

Church of Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima

Rev. Robert Grippo, Pastor

Parish Religious Education Program

Family Handbook

August, 2018

Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima Religious Education Program
470 Westchester Ave
Crestwood, NY 10707

mary.rose@annunciation-fatima.com

Religious Education Program Personnel

Can be reached at 914-779-2374

The Religious Education Office is in Annunciation School building across from the Main Office.

Director of Religious Education : Mary Rose
Religious Education Assistant : Laurie Polchinski
Coordinator of Special Needs Program : Doreen Napolitano

Parish Personnel

Can be reached at 914-779-7345

Parish offices are in the rectory directly across the street from Annunciation Church.

Director of Music and Choir : Jennifer Cardoni
Parish Office Manager : Anna Caruso
Parish Finance Manager : Mary Fuschetto

Table of Contents

Purpose and Overview of Parish Religious Education Program	Pages 5-8
Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines Pre-School and Kindergarten Religious Education or Catechesis or the Good Shepherd Family Catechesis Religious Education for Children with Special Needs Preparation for the Reception of the Sacraments Responsibilities of Parents in regard to the Religious Education Program Responsibilities of the Child Enrolled in the Parish Religious Education Program	
Registration and Placement	Pages 9-10
Registration Procedure Child's Placement in the Program Sessions Repetition Transfer to Another Program	
Arrival, Lateness and Absences	Pages 11-12
Arrival Walkers Lateness Absences Notification Procedure for Absence	
Dismissal	Pages 12-13
General Dismissal Early Dismissal of the Program Dismissal of an Individual before the End of the Day's Session	
Communication with Parents	Pages 14-15
Emergency Cancellations of Program Written Communications to Parents Rights of Non-Custodial Parent Parent Visits to Religious Education Program Individual Meetings with Catechists Invitation to Parents to Use Online Enrichment Materials for Families Social Networking Sites and Your Child's Protection	

Continued next page

Table of Contents continued

Religious Education and the Parent's Involvement

Pages 16-17

Homework
Prayer at Home with Your Child
Pray with Your Child in the Parish Community
Textbook
Assessment
Progress Reports
Permanent Record Card

Behavior Management

Pages 18-20

Dress Code
Cell Phones
Snacks
Lost Valuables
Unacceptable Behavior
Vandalism
Bullying and Cyber-Bullying

Medication and Medical Emergency

Page 21

Medication
Medical Condition of Child
Medical Emergency Information

Safe Environment

Page 22

Archdiocesan Children Protection Policy
Safe Environment Training and Possibility for Parent Opt-Out

Purpose and Overview of Parish Religious Education Program

The child experiences Catholic life in the home and in the parish, learning from the experiences of these two environments how to live as a faithful Catholic person.

Those who give life to the child¹ - the parents - bring the child through Baptism to Life in the Kingdom of God and continually nurture that life. Parents² teach their children the faith by what they say and do, by how they live, by placing Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of their family life. The witness of Christian life given by parents in the intimacy of family relationships is irreplaceable. Through it, children perceive and joyously live in the closeness of God in Jesus made tangible to them by their own parents' love and goodness.

The purpose of the Parish Religious Education Program is to assist parents in that sacred responsibility entrusted to them at their child's Baptism: to form and educate their children in the Catholic faith. But the effectiveness of the Religious Education Program depends radically upon the child's growth and development in the Catholic faith at home.

The six fundamental tasks of Catechesis³ which are entrusted to the Religious Education Program by the Catholic Church are:

- to promote the knowledge of the faith
- to give moral formation,
- to provide liturgical education,
- to teach to pray,
- to educate for community life.
- to initiate into the missionary dimension.

The role of the Director⁴ of Religious Education and the Catechists is to provide intellectual enlightenment about the Catholic life which the child is already living, and to foster the child's faith development by accomplishing the "Fundamental Tasks" in an age-appropriate way

An integral part of both a true Catholic home life and of the Religious Education Program is the child's attendance at Mass every Sunday and on the Holy Days of Obligation⁵. A primary responsibility of every Catholic parent is to attend Mass weekly with the child. The Religious Education Program helps the child to understand ever more deeply the meaning of the Mass which the family regularly attends.

