

Parent Handbook

Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima Parish

Religious Education Program

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Religious Education Program at Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima assists parents in religious formation of their children (grades 1-8) as Roman Catholics through:

- weekly student sessions led by faith-filled adults who engage and challenge students to a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ with the goal of a more personal and spiritual relationship with Him.
- prayer and reflection based in sacred scripture and sacred tradition including monthly communal experiences of Catholic practices such as Stations of the Cross and the Rosary.
- seasonal celebrations of the Church year to foster enjoyment of the Church's sacred traditions.
- special events to prepare students and their parents for the celebration of First Eucharist, First Reconciliation and Confirmation.
- a community environment where all families feel welcome and enthusiastic in their love for Jesus Christ and the practice of the Roman Catholic faith.

At your child's Baptism, the priest offered this prayer for you as fathers and mothers:

“God is the giver of all life human and divine. May He bless the father of this child. He and his wife will be the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith. May they also be the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We look forward to genuine cooperation with you as we nurture Catholic Christian values in our community.

May God bless us in the work of Catholic Christian formation that we carry on in His name.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Living a Catholic Christian Life

Living a Catholic Christian life is guided by the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ to “love one another as I have loved you.” It is this love of God and one another that underpins all Religious Education at Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima parish.

The Role of the Parent

The parent¹ has the primary and sacred responsibility to educate his/her children in the Catholic faith. The Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima Parish Religious Education Program is established to assist parents and families in fulfilling this responsibility.

A child’s growth and development in the Catholic faith is built on the foundation of the family. The Celebration of the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of our Christian life. Therefore, children are expected to attend the weekly Sunday or Saturday evening Mass supported by his/her parents. During the school year, the 10AM Sunday Mass at Annunciation Church is recognized as a “Family Mass” and is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the Holy Eucharist as a family. Masses for families with children who have special needs are offered several times during the year at Our Lady of Fatima Church. These provide children who benefit from accommodations to attend Mass in a modified setting.

The Director should be informed by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent as these pertain to the child’s participation in the program as well as release from the program.

The Role of the Student

Student behavior is expected to reflect the values and teachings of Jesus Christ. More specifically, behavior and attitudes should reflect the Ten Commandments, Corporal Works of Mercy, The Beatitudes, Spiritual Works of Mercy and the Laws of the Church.

The classroom obligations of students enrolled in the Religious Education program are:

- Weekly attendance at Religious Education sessions;
- Proper preparation for class instruction. Bring textbook and pencil or pen to each class.
- Completion of homework;
- Appropriate participation in class discussions and activities;
- Satisfactory completion of special assignments;
- Knowledge of prayers required at each grade level;
- Doing the very best work possible.

¹When the word “parent” is used in this document, it also includes anyone who may act as a student’s guardian, whether grandparent, aunt, uncle, godparent, etc.

The Role of the Religious Education Director

The Director of the Religious Education Program of Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima Parish is delegated by the Pastor to be responsible for the development, implementation and administration of the parish catechetical program, in accordance with the *Guidelines of the Archdiocese of New York*. His/her responsibilities include the following:

- Be a resource person for parents, catechists and other adults of the parish.
- Implement the principles of civil law concerning the safety of the students in accordance with the Archdiocesan Safety Guidelines.
- Provide catechesis (i.e. religious education) for all students of the parish including those who have disabilities.

The Role of the Catechist

The catechist is a person of faith who has the task of creating the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in faith among believers. The primary mission of catechists is to communicate God's love to those entrusted to their care, by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished through the fourfold activities of message, community, worship and service. The tasks of the catechist are: to help students grow in their personal faith & spirituality; to assist students as they are initiated into the faith community and its life, worship, symbols and practices; to attend Catechist Formation Classes leading toward personal fulfillment and certification; and to pass on a world view, a set of shared meanings and values that are Catholic and Christian.

OVERVIEW, ADMISSIONS & REGISTRATION

The **Parish Based Religious Education Program** offers instruction to students who attend public or private (non-parochial) school whose families are enrolled parishioners at Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima Parish. An eight year sequence of formation is offered; all Catholic students of the parish who do not attend Catholic elementary school are expected to participate. The Religious Education Program is not simply preparation for the sacraments of Confirmation, Reconciliation and Eucharist. It is an ongoing, continuing development of the Christian personality that offers and opportunity for catechists and students to meet regularly in order to learn about the Catholic Christian faith. Our aim is to provide a loving and caring Christian atmosphere in which our parish youth can grow in Christ-like attitudes and values.

Special Needs Religious Education is a ministry that responds to the religious and spiritual needs of persons who require accommodations. In consultation with the parent, the Coordinator for Students with Special Needs will appropriately place each student in a classroom setting that will address his/her special needs and encourage further spiritual growth.

