

The Roman Catholic Church
of Saint Magdalen de Pazzi
exists to echo Jesus' call to all:
Come and Follow Me.

Religious Education for Children and Families **Parent Handbook**



Church of St. Magdalen de Pazzi
105 Mine Street
Flemington, NJ 08822
(908) 782-2933
stmagdalen.org

Registration site: [https:// stmagdalenREregistration.org](https://stmagdalenREregistration.org)

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Mission Statement

*The Roman Catholic Church of Saint Magdalen de Pazzi
exists to echo Jesus' call to all:
Come and Follow Me.*

The ultimate goal of the Religious Education Office for children and Families is to advance the Kingdom of God. By promoting the true human dignity of each person as created in the image and likeness of God, we strive to lead all to a **personal** and living relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Our most basic mission is inviting others to follow the Way of the Lord Jesus and to form a community of disciples. Through the power, grace, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit we strive to lead all to a life of prayer and communion with God that expresses love in service to others who are in need. We seek an ever-deepening love for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and an encounter with the healing and forgiving presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

It is our desire to nurture all with the richness of the Catholic Faith that has been revealed as true through Scripture, the Magisterium and Tradition. We entrust our mission to our loving mother, Mary, under the title of Mother of Perpetual Help.

Rev. Kenneth Brighenti, Ph.D.
Pastor

Sister Marie Luu
Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL)

Purpose of the Parent Handbook

This handbook provides parents with the structure and policies of the Religious Education program for the children of St. Magdalen de Pazzi parish family as directed by the Diocese of Metuchen, the Pastor and the Parish Catechetical Leader.

Parents are responsible to read and carry out the guidelines provided in these pages to the best of their ability. You will be asked to read and sign a Covenant Promise when classes begin. This is a sign of your commitment to your child's faith formation.

Religious Education Office Hours

The Religious Education Office is located in the Spiritual Formation Center in the Church.

When classes are in session the office is open

Monday & Tuesday 11:00am - 8:00pm

Wednesday & Thursday: 10:00AM - 12:00pm (noon) and 1:0pm - 4:00pm

The office is closed on Friday.

When classes are NOT in session the office open

Monday through Thursday 10:00am to 12:00pm (noon) and 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

The office is closed on Friday.

Please check our website for holiday closings. If you need to meet with a staff member outside of these hours please email us at ReligiousEd@stmagdalen.org.

Our parish website is <http://stmagdalen.org/about-children-youth-formation>

Our registration website is <https://stmagdalenREregistration.org>.

Sacraments

Overview

According to the Catholic faith, the sacraments are a gift from God, given through the Church as an outpouring of His love. Through the sacraments, God justifies and sanctifies His people (i.e., He saves them and makes them holy), He meets His people where they are in order to draw them up to Him, He pours out His grace, He builds up the Church and He receives worship.

Baptism

“What do you ask of God’s Church?” was the question asked of you when you brought your child to be baptized. After your response, the celebrant offered the following words:

You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

The Eucharist

The Person of Jesus Christ is at the heart of all catechesis. We meet Christ most intimately when we come to receive Him in the Eucharist where He is Truly Present: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—nourishment for our journey back to the Father.

“If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing**” (Jn 15:5).

“**Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood** have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day”(Jn 6:54-56).

Reconciliation

Please review the examination of conscience (available on our website) and the formula for confession with your child(ren) to help prepare them to receive the mercy and love of God through this sacrament. Parents are requested to take their children to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis so that they may remain in a state of grace. Confessions are available on Saturday from 4:00 PM to 4:40 PM and after the 5:00 PM Saturday Mass. *Confessions are also available by appointment.*

Confirmation

Confirmation provides a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which helps the confirmed Catholic witness to Christ and lead a mature Christian life. The rite of confirmation, usually performed by a bishop, involves the anointing with chrism (holy oil), the laying on of hands, and the words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

The normative age for the reception of Confirmation in the Diocese of Metuchen is during the 8th or 9th grade school year, provided the candidate has completed two full years of formation. The pastor, in consultation with the PCL, determines the celebration in light of all pastoral considerations.