¹For the sake of brevity, the word "child" will be used to indicate children and youth up to 8th grade.

²For the sake of brevity, the word "parent" will be used to indicate the child's primary caretaker, whether parent or guardian.

³ Catechesis is a Greek word used by Christians from the earliest centuries of the Church. It means Religious Instruction and Formation in the faith.

⁴ For the sake of brevity, the title "Director" will be used to indicate both the Director and the Coordinator of Religious Education.

⁵ There are 6 Holy Days of Obligation (days when, in addition to Sunday, Catholics are required to attend Mass):

Dec. 8 – the Immaculate Conception

40 days after Easter – the Ascension

Dec. 25 – Christmas

Aug. 15 – the Assumption

Jan. 1 – Mary the Mother of God

Nov. 1 – All Saints Day

The Religious Education Program: a Seven-Year, Sequential Program

The essential Religious Education program is a seven-year sequence of formation beginning with grade level 1 and continuing through grade level 7. All Catholic children of the parish who are not attending Catholic schools are expected to follow this 7-year program.

The Religious Education Program consists in a minimum of 30 sessions, 90 minutes long, held between September and May.

The Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines

The *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis for Grades 1 through 6 and Grades 7 and 8* ensure a uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level and outline the content of the catechesis each child is taught at every grade. The Guidelines for every grade level are available on the parish website, www.annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education .

Family Catechesis

Each family in the Religious Education Program must participate in a minimum of five hours of family catechesis offered between September and August.

At the parish of Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima, the following Family Catechesis programs are offered:

- 1) Family Advent Program – during the season of Advent
- 2) Christmas Program -- December
- 3) Family Lenten Program – during the season of Lent
- 4) Family Mass and Children's Liturgy – offered between September and June at 10am Sunday Mass

Additionally, there are special Catechesis programs for those families with children who will be receiving either First Reconciliation/First Communion or Confirmation.

Religious Education for Children with Special Needs

Some children require an individualized program of instruction in a small group or a one-on-one setting or as part of the regular Religious Education session but with a personal assistant. In consultation with the parent, the Director will design an approach to Religious Education that addresses every child's needs.

Our parish provides classes for children with special needs on either Tuesdays or Thursdays at the Pope Francis Mercy Center, next to Our Lady of Fatima Church. Please contact Doreen Napolitano, the coordinator of this program, at Doreen.napolitano@annunciation-fatima.com if you wish to explore this option for your child.

Preparation for the Reception of the Sacraments

Preparation for the reception of the Sacraments – first reception of the Eucharist, of Penance (Reconciliation) and of Confirmation – is an integral part of the 7-year program. The child's primary preparation for the reception of the Sacraments is done throughout the consistent seven-year religious education, including home study between the sixth and seventh year.

In order to receive the Sacrament of Penance and First Communion, the child must complete the first and second year of the Religious Education Program.

Confirmation is received after the completion of the seven year curriculum and the child must have fulfilled all grade level requirements in order to receive it.

However, for each sacrament, the parish program provides an immediate preparation for the sacrament which has a strong family/parent dimension and which helps the children prepare themselves spiritually for the Sacrament. This immediate preparation is required to receive the sacrament and it is done in sessions separate from, and in addition to, the regular Religious Education program.

The immediate preparation program for each sacrament consists of:

- A parent evening session particular to the sacrament being received,
- A special parent/child session centered on the sacrament being received,
- A special Sunday Mass for the families of those students receiving a sacrament
- One or two scheduled practices for the reception of the Sacrament.

The preparation for Confirmation also includes 10 hours of service to the parish or community and required at-home study during the summer between the 6th and 7th year.

The parents of a child preparing to receive Penance, First Communion, and Confirmation must attend the required parent meetings as listed in the calendar. See the Religious Education program calendar for the dates.