Registration for the Religious Education Program takes place beginning in August for classes that begin that September; registration does not carry over from one year to the next so families must reregister their students each year. All students regardless of race, sex, or national origin will be admitted to the parish program. Information pertaining to dates and time of registration will be published in the parish bulletin and website. All registration forms may be found on the parish website: www.annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education.

Registration procedure for students presently attending classes:

1. Complete the re-registration form that lists each student you desire to enroll in the program
2. Complete and sign the Authorization Form and Student Safety Form for each student enrolled in the program
3. Pay the registration fee; speak with the Director if you have questions concerning the fee or payment of it.

Registration procedure for students new to the program:

1. Complete the registration form listing each student you desire to enroll in the program
2. Complete the Student Safety Form and Authorization Form for each student enrolled in the program
3. Submit a copy of the student's Baptismal Certificate and any other sacramental certificates.
4. If the student attended a Religious Education Program in a different parish or diocese, provide any previous records or progress reports.
5. For children with special needs, complete the "parent questionnaire" for children with special needs.
6. Pay the registration fee; speak with the Director if you have questions concerning the fee or payment of it.

Fees

For the 2017-18 catechetical year, the registration fees are:

1 student	\$225
2 students	\$300
3 or more	\$365

Additional support through Sunday collection: \$300 per family that is paid either to the Rectory or using the Sunday collection envelopes between September 1, 2017 and August 31, 2018. Families may also use ParishPay to have their Sunday support automatically submitted.

Sacramental Fees:

First Communion \$100

(For children receiving First Communion in May 2018. Payment is due on March 21st.)

Confirmation \$125

(For children receiving Confirmation in April of 2017. Payment is due on March 1st.)

All fees may be paid on-line at www.annunciation-fatima.com/fee-payments or by check or cash to the Religious Education Office at Annunciation School.

The registration fees are used for salaries, the purchase of books and learning materials, classroom supplies, professional development for the director and the catechists, sacramental preparation resources, communication expenses and other facility expenses. The parish subsidizes any expenses not covered by Religious Education fees.

Class Placement

Students are expected to attend Religious Education classes continuously from grade 1 through 8. In almost all cases, students must have completed the first two years of the Religious Education program and received the sacrament of Reconciliation in order to receive the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in May.

A parent/guardian who would like to enroll an older student in the program who has had no previous formal religious education classes should plan to meet with the Director so an individual plan of study can be drawn up. This is especially important if the parent/guardian would like the student to eventually prepare to receive one or more of the sacraments.

Any student who leaves the Religious Education Program after receiving First Communion will (upon reentering the program) be required to complete the grade level(s) of curriculum missed. The placement of the student is determined by the Director after consultation with the pastor and the parent.

Student with special needs will be placed in a classroom based on their individualized needs and the availability of the catechist to meet those needs.

Transfer/Early Withdrawal

If a student leaves the program before the completion of the catechetical year or at the end of the catechetical year, please advise the Director.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Christian Initiation is celebrated in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Through these visible actions a young person is incorporated into the Church and shares its mission in the world.

Sacramental catechesis has traditionally been of two kinds: preparation for the initial celebration of the sacraments and continued enrichment following their first reception. Requirements for the reception of First Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation are determined by Canon Law according to the following:

- Age of reason (to be able to distinguish right from wrong);
- Proper knowledge of sacraments;
- Emotional and spiritual preparation;
- Approval by parent, catechist, Director and Pastor.

The policy of Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima Parish is that a young (baptized) person who plans to receive the sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion must have completed one full year of the catechetical program (not counting kindergarten) and be currently enrolled in his/her second year.

Sacramental preparation for children with special needs will begin when appropriate and based on agreement of the parent(s), catechist, the coordinator or director of religious education and the pastor.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation reminds us that Jesus began His work on earth by calling people to repentance and faith: "Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel." (*Mark 1,15*). Catechesis of students for Reconciliation must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances of individuals and seeks to

- make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the student's life
- help the student recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrong doing, and turn to Jesus and the Church for forgiveness
- encourage the student to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving
- encourage the student to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.

The first reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is usually celebrated in February. All students preparing to receive their First Eucharist must first be instructed and prepared to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. A separate Reconciliation textbook is provided to guide the students' preparation.

Preparation of students for Reconciliation starts in the second grade level and is a joint effort between parent and catechist. Instruction includes the second grade curriculum covered weekly in class as well as a focus on the sacrament of Reconciliation that helps students understand that they are forgiven, and they belong to the community of Jesus' friends – the Church.

Parental Responsibilities as Student prepare for Reconciliation:

The example set by parents is of the utmost importance. Because parents are the primary educators of their students, they are responsible for initiating their students into the sacramental life of the church. Parents are expected to:

- serve as models for their students by being moral Christians;
- receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with their families;
- help students in forming a good conscience and a Christian code of morality;
- attend parent sessions and participate in activities and prayer services that are planned to help their student prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- take time with their student to talk about reconciliation, to read Bible stories and to pray together;
- determine their student's readiness for Reconciliation.

