a child receives First Communion in Level 2, Levels 1 and 2 need to be completed. Readiness for the reception of a sacrament is more important than the age/class level of a child. The pastor is consulted if postponement of a sacrament is deemed advisable.

## DISCIPLINE

To maintain a proper learning environment as well as for PREP to be effective, children must behave appropriately at all times. Parents/Guardians must realize that a catechist may correct a child that is either disruptive in class or in some way is causing a discipline problem. This correction will take the form of Christian correction and guidance. The program coordinator will be notified when repeated class disruptions occur; he or she will then contact the parents/guardians and arrange for a conference with them, their child, and the catechist. If the child continues to exhibit disruptive behavior in the classroom following the conference, the parish reserves the right to contact the parents/guardians and ask for the child to be taken home immediately. The child will be responsible for any missed work or assignments due to that early dismissal.

Sacred Heart PREP **will not tolerate behaviors** that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to: use of improper or racist language; fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation (bullying); vandalism; demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment.

Threats of violence or harassment made by a child either by oral, written or electronic means (text messages, social media) against any person, may cause the child may be suspended or expelled. Local police may be notified, depending on the offense. A child suspended, but not dismissed, for such acts, may be required to have a psychological clearance before returning to PREP. The child's parents/guardians would assume all costs related to the clearance.

Conduct incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the parish committed by a member of a child's family, including but not limited to parents/guardians and anyone acting on their behalf, is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

guardians to provide that document to the program coordinator immediately. This is also true in the event that such an agreement is issued after the time of enrollment. In the absence of such documentation, it will and must be assumed that parents share legal custody.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program coordinator with an official copy of the latest court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program coordinator with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

In situations with shared legal custody, cooperation is expected from both parents, especially in regard to sacramental preparation and celebrations.

## CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents/Guardians are asked to notify the program coordinator of anything that will help the catechists make learning easier for your child. Please make it known if your child has difficulty seeing, hearing, delayed reading skills, ADD/hyperactivity, etc. Special needs children are individually assessed and will be accommodated to the best of our ability through classroom site selection, catechist and assistant, as needed. With parental help, Sacred Heart PREP strives to offer the best Catholic learning environment for each child.

## COMMUNICATION

All families are responsible for the content of e-mails from the parish, coordinator, and catechists. Our program sends out updates and reminders via e-mail. Please contact the coordinator if you change your e-mail address or need to be added to this list.

Parents/Guardians are provided with the dates and times of Summer-Session and monthly activities calendar for the program year. A sacrament class calendar is provided at the back of this handbook for levels RCIC, 2, and 7/8. ***This calendar is subject to change during the year.*** Notifications will be given of changes and additional dates or events, particularly in regards to sacrament preparation.

Parents/Guardians should feel free to contact the program coordinator regarding any concerns or issues that may develop during the year.

Direct communication with your child's catechist is also a necessary component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to meet with their child's catechist to discuss any concerns or information that will enhance the learning experience. Please contact the catechist or the program coordinator to arrange an appointment outside of class time.

## ABSENCES

Faith formation received in PREP is ongoing in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is imperative that children regularly attend their program sessions.

Absences should be for serious reasons only: illness, death or serious illness in the family, etc. A parent is asked to contact the catechist or program coordinator to report an absence. Make-up work will be assigned by the catechist and that work must be completed by the next class.

## RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

In addition to receiving classroom instruction by the catechists, children are encouraged to participate in parish liturgical and devotional prayers. Please refer to parish website or Sunday bulletin for dates and times.

During the school year all PREP families are expected to participate in a minimum of five (5) activities at Sacred Heart. A PREP Family Activities Calendar listing the activities is provided monthly and can also be found on the parish website under the PREP forms page. **These activities count toward completing each PREP grade level and a certification of completion will be issued in May.**

## SACRAMENTS

Preparation for the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, and/or Confirmation is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A child's desire to receive a sacrament is mirrored in his or her, and parents'/guardians', positive attitude toward the preparation process and commitment. Therefore, regular attendance and proper behavior are expected. ***Children exhibiting chronic unexcused absences or lateness may be asked to delay reception of a sacrament.***

Parents/Guardians, in their role of taking an active part in preparing their child for reception of a sacrament, are to attend one meeting where they will receive pertinent information.

Children who are candidates for receiving a sacrament are expected to participate in a day of retreat and a day for practice, both of which are scheduled in advance.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia requires the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist) to be received in the parish in which the candidate is registered. Parents/Guardians not registered in Sacred Heart Parish need to obtain written permission from their proper pastor that specifically grants permission for their child to receive a Sacrament of Initiation in Sacred Heart church.

## *SUPPLEMENTS TO CLASSROOM EDUCATION*

### TEXTBOOKS AND HANDOUTS

Every Summer-Session participant is assigned a textbook at the beginning of the session. This book remains in the classroom. Candidates for Confirmation and other sacrament classes may use a different textbook with supplemental materials sent home periodically

Children may receive other handouts in the form of prayers to learn or parish communications. Parents/Guardians are asked to be sure to check any PREP folder/papers sent home with their child and have the child return the folder to class for the following session.

### HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Catechists may assign take-home assignments in the form of written work, activities, or study. The purpose of any assignment is to help children retain and put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. It is expected that parents/guardians will supervise the completion of these assignments.

### SERVICE INITIATIVES

All the baptized are disciples on mission, called to develop a life-long commitment of service to others as Jesus taught us.

A catechist may invite participants to engage in service activities as a means of deepening the formation process. Such activity will take place outside the scope of the regular catechetical sessions. In the event a catechist elects such an option, he or she will provide the participants with a detailed list of suggested activities.

**Excessive absences are to be avoided.** If this would occur, the PREP Coordinator will send notice to the parents that their child may be required to repeat the level in which he/she is enrolled. This may involve a delay in the reception of a sacrament for the child due to lack of adequate preparation.

Parents are asked to communicate directly with the program coordinator if absences are due to the child having an extended illness or an unusual family situation (e.g., custody issue, hospitalization, etc.) Whenever possible, the program coordinator will work with the parents/guardians to support the child's continued faith formation.

If your child has extended absences due to an **extended illness**, he or she needs a note from his or her physician to return to class.

Parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child up to date.

Absences due to **participation in sports or other extracurricular activities** are not permitted since religious education classes need to be the priority. Since a sequential religious education curriculum is followed, a child who returns to the program after a lengthy absence will be placed in the appropriate level to cover the work missed.

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

For the safety of our students and staff, and to comply with the Safe Environment Policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, parents/guardians are not permitted to enter Parish Hall during arrival time unless on official business with the program, in which case a visitor's pass must be obtained.

All children are to use the Parish Hall (school cafeteria) entrance and remain in Parish Hall until a catechist or aide directs them to their classrooms. They are not permitted to enter the classroom until the catechist or aide is present for supervision.

**Summer-Session begins promptly at 9:00 a.m.** A child arriving after the designated starting time will be considered late. It is strongly recommended that your child(ren) arrive ten minutes prior to the scheduled class time. Chronic lateness may interfere with your child(ren)'s learning and promotion.

**Summer-Session Dismissal is 2:00 p.m.**

**Sacrament Preparation Classes** begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. and end at 10:00 a.m.

## CAR LINE PROCEDURES

### Arrival:

Summer-Session staff members are on duty from 8:45 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. to welcome students in the Parish Hall (school cafeteria). To drop off students, parents should pull into the rear schoolyard of Lakeside Vantage Academy using Stewart Street. (Please note that Stewart Street is a one-way street) and proceed to the Parish Hall (school cafeteria) doors where staff members will be waiting to greet students. Please pull up to the doors before you allow your child(ren) to exit your vehicle. To increase safety and efficiency, all drivers should remain in line and follow the car directly in front of them. **All drivers will exit the schoolyard via River Road which is a 2-way street.**

### Dismissal:

Summer-Session students are dismissed at 2:00 p.m. each day from the Parish Hall (school cafeteria) door in the rear schoolyard of Lakeside Vantage Academy. All students will be kept in the building during dismissal time. The most efficient manner to pick up students from Summer-Session is to use the carpool line. Students will be called and escorted to their cars as their rides arrive. To ensure the safety of the students during dismissal time, parents must wait outside of the building if they choose to park in the Sacred Heart Church parking lot and walk to the building rather than drive through the carpool line. Please use Stewart Street to access the schoolyard. Drivers should display the family name card provided by the program, on the driver's side window or windshield and pull to the Parish

Hall door in order to pick up their student(s). Cars are to stay in line and are not to pull around to pass another car. All drivers will exit the schoolyard using River Road.

If the family name card is not displayed, the driver will have to exit the car line and park in the Sacred Heart parking lot, walk down to Parish Hall (school cafeteria) and produce I.D. that matches the child's(ren) registration paperwork. If a family name card is lost, please contact the program coordinator and a duplicate will be provided.

## SACRAMENT CLASSES

Children preparing to receive Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, or Confirmation must attend sacrament classes to receive instruction for the reception of these sacraments. A calendar of the class dates are listed in the back of the handbook.

Drop off begins: 8:20 a.m. at Parish Hall (school cafeteria).

Classes begin at 8:30 a.m.

Dismissal is at 10:00 a.m. from Parish Hall (school cafeteria).

## SUMMER-SESSION LUNCH AND SNACK PROCEDURES

Students must bring a lunch. Children are expected to bring a lunch with them in the morning. In emergency situations **ONLY** may lunch be dropped off by a parent/guardian. We ask that special lunches, especially those from a fast-food restaurant, are not brought to PREP. Students can bring a snack for designated snack time. This should be a simple, healthy snack and drink. Candy and soda are not permitted for either lunch or snack. A simple snack (pretzels and/or goldfish and a small water bottle) will be provided to students who do not bring a snack from home. No glass containers are allowed. These items will be confiscated and thrown away. **PLEASE** note that **NO FOODS CONTAINING PEANUTS** are permitted due to student peanut allergies.