

“Above all, in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and responsibility of the sacrament of matrimony, children should be taught to worship God and love their neighbor in accordance with their faith..... Parents should appreciate how important a role a truly Christian family plays in the life and progress of the whole people of God.”
(Vatican II, Gravissimum Educationis, 3)

Welcome to Parents

Dear Parents,

Welcome to another exciting year of religious education! Along with you, we look forward to being part of your child’s growth in faith and knowledge.

We have prepared this current set of guidelines to foster the learning process. It is our hope that the enclosed policies help to promote an environment in which our students can best learn about the beliefs and traditions of our Roman Catholic faith community.

We ask you to read the enclosed policies and procedures carefully. They are designed to insure the safety of our students, to promote the most fruitful use of our teaching time, and to encourage the faith lives of the children and their families. The last page of this booklet is a form which we would ask you to read, sign, and return to your child’s teacher at the next class.

Please know that the parish and religious education staffs stand ready to assist you in any way possible. God bless.

Christian Formation Committee:

Mrs. Elizabeth Systo, Parish Catechetical Leader, 534-2319 ext 17

Mrs. Ann Mulroy, Sacramental Coordinator, 534-2319 ext 18

Rev. Leonard Rusay, Pastor, 534-2319 ext 11

Mrs. Joline Frank, Pastoral Associate, 534-2319 ext 12

Sr. Rosanne McCabe,SSJ, Past. Assoc. for Adult & Family Formation, 534-2319 ext 13

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Our Religious Education classes are intended to offer a systematic instruction in the faith and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church to students being raised as active members of this faith community. All students participating in our program must participate at Mass on all Sundays, unless a serious reason excuses them. Catechists must teach that Mass attendance is an important responsibility, and that habitually missing Mass is a grave sin, absent a weighty excuse. Catechists may assign homework which presumes a student's Mass attendance (e.g. writing a short reflection on the homily, commenting on the readings, etc.).

Absentee Policy

Religious Education time is precious. Therefore, it is essential that every student attend every class meeting. When a student is going to be absent, the parents are responsible for notifying the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE (NOT THE CATECHIST AT HOME) of the absence prior to class time.

After the missed session, the Religious Education Office will not contact parents with material. A classroom agenda sheet will be stapled on the inside front cover of your child's book. The agenda will have the dates of religious education and the chapters to be covered in class. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS AND STUDENT TO COVER MATERIAL WHEN ABSENT.** If the student's book is not at home, the parents will need to pick up book from the Religious Education Office.

Students who accumulate 5 OR MORE ABSENCES will be tested at the end of the year before advancing to the next grade. Please note all 6th graders who attend Camp Bernie will be excused but will still be required to complete any missed class assignments.

Arrival/Dismissal Policies

To insure the safety of our students, parents and children are required to comply with the following policies:

The CIRCULAR DRIVE in front of the church is ABSOLUTELY OFF LIMITS to vehicular traffic BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER religious education classes. We regret that we will have to ask any family who violates this rule to leave the program.

Parents are asked to park their cars in the lot and accompany their children to the Community Hall where the students will gather. Students will be sent to their classes from Community Hall. Parents are asked to bring any students who arrive late directly to the Religious Education Office.

The Parish Catechetical Leader of Religious Education will call the children to order in Community Hall. The group will pray together, and then the classes will be dismissed to the classrooms at the direction of the P.C.L. On occasion, the Community Hall will be occupied and children may have to go directly to their classroom.

Parents who wish to pick their students up for early dismissal must come to the Religious Education Office first. In the event that anyone other than a parent wishes to pick up a child for early dismissal, the parents must make prior written arrangements with the Religious Education Office not the catechist.

ALL CHILDREN FOR ALL SESSIONS WILL BE DISMISSED FROM THEIR CLASSROOMS. PARENTS WILL PICK UP THEIR CHILDREN AT THEIR CLASSROOM DOOR. To insure the safety of all our children, parents are asked to park their cars while picking up students and to be especially careful while entering and leaving the lot. **IF A PARENT WISHES THEIR CHILD (grades 5 through 8 ONLY) TO WALK TO THEIR CAR IN THE LOT, WE WILL HOLD THESE CHILDREN LAST TO INSURE THEIR SAFETY.** The parent **MUST** submit a letter directly to the Parish Catechetical Leader releasing the Religious Education Program of all responsibility for that child from the building to the car.