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the heart of Christian life. Providing instruction on the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist helps students understand that the celebration of the Eucharist forms and nourishes the faithful with Jesus, the Bread of Life.

Catechesis for students seeks to strengthen their awareness of the Father's love, of the call to participate in Christ's sacrifice, and of the gift of the Spirit. Students are taught that the Holy Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Christ, and what appears to be bread and wine are actually Jesus' Body and Blood. They learn that the Eucharist is both meal and sacrifice and that it is a memorial of the Last Supper.

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is celebrated each May. All students preparing to receive their First Eucharist must have been prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their students for First Communion. Catechesis (instruction) aims to help parents grow in understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and participate readily in catechizing their students. A separate textbook is provided to help guide the students' preparation.

Catechesis for First Communion is conducted separately from catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation since each sacrament requires its own concentrated preparation. Beginning at the second grade level, preparation for First Communion is a joint effort of the parents and catechists as described below:

- The Second grade curriculum is covered weekly in class by the catechist and followed up at home by the parent;
- The First Eucharist program helps explain the Eucharist to students, familiarize them with the main events of Jesus' life, help them to participate more meaningfully in

the action of Mass, and to receive Christ's Body and Blood in communion in an informed and reverent manner;

- The students learn that they may receive Holy Communion in the hand, on the tongue and under both species. Catechesis includes making the students aware of the Church's requirements for fasting (no food or drink except water or medicine for one hour before receiving Communion).

Parental Responsibilities as their Student prepares for First Eucharist:

Because parents are the primary educators of their students, they are responsible for initiating their students into the sacramental life of the church. Parents are also expected to:

- serve as models for their students by being moral Christians;
- participate in Sunday Mass regularly with their families;
- nurture their student in faith;
- attend scheduled parent sessions and participate in any activities and prayer services that are planned to help their student prepare for this important sacrament of Holy Eucharist;
- talk with their First Communicant about the Eucharist, to read Bible stories and to pray together;
- determine their student's readiness for the Eucharist.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is intimately related to the other sacraments of initiation, Baptism and the Eucharist. Christians are reborn in Baptism, strengthened by Confirmation, and sustained by the food of the Eucharist. In Confirmation young people are signed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. They become more perfect images of the Lord Jesus as Confirmation confers grace upon them renewing and strengthening their baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and to work eagerly for the building up of His Body, the Church.

As the primary educators of their students, parents are to be intimately involved in catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, enabling them to set a better example for their students.

Components of the Confirmation Program:

- Regular attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Fulfilling the Religious Education class requirements.
- Proper preparation for class instruction and completed homework assignments.
- Consider taking a Confirmation Name.
- 10 hours of Christian Community Service.
- Sponsor's Certificate.
- Candidate demonstrates an adequate grasp of the content of the Catholic faith.
- Reception of the sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation.
- Living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus.
- Participation in any Confirmation activities as scheduled, including an evening retreat.

Parental Responsibilities as their Student prepares for Confirmation:

Because parents are the primary educators of their students, they are responsible for initiating their students into the sacramental life of the Church. Parents are also expected to:

- serve as models for their students by being committed Christians;

- worship regularly with their families;
- share their faith with their students both in word and action;
- encourage their student to reflect on and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation;
- attend scheduled Parent Sessions, participate in any activities and prayer services that may be planned to assist their son/daughter prepare for and freely request the sacrament of Confirmation;
- assist their student with the immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, through prayer, study, and Christian service;
- stress the initiation aspect of the sacrament by encouraging their son/daughter to continue learning more about the Catholic faith;
- help their son/daughter come to an understanding that the Confirmation Service Program is the beginning of a life committed to Christian service.

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDELINES

Archdiocesan Guidelines

Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima’s Religious Education Program meets all of the requirements of the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York. The Archdiocese of NY has published *Guidelines for Catechesis for Grades 1-6 and Grades 7 & 8* which ensure a clear and uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level. The *Guidelines* are not a substitute for the textbook. However, the textbook reflects the content of the *Guidelines* in a way that assists the catechist in preparation and delivery of the curriculum.

Catechesis

The Religious Education Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their students in the faith. While it can never replace parents, our Religious Education program complements parents as they carry out their responsibilities. “Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their students.” (*National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States.*)

In addition to enlightening the students of the parish in the doctrines and tenets of our faith, our Religious Education Program welcomes the opportunity to assist parents in teaching their students to walk along the path of faith. Opportunities for adult education are continually offered throughout the Archdiocese, in neighboring parishes as well as at Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima parish. Adult faith formation provides opportunities to reflect on the meaning of Catholic Christianity and one’s relationship with Jesus Christ. In so doing, parents make meaningful their professions of belief and nurture faith in their students by showing them the richness and beauty of the lived faith.