Preparation for Sacraments for Children who are Older or Who Have Special Needs

The parish also offers sacramental preparation for children who come into the program later than the second grade level and for children with special needs. Sacramental readiness must be assessed and demonstrated before a child can receive a sacrament and may require a longer preparation time.

The parent should call the Religious Education office for more information and to register.

The times of year for Reception of the Sacraments

The sacrament of Penance is received in February.

First Communions take place in May.

Confirmation is received in the spring of 7th grade.

Responsibilities of Parents in regard to the Religious Education Program

Parents have the primary and sacred responsibility to form their children in the Catholic faith and do so in the following ways: .

- teaching their child to live a moral life according to the values and teachings of Jesus Christ and the teachings, laws and norms of the Catholic Church. The primary way parents teach this is by living it themselves;
- attending Mass each Sunday with their children, thus instilling in them the conviction that weekly Mass attendance is essential to being a Catholic;
- participating fully with their child in the parent preparation for the first reception of Penance, for First Communion, and for Confirmation.
- ensuring that their child receives the Sacrament of Penance at least 2 times a year;
- preparing your child for participation in Religious Education each week by ensuring a timely arrival for the sessions and by fostering an openness and positive attitude toward the religious education the child will be receiving;
- fulfilling all the requirements outlined in the Parent Handbook;
- ensuring that their child fulfills his/her role in the Religious Education Program as outlined in the Parent Handbook;
- participating in their child's faith formation by making use of the parent and family textbook, online materials and the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis*;
- reviewing and praying at home the prayers to be memorized;
- assisting their child with homework as needed.

Responsibilities of the Child enrolled in the Parish Religious Education Program

The obligations of children enrolled in the Program are:

- living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus Christ;
- participating in the Parish Mass each Sunday;
- receiving the Sacrament of Penance at least 2 times a year;
- following the laws, norms and guidelines of the Church;
- attending the weekly Religious Education Sessions;
- being well-prepared for each Religious Education session by arriving on time and with all completing homework assignments satisfactorily;
- memorizing all required prayers;
- participating in class discussions and activities;
- behaving in the sessions with attentiveness and respect;
- performing satisfactorily on assessments and tests.
- fulfilling all requirements of the Religious Education Program including appropriate dress.

Registration and Placement

The Parish Religious Education program offers Catechesis to all children who attend non-Catholic schools and whose families are enrolled in the parish as parishioners. When space allows, the Director will try to also accommodate in the program children whose families are not able to become members of the parish.

There is no discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, disability conditions, family background and situation.

Registration Procedure

Every child must be registered for the Religious Education program every year. The Registration procedure is as follows:

- Register child for Religious Education Program starting in August and prior to the first class in September
- Complete and sign all registration forms as posted on www.annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education and submit them to Director of Religious Education
- If child is new to the program, a copy of the Baptismal Certificate must be provided.
- Speak with the Director about any accommodations that your child needs which will affect his learning and well-being in the Religious Education sessions.
- Refer to the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis* for your child's grade level. so that you will know the essential content begin taught to your child in the current year. This is available at www.annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education.
- Arrange with the Director of Religious Education the payment of the tuition according to the parish tuition chart and schedule and the needs of the family.

Religious Education Program Fees:

1 child	\$225 registration fee plus \$300 annual contribution to the parish
2 children	\$310 registration fee plus \$300 annual contribution to the parish
3 or more	\$375 registration fee plus \$300 annual contribution to the parish.

Additional Sacramental Fees: \$100 for First Communion, \$150 for Confirmation.

Registration fee due at time of registration application. Annual parish contribution (either sum of weekly envelope donation (Sept-July) or one-time payment) due by August 1, 2019. Sacramental fees due in March.

On-line payment at www.annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education/fee-payments

If a registration is cancelled and/or child attends fewer than 3 sessions and then withdraws, tuition will be refunded in full via check to the registrant.

No child will be refused admission to the Religious Education program because of inability to pay tuition. Parents for whom tuition would cause a severe financial burden should contact the Director for a reduction or a waiver. If a family cannot pay the tuition in full at registration a payment plan is drawn up by the Director and the Parent. This plan may include payment in the form of a specific service given to the parish.

