

Immaculate Conception & **A**ssumption of Our Lady *Religious Education Program*

Parent-Student Handbook 2015-2016

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Dear Parents,

*Parents... this child of yours has been enlightened by Christ.
He/she is to walk always as a child of the light.
May he/she keep the flame of faith alive in his/her heart.*

These words were spoken to you during the Rite of Baptism for your child. The grace of that moment is like a well that can be tapped for comfort, peace, joy and encouragement. God has claimed us in Baptism to be his son/daughter – and He will never take that away: it is an indelible mark on our souls.

Our journey together in religious education and formation helps us learn about the well of grace and mercy available to us. You form your children every day in the faith as they see you putting faith in action: grace at meals, forgiving them and each other, thanking God for the joys in life, turning to Him in the sorrows... The parish of Immaculate Conception & Assumption of Our Lady joyfully takes on the task of helping you in this primary responsibility of forming your children in the faith.

Thank you for entrusting your precious treasures – your children – to us and allowing us to be a partner with you. We consider this a sacred trust and promise you to listen and work with you throughout this year. Please know that our doors are always open should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Anthony Domenic Sorgie, Pastor
Miss Katy Feeney, Director of Religious Education

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Living a Christian Life

Living a Catholic life is not accomplished by simply attending Mass or Religious Education classes. It is a lifestyle that is to be witnessed everyday by what we say and what we do at home, at work, at school and at play.

Mass Attendance

An integral part of our Religious Education Program is that the children are expected to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation¹ and participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church. Learning in class can be truly effective only when one meets the Lord sacramentally at the altar.

The Role of the Parent

The parent has the primary and sacred responsibility to educate his/her children in the Catholic faith. The Immaculate Conception - Assumption of Our Lady Religious Education Program is established to assist parents and families in fulfilling this responsibility.

It is essential to the child's growth and development in the Catholic faith that the parents live the life of faith at home; the effectiveness of the religious education process radically depends upon this. The child learns in the religious education classes that celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday in the local parish as a community of faith is essential to being a Catholic. Therefore, the child is expected to attend the weekly Sunday or Saturday evening liturgy supported by his/her parents.

It is obvious that the values of parents become the values of the child. The child receives a "mixed message" which causes inner conflict when what is taught in Religious Education classes is not experienced by the child in his/her family.

The Director should be informed by the custodial parent and 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. When the word "parent" is used in this document, it also includes anyone who may act as a child's guardian, whether grandparent, aunt, uncle, godparent, etc.

The Role of the Child

Regular attendance at Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation, regular participation in the Rite of Reconciliation (when properly prepared), and living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus Christ all contribute to one's spirituality. The religious obligations of children enrolled in the program include:

- Participation in the Eucharistic Celebration of the Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (there are six in the Archdiocese of New York);
 1. Mary the Mother of God (January 1)
 2. Ascension (40 days after Easter, this year celebrated on May 5, 2016)
 3. Assumption (August 15)
 4. All Saints (November 1)
 5. Immaculate Conception (December 8),
 6. Christmas (December 25).
- Experiencing the Lord's forgiveness by receiving the Sacrament of Penance frequently, at least three or four times a year;
- Leading a sacramental life, frequently receiving the Eucharist and following the laws, norms and guidelines that tell Catholics how to love God and neighbor (i.e., The Ten Commandments, Corporal Works of Mercy, The Beatitudes, Spiritual Works of Mercy and the Laws of the Church.)

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

- Weekly attendance at Religious Education classes;
- Proper preparation for class instruction ... Bring textbook, pencil or notebook to class; • Completion of homework;
- 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.

The Role of the Religious Education Director

The Director of the Religious Education Program of Immaculate Conception - Assumption of Our Lady 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 children in accordance with the Archdiocesan Safety Guidelines.
- Provide catechesis (i.e. religious education) for all children of the parish including those who have physical, emotional, mental or learning 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 four-fold activities of message, community, worship and service. The tasks of the catechist are: to help individuals grow in their personal faith and spirituality; to assist individuals 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 AND REGISTRATION

The parish-based Religious Education Program offers instruction to children who attend public or private (non-parochial) school whose families are enrolled parishioners at Immaculate Conception - Assumption of Our Lady Parish. An eight year sequence of formation is offered; all Catholic children of the parish are expected to participate. The Religious Education Program is not a convenience for the reception of the sacraments of Confirmation, Reconciliation and Eucharist. It is an ongoing, continuing development of the Christian personality that offers an opportunity for catechists and children to meet regularly in order to learn about the Catholic Christian faith. Sacraments are not isolated events, but an integral part of the Christian life. Each level/grade in Religious Education adds to the development of the Christian life. Our aim is to provide a loving and caring Christian atmosphere in which our parish youth can grow in sound Christ like attitudes and values.