CURRICULUM

[Themes, objectives, and appropriate prayers for each grade level]

Grade One -- “*God is our Father who loves us. Jesus is the Son of God who saves us. The Holy Spirit helps us to be holy.*”

Objective:

To develop an awareness of God the Creator who gives us life and grace and promises us eternal life through Jesus.

Prayers:

Sign of the Cross

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory to the Father

First statement of the Apostles Creed: "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

Prayers to be encouraged:

Morning and Evening Prayers

Grace at Meals

Grade Two -- *"Jesus nourishes us and strengthens God's life and grace within us."*

Objective:

To present Jesus as the model for Christian living, and to introduce the sacraments of Baptism, Penance and Eucharist.

Prayers:

All prayers taught in grade 1

Act of Contrition

Simple responses at Mass

Apostles Creed to "...He will come again to judge the living and the dead."

Grade Three -- *"Jesus continues his life and work through the Church."*

Objective:

To deepen the student's understanding of the Church and to help the student experience the church as a Christian community.

Prayers:

All prayers taught in grades 1 and 2

The Apostles' Creed (in its entirety)

Grade Four -- *"As God's people we are called to live as Jesus did, choosing a life of love, characterized by obedience to God and service to others."*

Objective:

To help the students form their consciences according to the teachings of the Catholic Church and to learn the basis of Christian morality as taught in the Old and New Testament.

Prayers:

All prayers taught in grades 1, 2 and 3

Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

The Ten Commandments

Prayers to be Encouraged:

Act of Faith

Stations of the Cross

Grade Five -- *"Through the sacraments, the Church celebrates Christ's saving actions in our lives."*

Objective:

To help the student experience and understand the rites of the sacraments and so become a more conscious and active participant in the church's sacramental life.

Prayers:

All prayers taught in grades 1, 2, 3 and 4

Gloria

Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

Prayers to be Encouraged:

Act of Love

Grade Six -- *“God’s savings actions are found throughout history. The Holy Bible, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records God’s plan of salvation.”*

Objective:

To understand the Old Testament as the revelation of God in history of a people, a revelation fulfilled in the New Testament.

Prayers:

All prayers taught in grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary

Prayers to be Encouraged: Act of Hope

Grade Seven (four themes)

Personal Growth, Part I: The Human Person (For students celebrating Confirmation in Grade 7, this topic is covered during home study and the “Family Life” text.)

The growth and change experienced during adolescence are part of the unfolding of God’s plan for our development as fully Christian persons.

Objectives

To develop in the young adolescent a sense of self-worth and self-respect nurtured and strengthened by a knowledge of God’s love. To acquaint the young adolescent with an understanding of the virtues necessary for a life of goodness and faith.

Jesus and the Gospel Message (For students celebrating Confirmation in Grade 7, this topic is covered during Grade 6.)

The gospels reveal Jesus as the Savior and Risen Lord who calls us to advance the kingdom of God through discipleship.

Objectives

To broaden the young adolescent’s understanding of the gospels through a study of their formation, themes, message, and literary aspects. To help the young adolescent grow in a personal relationship with Jesus by encountering Him in the Gospels.

Sacraments

The mystery of Christ continues in the church through the sacraments which are visible signs of the love and saving action of Jesus.

Objectives

To help the young adolescent understand, appreciate and celebrate the continuing presence and saving action of Jesus in the church. To lead the young adolescent to a full and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Human Sexuality (For students celebrating Confirmation in Grade 7, this topic is covered during home study and the “Family Life” text.)

Sexuality is a gift from God. It embraces psychological, spiritual and physical characteristics of men and women. We human beings need to integrate our sexuality into our total personality in order to develop into the persons God has called us to be.

Objectives

To help the young adolescent appreciate the gift of sexuality. To assist the young adolescent in developing correct and positive attitudes concerning sexuality. To clarify for the young adolescent how the gift of sexuality can be misused.

Grade Eight (four themes)

Personal Growth, Part II: The Human Community (For students celebrating Confirmation in Grade 7, this topic is covered during home study and the “Family Life” text.)

Developing relationships with others and God is essential to becoming our true selves.

Objectives:

To help the young adolescent understand the elements which are essential to developing positive relationships. To help the young adolescent understand that true community is built on honest, loving and respectful relationships.

Church History (For students celebrating Confirmation in Grade 7, this topic is covered during Grade 7.)

Jesus’ life and mission continue through the Church, the community of believers called by God and empowered by the Spirit to be the sign of the Kingdom of God.

Objectives:

To deepen the young adolescent’s knowledge of the history of the Church. To lead the young adolescent to a fuller participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Morality (For students celebrating Confirmation in Grade 7, this topic is covered during Grade 7.)