Child's Placement in Religious Education Sessions

The final decision for each child's placement in the Religious Education Program sessions is made by the Director of Religious Education.

For any child who requires accommodations, the Director or Coordinator for the Special Needs Program in consultation with the parent will determine a program of religious education to effectively address these needs.

Any child who leaves the Religious Education Program and subsequently returns (e.g. after receiving First Communion) will, upon re-entering the program, be required to complete the curriculum of the grade levels missed using an assessment based on the *Archdiocese Curriculum Guidelines*.

When a child who is in third grade or older and has not had formal religious education, the Director will determine the most appropriate and effective way for the child to be taught the content of the faith, using the *Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines* as the norm.

Repetition

Repetition means that the child must repeat the grade level or the year's curriculum. Great care should be taken in the home as well as in the program to help the child realize that repetition is not a punishment but rather a means to help the child be as successful as possible.

The grounds for repetition are as follows:

1. Excessive absence: 5 or more absences are grounds for repetition.
2. Poor performance: if your child does poorly when assessed on the content of the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis*, remedial work will be required and organized by the Director. If the remedial work is not sufficient in enabling the child to grasp the content, repetition may be the best solution.
3. Excessive lateness: 6 or more late arrivals are grounds for repetition.

Transfer to Another Program

When a parent must withdraw a child from the program, the parent should immediately inform the Director. The Director will send a copy of the child's permanent record card to the Religious Education Program to which the child is transferring.

Arrival, Lateness and Absences

Parents assume full responsibility for the transportation of their children to and from the parish site where Religious Education sessions take place.

Arrival

The Religious Education Sessions take place at the following times:

Grades 1-5: Wednesdays from 3:30-5PM

Grades 6-7: Wednesdays from 7-8:30PM

Special Needs sessions are either Tuesday or Thursday afternoon and are individually scheduled by the Program Coordinator and the parents.

Supervision of the children on Wednesday afternoons will be provided beginning at 3:15PM. No child should be on the school premises without an adult with them before this time. Supervision for evening sessions will be provided beginning at 6:45PM.

On arriving for Wednesday afternoon Religious Education, the parent brings the child directly to the Annunciation Gym and the child's assigned table. Please do not leave until your child's catechist or catechist aide arrives.

On arriving for Wednesday evening Religious Education, parents may drop their children at the Main Entrance to Annunciation School on Westchester Avenue. Please do not leave until your child has been let into the building by an adult.

For students attending the Special Needs Program, a parent or adult must remain on the premises of the Pope Francis Mercy Center during the religious education session.

Walkers

If a child's parent has specified in a written notice to the Director that the child will arrive or leave the session unaccompanied by an adult, the child must report to the Catechist immediately upon arrival. Upon dismissal, the child must leave the premises immediately.

Lateness

If the child arrives after 3:40PM, he/she reports to the Religious Education office using the Westchester Avenue main entrance. From there, they will be brought to the session.

Punctuality is essential. Children who arrive late not only miss important information but also disrupt the entire Religious Education session. The child should arrive on time. If the child arrives late more than 6 times in the year, this can result in repeating the year. These make-up sessions will be determined by the Director.

Absences

Your child's regular attendance at Religious Education is very important to his/her whole life. These sessions should take priority over all other after school programs and activities.

- Three unexcused absences will result in the child having to make up the sessions. The number of make-up sessions will be determined by the Director and will be based on the number necessary for the child to be adequately taught the Archdiocesan Guidelines for his/her grade level.
- Five or more absences may result in the repetition of the grade level or attendance at make-up sessions.

In the case of a long-term illness confirmed by a doctor's report or family hardship, the Director and parent should make arrangements for religious education at home.

Notification Procedure for Absence

When a child is to be absent from a program session, the parent must give the Director advance written notification. If this is impossible, notification must be given to the Religious Education office by phone, email or text message before the Religious Education Program session begins.