Parents are expected to be present at dismissal time. Children whose parents have not arrived within 10 minutes of dismissal time will be brought to the office to call home. Students whose parents are consistently late (after 2nd incident) will be charged a late fee of \$15.00 per each fifteen minute period per child.

Bathroom Policy

We want to make the most of every teaching moment with the students. Therefore, parents are asked to encourage their children to use the bathroom before coming to class. Bathrooms will be available to students both before and after the class sessions.

If necessary, students may be excused from class on an emergency basis during class time. Catechists are asked to refer any student who abuses this privilege to the Religious Education Office.

Child Abuse

New Jersey State Law requires any person who has “reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse to report the same immediately to the Division of Youth and Family Services by telephone or otherwise.” (N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10 et seq.) The law imposes the obligation of notification on every person, and it cannot be delegated to any other person. The report to DYFS (Phone # 1-800-792-8610) must be made prior to advising the Pastor, Coordinator of Religious Education, or any other person. Failure to make such a report is punishable as a disorderly persons offense.

Under state law, child abuse includes but is not limited to sexual abuse, and embraces any conduct or lack of action which impairs or creates a substantial risk of impairing the physical, mental, or emotional condition of the child.

Catechist who report a case of child abuse to the DYFS are also required to immediately notify the Parish Catechetical Leader. Catechists are also required to notify the Coordinator of Religious Education immediately in the event of student-on-student violence.

Of course, all catechetical personnel are not allowed to impose any form of corporal punishment on any student for any reason. Corporal punishment is understood to be any punitive touching. Catechists in our program are authorized to verbally call a student to order and to send any unruly students to the office no other forms of discipline are permitted.

Special Occasions

Please **DO NOT SEND ANY FOOD** to class with your child. We have children with severe food allergies and children on special diets who are not permitted to have certain foods. Any food that is brought in will be taken away and given back to parents at the end of the class session. We ask that the **NO PARTY** policy be respected by all grade levels.

Drugs, Cigarettes, Alcohol, Weapons, Cell Phones, Beepers

Students are **FORBIDDEN** to use or possess drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, and weapons, cell phones, and beepers on Our Lady of Lourdes' property. Any student found in possession of drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, or weapons will be reported to the police and suspended or expelled from the program after consultation and review. If a student is found with a cell phone or beeper in class, it will be confiscated and returned to the parent at the end of class.

Cell Phones, Ipods, MP3 Players, and Electronic devices

We are understanding to the fact that students carry cell phones for emergency use. However, all students remain with the P.C.L. before, during, and after all sessions. Therefore all students must turn off cell phones during sessions or they will be confiscated. The use of all other electronic devices is not conducive to a learning environment and will also be confiscated.

Emergency Cancellation/Precautions

The Parish Catechetical Leader and Pastor determines if classes will be canceled for inclement weather. A decision is made for both the safety and the welfare of the catechists and students of the parish. A phone chain will be implemented by the P.C.L. **PLEASE KNOW WE DO FOLLOW PUBLIC SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS.**

A. Code Red - In case of a **COMMUNITY EMERGENCY** during religious education classes, all students will be escorted to the basement of Old Church (Youth Room area) by their catechists. Parents will come to the basement to pick up their child when the emergency has been lifted.

B. Code Yellow - In case of unauthorized intruders in the building, all catechists will lock the classroom door, instruct all students to get on the floor under the desks and close the curtains in their rooms. The P.C.L. will lock both entrance doors to classroom areas and contact the police immediately.

Emergency/Parent Phone Numbers

Parents are responsible for insuring that the Religious Education Office always has on file the CURRENT EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER of a parent or other designated adult who can be called. This phone number must be a person who would be available during the Religious Education class times, and who would be able to be present within 10-15 minutes of a phone call.

Fire Drills

The Religious Education Office is required to periodically conduct fire drills to insure the safety of our students and catechetical personnel.