Through our relationship with Jesus, we grow in an ever-deepening awareness of who God is, who we are, and how God calls us to live. Catholic Christian morality gives direction to our response to God’s call.

Objectives:

To help the young adolescent grow in an understanding of the moral responsibilities arising from one’s relationship with Jesus. To help the young adolescent understand what conscience is and how to form his or her conscience according to the Catholic faith. To help the young adolescent learn basic concepts of morality and develop skills for moral decision-making. To enable the young adolescent to recognize the role of the Spirit and the witness and guidance of the Catholic Christian community in moral living.

Prayer (For students celebrating Confirmation in Grade 7, this topic is covered during Grade 6 and 7.)

Prayer is an expression of our awareness of and response to God’s presence, love, goodness, and saving power.

Objectives:

To assist the young adolescent to grow in a desire for and appreciation of prayer as essential to the Christian life. To help the young adolescent, through the presentation and experience of a variety of prayer forms, to develop the ability to pray.

“PROTECTING GOD’S STUDENTS” -- SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Our Catholic tradition has always affirmed the dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God. Every person with whom we come into contact deserves to be seen by us as through the eyes of God. We know that ministry with students and youth, in particular, is a sacred trust. We at Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima Parish are committed to preserve, at all times and in all places, this sacred trust which is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ.

In 2002, the United States Bishops approved *The Charter for the Protection of Students and Young People* in an effort to protect students and youth from sexual abuse at all levels of church life and to restore trust in a Church scarred by the scandal of clergy sexual abuse. Article 12 of the charter directs all dioceses to create programs and processes to teach students and youth about sexual abuse and its prevention. In the Archdiocese of New York, lessons on sexual abuse awareness for students in the parish religious education programs and schools will be integrated into the religious education program each year.

This sexual abuse awareness training and its implementation will be discussed at the annual Parent’s meeting held in September.

We thank you for your support and interest as we partner to give our students the safest possible environment to grow in faith, in our parish, school and in our homes.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Assessment

Every student who enrolls in the program is expected to reflect grade level knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts of Roman Catholicism. Students are expected to review lessons at home every week. Students are assessed periodically with written and/or oral assessments. If a student does not exhibit grade level curriculum understanding, a meeting will be arranged with the parents, the catechist, and the Director of Religious Education to discuss the situation. The Director will decide if the student needs to repeat the year.

Progress Reports

Religious formation of the student takes place in the home, in church, and in the class setting. Progress Reports for the Religious Education Program only reflect class performance and homework. They are issued twice yearly to indicate the strengths and weaknesses that the students are demonstrating.

Retention

Students who do not satisfactorily complete the course of study at each grade level or do not attend the required number of catechetical sessions (approximately 75%) may be retained and required to repeat the grade level course. This is at the discretion of the Director. In some cases make-up classes may be scheduled or additional homework assigned as a means of avoiding retention.

Textbooks

The Religious Education Program provides textbooks to all students enrolled in class sessions for grades 1 through 8. Textbooks are distributed by the catechist to the students on the first day of classes. Textbooks are to be brought home and back to class weekly. If a textbook is lost, stolen, or damaged, a new one must be purchased immediately.

Homework

Homework reinforces classroom learning and can provide opportunities for independent study and creative thinking. Parents can help their students by arranging a quiet, comfortable place for their students to complete their assignments and checking to see that assignments are done. Parents are also encouraged to refer to the section at the end of each chapter in the textbook which offers suggestions for family activities pertaining to each lesson.

ATTENDANCE

Absenteeism

Your student's regular attendance at Religious Education classes is very important. These classes should take top priority over all other programs and activities. Repeated absences will necessitate a conference between the Director and the parents; excessive absences may result in a student having to repeat a grade level. Depending on the situation, attendance at make-up classes or additional homework may be assigned in order to catch up or move on to the next grade level. When your student will be absent from class, please call the Religious Education Office at 779-2374 and leave a message.

Arrival Procedure

Classes for Grades 1-5 begin at 3:30PM and end at 5PM on Wednesdays. Classes for Grades 6, 7 and 8 begin at 7PM and end at 8:30PM on Wednesdays. Punctuality is very important, both for the students and the catechist.

For afternoon students:

Students should enter the school building by way of the gym doors on St. Eleanora's Lane and exit from the same. **The building is not available until 3:20PM; we cannot provide supervision prior to that time.**

Upon entering the building for class, students should wait in the gym until it is time to go to the classroom. If a student enters the school building for Religious Education classes after 3:45PM, he/she should use the Westchester Ave school entrance and check in at the Religious Education Office before proceeding to the classroom.

For evening students:

Students should enter the school building by way of the main school entrance on Westchester Avenue and exit from the same. Upon entering the building for class, students should wait in front hallway until their teacher takes them to their classroom.