Special Religious Education is a ministry that responds to the religious and spiritual needs of persons with a physical, mental, or emotional disability which impairs their functioning in a regular classroom. Because of that disability, the child may require individualized instruction in a small group, in a one-on-one setting, or, if assistance is available, may be mainstreamed into the regular catechetical program. In consultation with the parent, the Director will appropriately place each child in a program that will address his/her special needs and encourage further spiritual growth.

Registration for the Religious Education Program takes place each spring for classes that begin the following

September; registration does not carry over from one year to the next so families must reregister their children each year. All children 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.

Registration procedure for children presently attending classes:

- Completion of a Religious Education family registration form listing each child you desire to enroll in the program;
- Completion of student information record (medical emergency) for each child enrolled in the program (this may be done on the first day of class);
- Completion of a "Volunteer Form";
- Payment of the registration/tuition fee; speak with the Director if you have questions concerning the fee or payment of it.

Registration procedure for children new to the program:

- Complete steps 1-4 outlined above.
- Submit original Baptismal certificate and First Communion certificate.
- Any previous records (e.g., latest progress report) if the child attended a Religious Education Program in a different parish or diocese.

Tuition & Other Costs

For the 2015-2016 catechetical year, the basic tuition for one child is \$285; for more than one child, the tuition is \$395. A late fee of \$50 will be added to returning registrations submitted after the regular registration deadline.

The tuition fees are used for salaries, subscriptions to periodicals, the purchase of books and pamphlets, classroom and craft supplies, professional enrichment of the director and the catechists, computer and copier expenses, etc. Having these resources at our disposal contributes to the quality of the program. The balance of the ongoing Religious Education budget, not covered by tuition, is subsidized by the parish and through various fundraisers.

Class Placement

Parish Religious Education Programs are preparation for life. Children are expected to attend Religious Education classes continuously from Grade 1-8. In almost all cases, children 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.

A parent/guardian who would like to enroll an older child 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 child to eventually prepare to receive one or more of the sacraments.

Any child 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 child is determined by the Director after consultation with the pastor and the parent.

Transfer/Early Withdrawal

If a child leaves the program before the completion of the catechetical year or at the end of the catechetical year, please advise the Director. Tuition will be reimbursed; however, \$25.00 will be withheld for administrative purposes.

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. Full initiation into the Church occurs in stages.

Sacramental catechesis has traditionally been of two kinds: preparation for the initial celebration of the sacraments and continued enrichment following their first reception.

First Penance/Reconciliation

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 Immaculate Conception - Assumption of Our Lady 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.

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). The sacrament of God's love and forgiveness continues his work of forgiving and reconciling. Catechesis of children 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 child's life;
- help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrong doing, and turn to Jesus and the Church for forgiveness.
- encourage the child to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving;
- encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.

The first reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is usually celebrated in January/February. All children preparing to receive their First Eucharist must first be instructed and prepared to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Preparation of children 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 that helps children learn what it means to share Jesus' gift of Himself, to know they are forgiven, and understand that they belong to the community of Jesus' friends – the Church.

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

- serve as models for their children by being moral Christians;
- receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with their families;
- help children 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 child prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation;

- take time with their child to talk about reconciliation, to read Bible stories and to pray together;
- determine their child's readiness for Reconciliation.

First Eucharist/Holy Communion

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

Catechesis for children 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. Children 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 children preparing to receive their First Eucharist must have already received the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Communion. Catechesis (instruction) aims to help parents grow in understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and participate readily in catechizing their children.

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 children, 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 children learn that they may receive Holy Communion in the hand, on the tongue and under both species. Catechesis includes making

the children aware of the Church's requirements for fasting (no food or drink except water or medicine for one hour before receiving Communion).

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

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

Confirmation

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 and renews and strengthens their baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and work eagerly for the building up of His Body, the Church.

As the primary educators of their children, parents – along with sponsors – 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 children or godchildren.

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.
- Christian Community Service.

- Sponsor’s Certificate (testimonial).
- Candidate demonstrates an adequate grasp of the content of the Catholic faith.
- Reception of the sacrament of Penance/ Reconciliation (we suggest three times a year).
- Living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus.
- Participation in a Confirmation retreat.

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

- serve as models for their children by being committed Christians;
- worship regularly with their families;
- share their faith with their children both in word and action;
- encourage their child 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 to prepare for and freely request the sacrament of Confirmation;
- assist their child 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 Project is the beginning of a life committed to Christian service.

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDELINES

Archdiocesan Guidelines: Immaculate Conception - Assumption of Our Lady’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 that ensure a clear and uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level. While the Guidelines are not considered a substitute for the textbook, they are of assistance to the catechist in the use of the textbook by identifying the essential content to be taught.