The Christian Initiation of Older Children:

- Unbaptized: Particular Canon Law specifies that children and youth over the age of 8 who have not been baptized **MUST** be prepared to receive all three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist through the RCIA process, adapted for children.

- Baptized as an infant/child, has not received the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist, and is uncatechized: The PCL will incorporate them into the RCIA process adapted for older children.
- Baptized as an infant and catechized, but has not received First Communion and/or Confirmation: It should be determined through an interview with the older child and his/her parents to see if the child has had any catechesis. If the child has received catechesis whether in the home or from other source, the pastor or PCL will determine the best placement for the child, preferably with the child's peers. A minimum of 2 years of catechesis is required before a sacrament is received.
- Youth who have not received Confirmation ONLY: These older children should participate in the parish's adult Confirmation preparation (RCIA).

Sacramental Year

All parishioners including children (home-based and classroom instructed) preparing for First Holy Communion and Confirmation are expected to:

- participate in the Sacramental life of the Church (regular Sunday worship)
- live faith in the family

In addition, they are expected to participate in the following:

- parish life, stewardship services, special events, meetings, gatherings
- retreats for First Communion / Confirmation
- assessments / interviews

Such community experiences are integral parts of the preparation that cannot be experienced in isolation from the parish.

Why Mass?

Mass attendance is the most important part of your child's formation and preparation to receive the sacraments that will bring them life in Christ. For that reason, families are expected to participate in Sunday Mass each week and Holy Days of Obligation. We are made for worship and if we don't worship Him, we tend towards worship of false gods.

Attendance

In accord with the Diocesan Policy for attendance, no more than 3 absences are permitted from classroom formation, and no more than 3 absences from Sunday Mass. The following steps will be taken when there are excessive absences:

- A call will be made to parents of children with 3 absences
- A conference will be scheduled with the PCL and parents of children with 4 absences
- A conference will be scheduled with the Pastor, the PCL and parents of children with 5 absences to discuss postponing the sacraments

Parents' Collaboration with Catechists

For Catholic parents, the mission to catechize is rooted in the Sacrament of Marriage, which consecrates them for the Christian education of their children. *“This Sacrament enriches them with wisdom, counsel, fortitude, and all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to help the children in their growth as human beings and as Christians.”* **(On the Family, Pope John Paul II, 1981, 38)**

By virtue of this sacrament, parents are the primary educators of their children. By enrolling your children in our Religious Education Program, you are asking us to assist you in that process by providing a foundation in Church teachings and morals.

The encouragement of the parents is the single most important factor in the education of a child. Therefore, become familiar with your child’s course material and make every effort to participate in the program as much as possible.

Please communicate with your child’s teacher throughout the school year so that a collaborative effort may be made to provide a foundation in Roman Catholic doctrine and morals for your child(ren), and don’t hesitate to contact any of our staff with questions you may have.

The Religious Education Office provides a schedule of classes and a respectful atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Please bring your children to class on time, with their books, pencils, and completed assignments.

Custodial Status

It is the responsibility of the parents to notify the Parish Catechetical Leader in writing of custodial status and any restrictions concerning the non-custodial parent. For the safety and well-being of your children, we will not disclose any information about a child, or dates of sacraments to anyone other than who is listed on the registration system.

Medication Policy

Catechists do not administer any medication. If your child is taking medication that would affect the child's participation, or will need to self-administer emergency medication such as an Epi-Pen or other self-injectors or inhalers, please notify the PCL. You will be required to complete a Self-Administration of Medication form. A copy of the form is attached below and can be found on our website.

Food Allergies

It is the goal of St. Magdalen's Parish to reduce the risks posed by food allergies, especially those posed by peanuts and tree nuts, so that children may enjoy a safe and respectful place to grow in their faith.

Recognizing that strict avoidance of the allergen is the only way to prevent a potentially life-threatening reaction, we ask your cooperation with the following policy: No food or drink of any kind is permitted in the classrooms during parish catechetical formation classes.

The Religious Education program is not the only ministry that uses the Spiritual Formation Center. We must be aware that other ministries, although asked not to, may bring food into the classrooms.