If a student enters the school building for Religious Education classes after 7:15PM, he/she must check in at the Religious Education Office before proceeding to the classroom.

Dismissal Procedure

For afternoon students:

Parents should arrive in the gym a few minutes before 5 PM for dismissal as we are not able to provide supervision for more than a few minutes after the dismissal time. Before a student leaves the gym, he/she should be released by the catechist or signed out by a responsible adult. This is a necessary step that has been implemented in order to insure the security and safety of the students who attend the Religious Education classes. Children are not permitted to leave the building without an escort by a parent or authorized adult.

For evening students:

Students will be dismissed through the Westchester Ave main entrance. Parents should arrive a few minutes before 8PM. Before a student will be allowed to leave the building, he/she should be released by the catechist or signed out by a responsible adult. This is a necessary step that has been implemented in order to insure the security and safety of the students who attend the Religious Education classes.

Unsupervised students are not permitted on the grounds at any time. If it is necessary for an unescorted student to leave the building at dismissal time, a written note describing the circumstances and signed by the parents/guardian should be given to the Director before the class. Students should report to the Director in the unforeseen event of not being picked up. Please be aware that the Director, catechists and other members of the catechetical staff will not drive students home.

PLEASE NOTE: If a student needs to be dismissed from class early, the request should be made in writing, signed by the parent and given to the Director, not the catechist, prior to the scheduled class.

Arrival and Dismissal for the Special Needs Religious Education Program

The Special Needs Religious Education Program meets at the Pope Francis Mercy Center, 5 Strathmore Road, Scarsdale, NY on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The children will enter through the front door at their designated arrival time. All special needs students will be accompanied by a parent or caregiver who will remain onsite for the duration of the class. The catechists will rejoin the children with their parents at one of the two waiting areas.

CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

Every student who participates in the Religious Education Program is expected to cooperate in the maintenance of the building where classes are held as well as its grounds. Disruptions, disrespect, defacing or damaging property will not be tolerated. The behavior expected from each student is a combination of common courtesy and safety considerations.

In the interest of safety and maintaining order, the following guidelines for dress and conduct are to be followed:

Dress Code

- Clothes should appropriately cover the body and not interfere with student safety.
- Clothing should not promote products or activities that are offensive or disruptive in a Catholic learning environment.
- No pajama bottoms (or tops).
- No shoes/sneakers with cleats or rollers (hidden or otherwise).
- No hats, caps or headgear of any kind
- No headphones

Unacceptable Behavior includes the following:

- Fighting
- Defiance of staff
- Use of profanity
- Refusal to prepare assignments or to participate in class
- Possession of dangerous objects
- Possession or use of tobacco or a controlled substance

- Damage to property
- Leaving the building/premises during the class without permission
- Habitual tardiness & absenteeism
- Intimidating fellow students
- Cheating
- Throwing snowballs
- Gum chewing
- Eating while classes are in session
- Use of cell phones or other devices while class is in session, unless approved by the catechist
- Inappropriate or indecent use of the internet or other digital forms of communication as defined in the *Safe Environment Policy of the Archdiocese of New York regarding Electronic Communication, Internet and Computer Use*. This document may be found at <https://www.nyfaithformation.org/documents/2015/4/Introduction%20to%20the%20Safe%20Environment%20Policies.pdf>

Vandalism

Willfully damaging or destroying property will not be tolerated. Vandalism must be paid for by the parent of the student involved. Accidental damage should be immediately reported to the Director.

Behavioral warning

From time to time some students find it difficult to follow the rules that are made to ensure the greatest convenience for the greatest number. Continued infraction of rules of conduct will result in a call or note to the student's parent by the catechist or Director describing the situation. In some cases, home study may be the only alternative to a difficult situation.

COMMUNICATIONS

Calendar

A calendar of all class dates, holidays, times of classes will be published on our website: <http://annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education> . Dates and times for parent sessions and classes, retreats, and all events for sacramental programs will be published and distributed as they become available.

Special Needs Calendar

A calendar of all special needs class dates and holidays will be distributed via email and available on our website: <http://annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education> . Dates and times for parent sessions, special needs masses and all events for sacramental programs will be published and distributed as they become available.

On-going Announcements

E-mail and our parish website are our primary means of communication with you. Parish bulletin announcements are also used. Please read all communications and consult the parish bulletin or website each week for relevant information.

Cancellation of Classes and Events

Inclement weather especially that which occurs between November and March, can have an impact on the Religious Education class schedule.

If Yonkers Public Schools cancels school or after-school activities due to weather, Religious Education (and any Religious Education meetings or events) will also be cancelled for that day.

Whenever a decision is made to cancel classes or events pertaining to the Religious Education program, the Director or catechist will also send an e-mail message. The answering machine at 779-2374 will also be updated with cancellation messages.