Handicaps/Special Needs

Parents are requested to see the Parish Catechetical Leader for any special needs or special arrangements that may be necessary for their child before the first day of class. It is also imperative that we are made aware of students who have learning difficulties. We have trained staff to help plan and execute specialized programs or to follow the child's IEP. All information provided to us is confidential.

Homework

Students are asked to complete homework assigned to them by their catechists. Students work will be collected and checked for completion. Catechists will notify parents of any child who DOES NOT regularly turn in homework assignments.

Testing

Catechists are **REQUIRED** to give assessments during the course of the year and possibly the end of the year. If a student's scores are below average, parents **WILL BE** notified and students **WILL BE REQUIRED** to be retested under the supervision of the Parish Catechetical Leader. Students who do not pass the test may need to do extra work at home during the summer. If the student **DOES NOT** complete this summer work satisfactorily, he/she will be required to repeat the same grade.

Office Hours

The Religious Education Office is open during class hours and from 9:00am to 8:00pm, Monday and Wednesday, 9:00am to 4:00pm Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The Parish Catechetical Leader is always available to speak to parents who might have any questions concerning their child's class. The phone number is 534-2319 ext 17.

Progress Reports

Progress Reports are issued in December and April each year. We ask our Catechists to be as candid as possible on these reports so that you as parents have an accurate understanding of how well your child is progressing in the program. The December Progress Reports must be signed by a parent and returned to the student's Catechist at the next class meeting.

Parents may be requested for a conference with the Parish Catechetical Leader and the child's catechist and in some cases possibly the Pastor. This conference will take place at the convenience for the parent, Parish Catechetical Leader and the Pastor. We expect that respect, trust, and civility will characterize these meetings.

Records and Transfer Policy

The Religious Education Office maintains records of each child's participation in our program. After making prior arrangements with the Parish Catechetical Leader, parents are permitted to inspect these records.

Any parent who wishes their child's records sent to a different parish or school is asked to notify the Religious Education Office at least 7 work days prior to these records being needed. Provided that all fees have been paid and all exit procedures complied with, we will gladly send a copy of our records to the new institution.

Registration

Registration for Religious Education classes will take place in the spring. Registration times are published in the parish bulletin, on the yearly religious education calendar and a notice of registration days and times are mailed home to parents with children currently in our program and those families whose children are entering 1st grade. The parents of students who are new to our program are asked to provide documentary proof of any sacraments their child has received and any prior formal religious education their child has undergone.

Fees for the coming year will be published, payable, and a deposit will be due at the time of registration. No child will be deprived of Religious Education because of an inability to pay.

If parents are unable to pay the requested fee, they are asked to please speak to the Parish Catechetical Leader to make alternate arrangements. Please remember that all information is kept confidential.

Class sessions and sizes are limited to maximize learning potential and to insure safety. Registration for class times and sessions is open to all parishioners on a first come, first served basis. Failure to register a child at the specified time will result in a child not able to enter the session most convenient for parents.

Roman Catholic Teaching

All catechists and aides function in line with the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Catechists are therefore expected to keep updated and informed about the issues they teach, present Roman Catholic Church teachings as authoritative and binding, and follow the curriculum as laid out in the textbook and diocesan curriculum guidelines.

Sacramental Preparation Policy

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation is handled by our Religious Education program. These classes are held on various Sundays separate from regular weekly classes. Parents must attend a special meeting to be held prior to the beginning of these programs. Admission to these programs is open to students who meet the following requirements:

1. THE STUDENT MUST REGULARLY ATTEND SUNDAY MASS.
2. For Reconciliation and Eucharist, the student be actively involved in regular religious education, and must have successfully completed one year of formal Religious Education and must be satisfactorily progressing through a second year. For Confirmation, the student must have successfully completed the seventh grade in a formal Religious Education program, must be actively involved in service for confirmation and must be satisfactorily progressing through the eighth grade.

Once admitted into the Preparation Program, the student must satisfactorily fulfill all requirements which will be explained at the Parent Meeting. If a student does not comply with these requirements the Parish Catechetical Leader in collaboration with the Pastor may defer a student from the preparation process.

At Our Lady of Lourdes, students usually receive Reconciliation and Eucharist in the second semester of the Second Grade. Confirmation is received in the fall of the Ninth Grade.