Parents and guardians of highly allergic children **MUST** inform the PCL and catechist, so that all precautions will be taken. Please inform us if your child has been prescribed an Epi-Pen, or other self-injector and carries it during his/her time of Catechetical Formation Classes.

Children with Special Needs

Please inform us if your child has special needs. This important information helps the catechist to meet your child's specific needs and *will not categorize* your child in any way.

Works of Mercy (Service hours)

Children in the 7th and 8th grade program will be required to complete specific Works of Mercy with specific hours associated. Each of the 2 years, students will be required to complete 20 hours of service. The service hours must be performed part of completing the grade. If your child does not complete his/her service hours he will not be able to move to the next grade or receive confirmation.

Some examples of service hours that can be performed are:

- Work with Camp Saint Magdalen
- Work with Knight of Columbus on events like Thanksgiving Dinner, Christmas Breakfast, Easter Breakfast

Children who serve as an Altar Server or sing in the Children's choir receive the full 20 hours of service.

The specific approved Works of Mercy will be given to the children by their catechist throughout the school year.

Arrival (Drop-off)

Children are asked to arrive 5 to 10 minutes prior to class start time with their textbooks, prayer journals, and Bible (grade 5 and above).

Grades 1-4 MUST BE ESCORTED by an Adult to class. Students who walk to and from St. Magdalen de Pazzi Church for formation classes will need to fill out the Walking Permission Form. The permission form must be on file with the Religious Education Office before the first day of class. The Walking Permission Form is included at the end of this document and is available on the Parish website.

The first 2 rows of parking spots (Bonnell Street parking lot) closest to the church will be roped off to ensure the safety of the children. We ask your full cooperation in the following method of drop-off and pick-up.

- Please park in the parking lot on Bonnell Street and walk your child along the path to the back door of the church.

- **Grades 5-8**, may be dropped off in the driveway to the Spiritual Formation Center near Mine Street. **There is to be NO PARKING for any reason.** If you wish to escort your child to class, please park in the parking lot on Bonnell Street and walk your child down the path near the parking lot to the back door of the church.
- After dropping children off, please proceed **cautiously** and **slowly** out to Bonnell Street.
- **Handicapped Parking is for Handicapped persons only!**

Dismissal (Pick-up)

- **Grades 1 to 4** should be picked up at the classroom by parent **and exit by back stairway.** If you arrive early, please wait in the Gathering Space near the Rotunda. When parents gather in front of the classrooms it becomes a distraction to Catechists and the children.
- **Grades 5-8** will be dismissed to **exit out the back stairway** of the Spiritual Formation Center **to the back door** so that they can walk out the path to the Bonnell Street parking lot.
- We have been asked to advise parents that blocking the stairwell and/or sitting on the stairs while waiting for classes to end can be a dangerous situation. In the case of an emergency the stairs must be clear. We ask that parents wait in the gathering space. The best way to get to the gathering space is to come to the main entrance doors (located by the circle).
- **THE MINE STREET DRIVEWAY IS ONLY FOR DROP OFF. There is to be absolutely no pick up by car in the driveway to the Spiritual Formation Center near Mine Street.**
- Please do **NOT** park in front of Church.
- The PCL/Catechist will not send a student home with a driver who is visibly impaired, and reserves the right to call an alternate contact number provided during the registration process.

Late Arrival, Early Dismissal

- For the safety of our children, all doors will be locked 5 minutes after the session start time. The only entry to the building will be through the Mine Street entrance by the office. Students who are late will need to sign in and get a PASS from the office before going to their classroom.
- If your child needs to leave early, you must notify the office before the beginning of the class session. You may email the Religious Education office at ReligiousEd@stmagdalen.org. For all grades, parents must come to the office to pick up your child. No students may leave the building without a parent or guardian.

Emergency Closing

In case of inclement weather, (hurricanes, ice, and snow) the decision for an emergency closing will be made by the Parish Catechetical Leader in consultation with the Pastor.

If the Flemington-Raritan School District are closed or have an early dismissal due to weather, Catechetical Classes will be canceled. Notices will be posted on the parish website and sent via email to parents.

Schedule of Classes

Sunday: Family Alive (previous Symbolon) Family Formation:

9:00am Mass followed by a light breakfast and Formation from 10:30am to 11:45am.