If your child is absent and the Director has not received previous notification, the Director will alert you by a telephone call as soon as attendance is taken. If you cannot be reached by phone, an email and text message will be sent to you. If you do not respond immediately, the Director will call the person designated on the *Child Information Record* which you submitted at Registration.

Dismissal

General Dismissal

At the end of the Religious Education session every child is released to the care of its parent or parent substitute. The parent substitute must be the person designated in writing at registration. If someone other than the parent or parent substitute is to pick up the child on a given day, this change must be given in writing to the Director prior to the session in question.

- A child will not be released to anyone under age 18.
- A child will not be released to someone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Staff of the Religious Education Program are not allowed to drive children home.
- The Director should be informed in writing 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 to the child's release from the program. A copy of the appropriate section of the custody papers should be attached to the written statement.

At the end of the Wednesday afternoon sessions, the children return to the Annunciation Gym and their assigned tables. Parent or parent substitute should notify the catechist or the supervising adult that they are taking the child.

At the end of the evening sessions, the children will wait outside the Westchester Avenue entrance to the school. Parents may drive up and pick up their children. Each child should notify the supervising adult that he/she is leaving and with whom. Children should NOT be picked up on St. Eleanora's unless the parent parks and picks up in person.

No child may remain on the parish premises after the Religious Education Program ends because supervision is not provided. The parent must instruct the child to report to the Director in the unforeseen event of not being picked up on time.

Early Dismissal of the Program

The Religious Education Program will not have an early dismissal unless it is necessitated by an emergency. Parents will be notified of the emergency closure of the program using Flocknote e-mails or text messages.

Depending on the emergency situation, the children will be taken either to the Annunciation Gym or Annunciation Church property for dismissal.

Dismissal of an Individual before the End of the Day's Session

If your child needs to be dismissed early, the request for this early dismissal should be given to the Director in writing by the parent prior to the scheduled session. This request should include:

- the name of the person picking up the child,
- the designated date and time,
- the reason,
- the signature of the parent.

The Parent must come to the Religious Education office to pick up and sign out the child. The Director or appropriate adult will go to the session and walk the child to meet the parent. The Parent may not go directly to the session area.

Communication with Parents

Emergency Cancellations of Program

Emergency cancellations due to forecasted weather or building accessibility issues will be announced using Flocknote e-mail or text. E-mail notifications may also be used.

The Religious Education program follows the weather guidance from Yonkers Public Schools. Therefore, if Yonkers public schools are closed, the Religious Education program is cancelled. Also, if Yonkers public schools cancels after-school activities, the Religious Education program is also cancelled for that day.

If parents have questions about whether Religious Education is cancelled or not, they should e-mail mary.rose@annunciation-fatima.com.

Parents should have in place an emergency plan for those times when Religious Education must be cancelled due to weather or other unforeseen circumstance.

Postponements and Rescheduled Events

Parents are notified of the cancellation of other Religious Education events via Flocknote.

Written Communication to Parents

General written communication is distributed via Flocknote or e-mail. The parish website (www.annunciation-fatima.com/religious-education) is the source for all program documentation and instruction.

All individual communications to parents will come from the Director and be emailed or mailed unless they can be handed via conversation or phone call between the parent and a program staff member.

Rights of Non-Custodial Parent

The Director should be informed in writing by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent to receive duplicate sets of progress reports, invitations to religious education events, notices, calendars, etc. as these pertain to the child's participation in the program. A copy of the appropriate section of the custody papers should be attached to the written statement.

Visits to Religious Education Program

Unauthorized persons are NOT allowed beyond the gym or main hallway of Annunciation School when Wednesday Religious Education sessions are taking place. Parents may be in the Religious Education office while Religious Education session if a program staff member accompanies them.

Individual Meetings with Catechists

All meetings between parent and Catechist regarding the faith formation or behavior of a child must be approved and arranged by the Director prior to the meeting.

A Catechist may be allowed to keep a child after the program session for reasons such as additional instruction, misbehavior, excessive absence or lateness but this can only take place with the permission of the parent and it must be organized by the Director.