Parent/Catechist Conferences

Parents are asked to introduce themselves to their student's catechist early in the school year and are invited to contact the catechist or the Director of Religious Education anytime during the year with questions they may have.

Class Visits by Parents

Upon request parents are welcome to visit their student's class. In the interest of student safety, maintaining safer spaces and courtesy to the volunteer catechist, please be aware of the steps listed below concerning class visits. Parents should:

- Speak with the Director before the anticipated visit.
- Check in at the Religious Education Office before going to the classroom.
- Introduce themselves to the catechist and catechist assistant upon entering the classroom.
- Not read the newspaper, talk on a cell phone, or work on a computer or other electronic device during the class session.
- Submit to a background check and attend a *Safer Spaces* information/awareness session if the class visits begin to take place on a regular basis. The Director is solely responsible for making this determination.

Parent Sessions

At the beginning of the year the Director holds an introductory meeting for all new parents. The purpose of this meeting is to make an updated copy of the Parent Handbook available, to review *Safe Environment* guidelines, to inform the families of any changes in procedure or policy since classes ended in May and to answer any questions of a general nature. Parent sessions also take place throughout the year for those who have students preparing for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

SAFETY & OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION

Crisis Management Plan & Fire Drills

A *Crisis Management Plan* will be followed in the unlikely event that in the interest of safety the students, catechists and other personnel must be relocated from the school building during class time. Fire drills are held twice a year (once in the fall and once in the spring).

Emergency Information

Each parent is required to complete a *Student Safety Form* for each student enrolled in the program. The information given is vital in case of a medical emergency. There is also a dismissal form designating additional adults to whom your child may be released. A parent's signature validates these forms.

Medication

No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) will be administered to, or taken by, any student during a class session. If an exception needs to be made, the parent should speak to the Director.

Field Trips

If a field trip is planned, the *parent of every minor who will participate must complete the Parish-Sponsored Trip Form*. Telephone calls will not be accepted in lieu of written permission forms. Great care will be taken to ensure the safety of all students during the entire course of the trip as we provide for an adequate number of chaperones and proper insurance coverage. In the interest of the safety of the students, parents/guardians who accompany the class on a field trip may be asked to submit to a background check and attend a *Safer Spaces* information/awareness session. The Director will make this determination.

Church Visits

Religious education classes will visit Annunciation Church for various reasons throughout the year. Classes will be escorted in and out of the building and across St. Eleanora's by way of the crosswalks. Students are expected to walk in an orderly fashion and adhere to the directions issued by the catechist or catechist assistant.

Church Visits for the Special Needs Program

Special Needs Religious education classes will visit Our Lady of Fatima Church for various reasons throughout the year. Visits will be announced in advance by the catechist to the parent or care-giver. The children will access the church from within the Pope Francis Mercy Center through the "bridge room".

Transportation

Parents will assume responsibility for the transportation of their students to and from the parish site where classes take place.

Medical Emergency Procedures (in case of accident or illness)

If a student incurs a relatively *minor injury* while attending the catechetical program, the following steps are taken: The catechist reports the accident immediately to the Director; if bleeding is involved, the procedure outlined under "Blood borne Pathogens" (found in the "Catechist Handbook") are followed; the Director notifies the parent (if the parent cannot be reached, the Director follows the instructions on the Student Safety Form); if there does appear to be injuries, a copy of the accident report should also be sent to the Archdiocesan Insurance Division; the Director keeps a copy of the accident report on file in the Religious Education office. In case of *serious accident or illness*: The catechist immediately reports the accident to the Director and 911 is called; the Director notifies the parent, if the parent cannot be reached, the Director follows the instructions on the Student Safety Form; the Director notifies the Archdiocesan Insurance Division so that they will be prepared in the event that an accident or illness gives rise to a claim; the Director completes the accident form, keeps a copy in the file, and sends copies to: Archdiocesan Insurance Division, 1011 First Avenue, NY, NY 10022.

Medical Condition of a Student

The parent must inform the Director about any medical condition their student has which could flare up during a session (e.g. allergies, asthma, the possibility of seizures, etc.) or if the student has a condition that could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. hyperactivity, ADD, other learning disability, etc.) Parents should document any medical conditions using the Student Safety form. The Director communicates this confidential information to the catechist.

Visitors

Due to insurance issues, students not registered in the Religious Education program are not permitted in the classrooms or building during class time. In case of a necessity, a visitor should report to the Religious Education office and speak with the Director.

Phone Use

The Religious Education phone number is 779-2374 and may be used for parents to contact the Director for any reason. Parents may also reach the Director via cell phone in case of emergency at 914-494-7723. Special Needs parents are asked to contact the coordinator at 914-447-2821.