Monday: Session A Grades 1-6: 4:45pm to 6:00pm

Session B Grades 7-8: 6:45pm to 8:00pm

Tuesday: Session A Grades 1-6: 4:45pm to 6:00pm

Session B Grades 3, 5-8: 6:45pm to 8:00pm

Textbooks

Students must come to class with their textbooks.

Bibles contain the Sacred Word of God and should be respected, and because they are blessed, they must not be thrown away. Lost Bibles will be replaced for a fee of \$15.00 and textbooks for \$20.00.

Grades 1-8: Spirit of Truth by Sophia Institute for Teachers.

Student Responsibilities

St. Magdalen Parish Property

The Spiritual Formation Center is a gift to our children. Disrespect of property by children is a serious offense and will have serious consequences, including, but not limited to, suspension from the program.

Dress Code

Modesty is a sign of respect for the dignity both of oneself and others. Students must dress modestly when they attend classes or events related to the formation program.

Clothing that is not permitted:

- Clothing which exposes any abdominal area, low necklines, halter-tops, tube tops and tank tops etc.
- Clothing that is ragged, overly tight, or transparent. Shirts containing negative or promiscuous messages.
- Mini-skirts or short shorts
- Shoes with cleats or wheels

Discipline

In the case of inappropriate behavior, lack of effort, or a poor attitude on the part of a child, the following steps (if the behavior persists) will be taken.

- Catechist will speak privately with child about behavior
- The PCL will meet with the child
- Parent notification by the catechist and/or PCL
- A face to face conference with the parent, child and PCL

If the difficulty persists, the child will be withdrawn from the program until alternative solutions are reached. If the child continues in the program, a method of on-going evaluation will be put into effect.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

Many parents have reported growing concern about cell phone and other device use, both about the amount of time teens spend on their phones as well as the risks and dangers of misusing their phones. We share your concerns and to ensure a reverent classroom environment for our students, we kindly ask that you discuss the following guidelines with your child prior to the start of classes:

- Cell phones should be left at home. In an emergency, the office is equipped with multiple landlines, cell phones as well as parent contact numbers.
- If you prefer to allow your child to carry a phone for safety or other communication reasons, they should turn the phone off and store it in a backpack or bag during class. We prefer not to collect phones and will only do so if your child does not choose to respect this policy.
- Phones should remain off until students exit the building: no calls, texting, use of social media, games or apps, or camera/video functions will be permitted in the classrooms, hallways, or inside bathrooms.

Homework

Assignments may be given to your child/children, especially in the Confirmation Program. There may also be classroom reviews. These tools are an important part of your child's formation and an aid for teachers to gain an assessment of your child's progress and understanding. Homework must be completed each week it is given. Homework not turned in, or not properly completed will be used in consideration of completing the grade.

Fire Drills

One fire drill and one lockdown drill will be conducted per year. Every organization is vulnerable to intruders. In case of emergency when everyone must be evacuated and moved to a safe place, the Parish Center will be our shelter location. Children are to walk with the catechist out of the classroom to the designated exit and wait outside the building for further instructions.

In case of a fire alarm, parents waiting for dismissal of children must vacate the building and wait outside. Parents may not block the exits waiting to find their child.

For the safety of everyone, your child must be brought to the designed safe zone. No child will be dismissed until we have accounted for all children.

Stairwells must be kept clear at all times.

Policy for Suspected Child Abuse

The Diocese of Metuchen directs that if a catechist/PCL/staff suspects a child has been abused, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) be notified immediately, in compliance with New Jersey statutes. The phone number for DCF is 877-NJ ABUSE.

Any information that leads a catechist to believe a child intends to harm himself/herself requires the catechist to notify authority.

Drugs

Drugs are not allowed on premises. If a child is found to be in possession of drugs, police and parents will be notified. Catechists have been directed not to send a child home with a driver who is visibly impaired. The Parish Catechetical Leader reserves the right to call an alternate contact as provided during registration.

Registration

Registration for classes should be completed using our registration system at <https://stmagdalenreregistration.org>. This system is used to maintain contact information, registration history and attendance. Directions on how to create an account and how to register are posted on the website.