Student Code of Behavior

Students are expected to obey the instructions of all catechetical personnel and to refrain from any conduct which disrupts the learning process. Catechists are requested to deal with disciplinary problems as EARLY AS POSSIBLE. After one or two warnings, the catechist is requested to send a disruptive student to the office. When a student is sent to the office, his/her parents will be notified of the difficulty. Any student continually disrupting class will be REQUIRED to have his/her parent ATTEND CLASS with him/her until the behavior subsides or possibly be removed from the program, at the discretion of the Parish Catechetical Leader and the Pastor.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS, catechists establish a set of rules of order for their classroom. All Students are expected to comply with these rules.

Students **ARE NOT PERMITTED** to bring hats, gum, toys (including electronic toys), food, or beverages into class. The catechist should confiscate any such materials and turn them in to the Parish Catechetical Leader. The office will return these items to the child's parents at the end of the session.

Any student who verbally or physically abuses another student or teacher, or who causes damage to parish property, will be suspended or expelled from the program after consultation and review by the Parish Catechetical Leader and the Pastor.

Textbooks

Students receive their textbooks "Faith First Legacy" upon arrival to class their first day. Students **must** bring their assigned textbooks to class each week. At the end of each class session when an assignment is given, students are to take these books home. Having the books at home will enable parents to see what their child is learning and facilitate the homework process.

The **first time** a student forgets to bring his/her book to class, catechists may permit him/her to look on with another student. For **the second or subsequent offense**, the student should be sent to the office where he/she will be asked to call his/her parents and have the book brought to him/her.

The students will also receive a Benziger Family Life Book and parent supplement. This program is mandated by the Diocese of Metuchen and Bishop Bootkoski. The students book will be given on a loan basis for parents to work with them on the necessary material. Each family is expected to complete the necessary material. If a family elects not to participate in this program, a letter must be sent from the parents to Fr. Leonard Rusay.

Students in 3rd grade through 8th grade are required to have bibles. Students **MUST** bring their bibles and assigned textbooks to class each week. At the end of each class session if an assignment is given, students are to take these books home. Having the books at home will enable parents to see what their child is learning and facilitate the homework process.

The **first time** a student forgets to bring his/her book to class, catechists may permit him/her to look on with another student. For **the second or subsequent offense**, the student will be sent to the office where he/she will be asked to call his/her parents and have the book brought to him/her.

If a student loses his/her book, he/she will be required to purchase another from the Religious Education Office.

Visitors

Other than students, catechetical personnel, hall monitors and the parish staff, **NO PERSONS** are permitted in the upstairs halls, classrooms, or rest rooms during Religious Education sessions without the express authorization of the Religious Education Office.

Visitors, including parents, are asked to come to the office before proceeding any further into the classroom areas. Parents are welcome to attend their child's classes but must first register with the Parish Catechetical Leader.

Catechists are asked to contact the office by intercom immediately if they notice any unauthorized visitors in the building.

Currently, our Religious Education program is registered with the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office under Megan's Law notification for the safety of our children.

**Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education
Parent Handbook Agreement**

Family Name

Please print

Phone

I, the parent or legal guardian of the above mentioned family, testify that I have read, understood, and agree to comply with all policies and procedures listed in the 2007-2008 Parent Handbook, especially those listed below:

Absentee Policy	Office Hours
Arrival/Dismissal Policies	Progress Reports
Bathroom Policy	Records and Transfer Policy
Child Abuse	Registration
Special Occasions	Roman Catholic Teaching
Drugs, Cigarettes, Alcohol, Weapons	Testing
Cell Phones, Ipods, MP3 Players, & Electronic Devices	Emergency Cancellations/Precaution
Emergency/Parent Phone Numbers	Sacramental Preparation Policy
Fire Drills	Student Code of Behavior
Handicaps/Special Needs	Textbooks and Bibles
Homework	Visitors

I understand and agree that my or my child's failure to abide by all these policies and procedures may result in my child's suspension or removal from the program. I pledge to cooperate with the program by reinforcing at home what my child learns in class, and by insuring that my child participates regularly at Sunday Mass.

Parent's Signature

Date