Valuables

The catechetical staff cannot be responsible for valuables that students bring to class. It is recommended that all valuables be left at home.

Lost & Found

Any clothing, money, jewelry or other articles of value that are turned in may be claimed at the Religious Education Office.

Snacks

Food is not permitted in the classrooms during the catechetical sessions. When students arrive and gather in the gym, they may eat snacks that they have brought from home. Snacks may also be purchased for \$1, as available.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ... Parent Facts²

Children are gifts from God to loving, caring families. In order to assist you as the primary educators of your children, we have listed below some suggestions to ensure their safety.

Always keep **communication** open between you and your children. Encourage them to speak about their day in school and after school activities. Always listen respectfully and try not to react with emotion if you hear something that shocks or surprises you. Be ready to discuss, advise, even admonish, in a calm and loving way. Praise your child whenever possible and, if it is necessary, to be disapproving, choose your words carefully and be as kind as possible when speaking. Young children want to please their parents and can be emotionally hurt by critical comments. Always let the child know you love him or her; it is the behavior you may not like. The more open a parent can be and the more interested in the child's behavior, the easier it will be for the child to speak to the parent if serious problems occur. Be a good listener.

All of us are children of God and, as such, must be treated with **dignity and respect**. Teach your child about this dignity and that no one should touch him or her in a disrespectful way. Children should know the

2 ²Courtesy of the Department Of Education, Archdiocese of New York.

difference between appropriate and inappropriate touches. We teach primary grade students that the parts of our bodies which are covered by a bathing suit are private. It is advisable to use proper names for the parts of the body when you have this discussion with your child. Tell the child that no one is ever to touch those private parts of their bodies unless they're at the doctor for a check-up (and you are there with them) or when they might ask you for some assistance. Teach your children that they are very precious to God and if anyone tries to touch them in a private place, they're to say "NO" in a very loud voice and tell you immediately. Assure your children that if someone touches them, they are NOT at fault -- the adult who touched them is.

Sometimes adults who want to abuse children use **lures to entice them**. Here are some you can warn your children about:

- *Bad News Trick* ... The predator tells a child that something bad has happened (sickness or death of a parent, fire, etc.) and that the predator was asked to pick up the child and bring him/her home.
- *Bribe Trick* ... The predator offers something special that the child may want and then asks for sexual favors in return.
- *"Can I Help You" Trick* ... The predator may give assistance to a child when needed or may offer to help the family of the child by offering rides or babysitting. This puts the predator in a position of trust for future abuse.
- *Drug and Alcohol Trick* ... Drugs and/or alcohol can be given to a child to make them easier to take.
- *Game Trick* ... Wrestling, tickling, accidental or deliberate contact with genitalia as part of the rules to a game played with a child.
- *"Help Me" Tricks* ... The predator may ask for help from a child such as asking for directions, finding a lost pet or carrying heavy packages.
- *Internet Trick* ... A predator will try to get personal information from the child. The predator may act as though he or she is the same age as the child in order to establish a friendship. He/she will often send the child sexual material and will try to set up a meeting with the child.
- *Position of Power or Authority Trick* ... A predator may be in a position of authority such as a coach, police officer, priest or teacher and uses this position to get children to be obedient to his/her request.
- *"You are Special" Trick* ... The predator gives special attention or favor to a child in order to gain trust for future sexual abuse.

Parent must take full responsibility for their **children's online computer use**. Sexual predators often use the internet to sexually exploit children and teens. School age children should be strictly monitored whenever they use the computer. Here are some common sense rules to set for your children:

- Never give personal, identifying information to anyone online.
- Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, or make him/her feel uncomfortable.
- Not everything one reads online may be true. An offer that is "too good to be true" probably is.
- Make the use of the computer a family activity. The computer should not be in a child's bedroom but in the family room, living room or kitchen.
- Use a filter to deny access to certain types of material.
- Be suspicious if your child spends late night time on the computer or if he/she changes the screen quickly when you come near.

If a child is experiencing emotional difficulties, **his or her behavior often changes**. The garrulous child may become moody and reclusive; the quiet child may react with anger in fits of temper or voiced resentment. The vigilant parent must be sensitive to these changes in ordinary behavior. This is the time when communication is very important and a kind and caring approach is necessary. Make sure your children know your love for them and your interest in their concerns. Sometimes children will speak to a grandparent, aunt or uncle if they are reluctant to speak to parents. Remember, if you suspect that something is wrong, it probably is. Bring in your family support system to help in this situation.

Always know where your children are and who is supervising them. Be aware if an adult chaperone is paying attention to your child to the exclusion of others. Be concerned about the adults with whom your child communicates via e-mail or phone and if the adult seems to monopolize his/her time. Be prudent about excursions and outings which you allow your child to attend; try to serve as a chaperone yourself as often as possible. Let your children know that their friends are welcome in your home.