As part of the registration you are required to pay registration fees. The fees are as follows,

- First child in family is \$130
- Second child is \$105
- The max cost per family (regardless of number of family members) is \$300.
- For sacrament years, 2nd and 8th grade there is a sacrament fee. This fee covers the cost of additional events as well as Diocesan costs.
 - o Second graders the fee is \$50
 - o Eighth graders the fee is \$75

Home Instruction (Home-based Catechesis)

The National Directory for Catechesis states: “If Catholic parents choose to provide catechesis for the children in their home, that catechesis must be both complete and authentic. The home-based catechesis of children is a cooperative effort between the children, their parents, parish leadership, and the diocesan bishop. Parents who choose to be not only the primary educators of their children, but also their catechists must adhere to all guidelines for catechists as outlined by the diocesan bishop.” (61 A-3)

In home-based catechesis, children are expected to be catechized using texts which are conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church as determined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In addition, the materials and the content of catechesis should be in conformity with the texts and resources used in the parish education program. The PCL and the catechetical office of St. Magdalen de Pazzi’s will provide such texts/materials and instruction in their use, as well as to evaluate the progress of students from time to time through testing, personal interviews and standards used in the parish religious education setting. Students in home-base settings are expected to maintain contact with the parish. Home-based instructional parents are invited to participate in opportunities for catechist formation that are offered in the parish. They are expected to meet and consult with the PCL of the parish regarding the option of home-instruction as well as the periodic progress of home-based catechesis.

Parents who decide to Home-instruction should use the Catechist Guide to teach your children at home. The Catechist Guide is well planned, ready to teach. It includes well written lesson plans, activities and worksheets. We ask that you pay a \$50 deposit to receive a copy of this guide. If the guide is returned in excellent condition the \$50 fee will be returned. Home-instruction students must register through the normal registration process after permission has been given. The same fees apply to home-instruction as do in-class instruction.

WALKING PERMISSION FORM

For Grades 6-8 only

I gave my child _____ age _____ permission to walk without adult supervision to and/or from St. Magdalen de Pazzi parish for the Religious Education program. I assume the responsibility to ensure that my child knows and will follow traffic safety rules.

I hereby release the Diocese of Metuchen, the Parish of St. Magdalen de Pazzi and any, and all of their representatives or agents from any and all claims or liability arising from, or related to, my child's travel to and/or from the parish Religious Education program.

This permission form may not be used for any child in Grades 1-5 who must be escorted by an adult.

Parent / Guardian Name:

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date: _____

Office Use Only: Date Received _____ By _____

**Diocese of Metuchen
Office for Catechesis**

SELF-ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

Permission for child/youth to carry and/or use emergency medication
for potentially life-threatening condition.

Child's / Youth's Name _____ DOB _____ Class _____

Parish _____ City / Town _____

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:

Diagnosis _____

Name of Medication _____

Dosage and Instructions _____

Possible Side Effects _____

I certify that the child named above has allergies that are potentially life-threatening, as listed above, and is permitted to self-administer the listed medication. The child has been instructed in the proper techniques of self-administration and has demonstrated to me competence in this technique.

Name of Health Care Provider (PRINT) _____

Signature of Health Care Provider _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date _____

PARENT / GUARDIAN:

I authorize my child to self-administer the listed medication during religious education hours, if necessary. I acknowledge the parish of Saint Magdalen De Pazzi (NAME) **DOES NOT** have a nurse **OR** trained staff member on the premises during religious education hours. In the event my child must self-administer epinephrine (EpiPen), I understand that 911 will be called and my child will be transported to the local hospital. It is my obligation to provide the Parish Religious Education Office with working telephone numbers where I can be reached at all times and my responsibility to attend to my child once the emergency squad leaves the parish program. I understand that the Diocese of Metuchen, the parish of Saint Magdalen De Pazzi (NAME), and any and all of their representatives or agents against all claims arising from the self-administration of the listed medication.

Signature of Parent / Guardian _____ Date _____

Phone _____ Cell _____ **EFFECTIVE FOR ONE (1) YEAR.**