Invitation to Parents to Use Online Enrichment Materials for Families

The book publishers offer online enrichment materials that families are encouraged to explore.

For children in Grades 1-5: <https://religion.sadlierconnect.com/wbcid> Select “We Believe Catholic Identity” for your child’s grade level

For children in Grades 6 and 7: <https://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/series/6> Select by topic under “Catholic Connections for Middle School Students”.

For children in our Special Needs program: <https://www.loyolapress.com/faith-formation/finding-god/finding-god-2013/parents-and-students>

Social Networking Sites and Your Child’s Protection

Regarding the use of Social Networking Sites and all other electronic communication, the parish Religious Education Program follows the directives published by the Archdiocesan Safe-Environment Office (Nyfaithformation.org – Safe Environment Resources – Facebook and Child Protection). These include the following:

- There may be no private direct communication with a minor. All communications must be through parents.
- There may be no photographs or videos of minors posted without the written permission of the parent.
- There may be no photographs or videos posted of Religious Education personnel posted without the individual’s written permission.
- With regard to a group photo or video, written permission for the child or Catechist must be given.
- There may be no contact information, or other personal information, of a minor or of Religious Education personnel posted without the written permission of the parent or Catechist/Director..

The written permission for all the above must be given directly to the Religious Education Director.

Religious Education and the Parent's Involvement

Homework

Homework reinforces learning and provides opportunities for independent study and creative thinking. It is an effective way for the child to internalize the religious education he/she has received so that it becomes "faith formation". Parents can help their children by arranging a quiet, comfortable place for them to complete the homework and by encouraging and helping the child as needed.

Parents are strongly urged to participate in the online parent dimension of the child's religious formation which is provided by the textbook company and follows the child's lessons.

Prayer at Home with Your Child

Parents are the primary educators in the faith for their children and one of the most important ways parents fulfill this essential responsibility is by praying with their children every day and in this way teaching them to pray. Some of the prayer practices that are done in the Catholic home are:

- +grace before meals,
- +prayers at the child's bedtime,
- +blessing the child in the morning before he/she leaves for school by tracing the cross on the forehead and saying with the child the prayer to his/her guardian angel,
- +saying the family rosary together regularly,
- +having pictures and statues of Jesus and Mary in the home and gathering around them for prayer,
- +having a family bible in a place of honor and reading a passage or story from it regularly,
- +reciting with the child the traditional Catholic prayers which he/she is learning in Religious Education,

Prayer with Your Child in the Parish Community

Weekly attendance at Mass together as a family is one of the most powerful and essential ways that the parent fulfills his/her responsibility to form their children in the faith. In fact, it is so essential that a family or a person is not really a practicing Catholic if they do not go to Mass every Sunday.

The children learn to live as a Catholic above all by experiencing their parents living as Catholics. This must also include regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance. The Religious Education Program explains to the children the meaning of the Catholic life of faith that they are living at home and experiencing in the parish community.

Throughout the school year, our parish has a special Children's Liturgy during the 10AM Mass at Annunciation Church. Children between the ages of 4-8 are invited downstairs during Mass to hear a children's version of the reading and participate in a relevant craft. Please check the bulletin at www.annunciation-fatima.com to see the latest schedule.

Textbook

Every student receives a textbook during the first class. It is expected that students bring their textbooks to class every week. In addition, 2nd and 7th grade students receive special sacrament preparation texts that they should bring to class as directed by their catechist.

Assessment

Each child is expected to master the contents of the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis* at the grade level in which he/she is enrolled. Children will be assessed regularly with written tests and oral exercises. These assessments will be based on the textbook lessons and on the *Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines*.

It is important to assess the faith formation taking place in the child and to offer feedback to you, the parent, in order to facilitate further growth. Please be aware that the child's faith, love for the Lord, and commitment to the Church is not being assessed in the testing program. What is being assessed is the child's grasp of the knowledge that has been taught in the Religious Education Program..

If a child does not do satisfactorily reflect understanding of the basic faith formation concepts, a meeting will be arranged with parents, the Catechist and the Director in order to come to a better understanding of the child. A remedial plan will be developed and once it has been followed, the child will be evaluated again.

The Director will decide, in consultation with the parents, if a child needs to repeat a year.

Progress Reports

Religious formation of the child takes place in the home, at the celebration of Mass and other Sacraments, in parish gatherings, and in the Religious Education setting. Progress reports only reflect the child performance in religious education. The progress report assesses the child's attendance, behavior and attitude, participation in the sessions, homework and memorization, and evaluation of the child's grasp of the content taught.

Catechists prepare a progress report for each child in their session twice yearly: in January and in May. These reports are distributed directly to the parents in early February and mailed home in June.

Permanent Record Card

A *Permanent Record Card* is kept in the Religious Education file for each child. It records the child's successful completion of each grade level. If a child must transfer to another religious education program, a copy of this *Permanent Record Card* is sent to the Director of the new program.

Behavior Management

Catechists use behavior management (or “discipline”) appropriate to an educational environment as a necessary means for the Religious Education Program to accomplish its goals. The purpose of behavior management is to help the children develop self-control, self-respect, respect for others, and reverence for the Word of God which is being explained to them in these sessions.

Discipline includes positive reinforcement to shape acceptable behavior and redirection. Consequences may be employed to stop unacceptable behavior. Consequences include actions such as pausing in class proceedings to focus on and rectify an individual child’s inappropriate behavior, changing a child’s place in the room, assigning a written reflection on the problem behavior, telling the child their parent will be called after the class, and/or sending the child to see the Director.

Several infractions of rules of conduct or persistent disrespect will result in a call by the Director to the child’s parent in which the Director will describe the situation and work out a solution with the parent. If the infractions continue, the Director will organize a conference with the Parent, the Catechist, the Director and the Pastor. In some cases, a program of home study may be the only alternative to a difficult situation.

Dress Code

Children are required to wear appropriate clothing reflecting the dignity of the faith formation in which they are participating.

Examples of unacceptable clothing include but is not limited to:

1. Revealing garments such as tube or halter tops and short shirts or dresses.
2. Exposed undergarments.
3. Unsafe footwear such as flip-flops, excessively high heels, roller shoes and laced shoes that are unlaced.
4. Clothing promoting values or products that are inconsistent with Christian living.

The exercise of good taste and proper, reasonable judgment on the part of the parent in overseeing the child’s choice of clothing, in itself, provides effective formation for the child.

With the approval of the Pastor, the Director has the final authority to determine the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the clothing worn. If a child violates the policy, the child is removed from the session and the parents are immediately called. The parents must bring alternative clothes for the child to change into so that he/she may return to the Religious Education session.

Cell Phones

The use of cell phones and other electronic devices by the child is not permitted during the Religious Education session, unless this is directed by the Catechist as part of the educational process. Cell phones brought into the place of the Religious Education session must be turned off and kept in the child's backpack. Children in need of contacting a parent must ask the Catechist's permission to go to the Religious Education Office to place the call.

Snacks

Upon arrival in the gym, children have time for a snack prior to the start of the Religious Education session. However, the Religious Education Program is a nut-free environment so parents are asked to not send any snacks that have nuts.

No food or liquids are allowed in the classrooms. Catechists will bring students to the gym if they are providing food.

Lost Valuables

All clothing, money, jewelry or other articles that are found should be turned in to the Religious Education Office and can be claimed there. Children should not bring valuables to the program and the program personnel cannot be responsible if these are lost.

Unacceptable Behavior

The following types of behavior are not allowed during the Religious Education Program.

Infractions which call for Discipline by the Catechist

- ÿ Acting in a disrespectful manner toward the Catechist, other adults or children in the program
- ÿ Speaking and interacting with other children inappropriately instead of being involved in the session
- ÿ Leaving a classroom without permission
- ÿ Using a cell phone during the session when not authorized by Catechist
- ÿ Doing something other than the work of the session
- ÿ Violating the dress code
- ÿ Eating while classes are in session

Persistence in any of these behaviors after several corrective measures have been taken will place this behavior in the category below.

Infractions which call for immediate action by the Director and Pastor

- ÿ Possession of and /or trafficking alcohol or other drugs
- ÿ Leaving the Religious Education premises when child is supposed to be attending the session

- ÿ Willful defiance of authority
- ÿ Possession of weapons, such as knives, guns, or look-alikes
- ÿ Physical assault/fighting
- ÿ Extortion
- ÿ Arson
- ÿ Vandalism
- ÿ Theft
- ÿ Cheating
- ÿ Intimidating fellow students
- ÿ Abusive/vulgar language
- ÿ Harassment
- ÿ Defacing or damaging of parish property
- ÿ Threatening bodily harm
- ÿ Bullying/Cyber-bullying

Vandalism

Willfully damaging or destroying property (personal or parish) will not be tolerated. Vandalism must be paid for by the parent of the child who did it. Accidental damage should be immediately reported to the Director.

Bullying and Cyber-bullying

The Archdiocesan policy against bullying is followed. This policy states:

'A safe and civil environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve Christian values; harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying (using technology to bully such as but not limited to: posting an inappropriate pictures of a student on the Internet) and other violent behaviors will not be tolerated in a religious education program environment. Any student who engages in this behavior may be asked to leave the religious education environment if this is seen to be in the best interest of the rest of the religious education community. Bullying includes but is not limited to: threatening physical harm, verbal abuse, intimidation, cyber-bullying.

Medication and Medical Emergency

Medication

No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) will be administered to, or taken by any child during the Religious Education Program.

In the event that a child has a condition for which emergency medication may be necessary, the parent must provide a written request and directives to the Religious Education Director when the child is registered for the program.

Any emergency medication/medical device to be administered during the program according to the above directives must be brought by the parent to the Religious Education Office and ideally is administered there.

Medical Condition of Child

The parent should inform the Director about any child who has special medication needs, a medical condition which could flare up in the session, or a medical condition which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. allergies, asthma, auditory or visual impairment, possibility of seizures, learning disability, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, need for the epi-pen). This information is strictly confidential and will be used with the utmost discretion. The Director will insure that the Catechist is informed.

A course of action in case of a flare up is determined by the parent at the time of registration and put in writing. The Director and Catechist will follow these written instructions.

Completed program registration forms contain the names and contact information for the people who must be contacted in case of emergency.

Medical Emergency Information

In the case of any medical emergency, 911 will immediately be called without exception.

A *Child Information Record* along with appropriate Medical Forms is filled out by the parent and kept on file in the Parish Religious Education Office. The parent must be careful to keep the information in these forms current. Any changes to the forms are made in writing and signed by the parent.

Safe Environment

Archdiocesan Children Protection Policy

The Archdiocese of New York and the parish of Annunciation-Our Lady of Fatima are committed to ensuring the personal safety of all children in the Religious Education Program. Therefore the parish and its Religious Education Program follow all the policies, directives and requirements of the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office. These policies and programs are to be found on the Safe Environment web page which can be accessed through the Archdiocesan web site (Archny.org) and the Catechetical Office web site (nyfaithformation.org)

In compliance with the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office directives, any adult who works with or has contact with the children in the program must first:

1. Complete a volunteer application form with two references
2. Take a three-hour training session entitled *Protecting God's Children*
3. Read the *Child Protection Handbook* and sign the Acknowledgement form.
4. Read the monthly training bulletins.

Assistants to Catechists who are under the age of 18 do not receive this Child Protection training; therefore they must be supervised at all times by an adult who has received the training.

Safe Environment Training and Possibility for Parent Opt-Out

Each year, the Religious Education Program provides to each child the curriculum entitled "Right, Safe and Good Relationships", following the lesson plans provided by the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office. (See Safe Environment Web site: Children's Curriculum.) This training is explained at the annual parent meeting in October and given during March or April. Parents have the option to exempt their child from any session of the Safe Environment Training. If the Parent chooses to do so, they must complete and sign the *Parent Opt-Out Form* which they secure from the Religious Education Office.