Catechesis

The Religious Education Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their children 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 children.” (*National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States.*)

In addition to enlightening the children of the parish in the doctrines and tenets of our faith, our religious education program welcomes the opportunity to assist parents in teaching their children to walk along the path of faith. Opportunities for adult education are continually offered throughout the Archdiocese, in neighboring parishes as well as at Immaculate Conception - Assumption of Our Lady. The classes for adults provide instruction in Catholic doctrine that helps parents place Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of their lives through liturgical worship (i.e. Sunday liturgy, reception of the sacraments), frequent prayer, and communication of Christian values and attitudes. In so doing, parents make meaningful their professions of belief and nurture faith in their children 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
- Hail Mary
- 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
- Our Father
- Act of Contrition
- Glory to the Father
- 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 child’s understanding of the Church and to help the child 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 children 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 child 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 saving 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)

1. Personal Growth, Part I: The Human Person

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.*

2. Jesus and the Gospel Message: *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.*

3. 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.*

4. Human Sexuality: *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)

1. Personal Growth, Part II: *The Human Community; 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.*

2. Church History: *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.*

3. Morality: *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.*

4. Prayer: *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 CHILDREN” – 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 children and youth, in particular, is a sacred trust. We at Immaculate Conception - Assumption of Our Lady 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 Children and Young People* in an effort to protect children 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 children and youth about sexual abuse and its prevention. In the Archdiocese of New York, lessons on sexual abuse awareness for children in the parish religious education programs and schools will be integrated into the religious education program each year.

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

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

Testing

Since there is formal testing at each grade level, it is expected that a certain amount of knowledge will be retained by each child who enrolls in the program. Children are expected to review lessons at home on a regular basis every week. Children will be tested regularly, with written and/or oral tests.

If a child does not fulfill grade level requirements, 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 child needs to repeat the year.

Progress Reports

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

Retention

Children 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 children enrolled in class sessions for Grades 1-8. Textbooks are distributed by the catechist to the children on the first day of classes. Students in Grade 5 are also given a Bible. This Bible will be used in 5th through 8th grades. Textbooks are to be brought home and back to class weekly. If a textbook (or bible) 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 children by arranging a quiet, comfortable place for their children 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 child'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 child 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. Always call the Religious Education Office when your child will be absent from class.

Arrival Procedure

DAY	TIME	GRADE
Tuesday	4:15 – 5:15 PM	Grade 1
	7:15 – 8:30 PM	Grade 6
Wednesday	4:15 – 5:30 PM	Grades 3 and 5
	7:15 – 8:30 PM	Grade 8
Thursday	4:15 – 5:30 PM	Grades 2 and 4
	7:15 – 8:30 PM	Grade 7

- Punctuality is very important, both for the children and the catechist.
- Children should enter the school building by way of the cafeteria.
- All grades congregate in the cafeteria.
- Catechists escort the students to the classrooms.
- Children should arrive at the building for classes no earlier than fifteen (15) minutes before class is scheduled to begin; we cannot provide supervision prior to that time.
- If a child enters the school building for class after 4:15 PM for the afternoon session or 7:15 PM for the evening session, he/she should enter the building by the main doors and see the attendance clerk in the Religious Education Office and sign in before proceeding to the classroom.

Dismissal Procedure

Afternoon Dismissal: All classes will be dismissed from the cafeteria. This will avoid any confusion and safety concerns in the parking lot. Parents will enter through the marked door exit through the other. In inclement weather, parents will be permitted to wait in the hallway.

Evening Dismissal: Parents will pick up their child at the classroom. Please enter and check in at the school main entrance.

- Please arrive on time for dismissal. We are not able to provide supervision after the dismissal time specified on the calendar.
- Before a child will be allowed an early dismissal from the classroom, he/she must be signed out by a responsible adult. This is a necessary step that has been implemented in order to ensure the security and safety of the children.
- Unsupervised children are not permitted on the grounds at any time.
- If it is necessary for an unescorted child 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.
- Children 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 children home.
- PLEASE NOTE: If a child 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.

CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

Every child 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 child is a combination of common courtesy and safety considerations.

Dress Code

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

- No pajama bottoms (or tops) may be worn to class. Also, undergarments are not to be exposed.
- No shoes/sneakers with cleats or rollers (hidden or otherwise) may be worn in the building at any time.
- Extremely brief garments are not permitted. Examples include, but are not limited to, skirts/shorts shorter than mid-thigh, spaghetti strap tops, halter tops and backless shirts.

- Clothing that advocates controlled substances, alcoholic beverages, offensive language and/or offensive illustrations are not permitted.
- Hats or caps may not be worn in the building as well as sweatbands and bandannas.
- Recital attire may not be worn to class.

Electronics Policy

Smart phones, MP3 players, and other electronic devices should not be brought to class. If they are brought to class, they must be turned off. If a student is found using a device during class, the device will be confiscated and held in the office until claimed by the child's parent.

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

Vandalism

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

Behavioral warning

From time to time some children 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 child'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 and distributed to all children and families prior to the first day of class. Dates and times for parent sessions and classes, retreats, and all events for sacramental programs will be published and distributed as they become available.

Letters/ Fliers/ Bulletin Announcement

Letters to parents by email, fliers sent to parents through the children, parish bulletin announcements and a monthly newsletter are our main sources of ongoing communications. Please be sure to read all email, fliers and newsletters and consult the parish bulletin 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 classes schedule. Please become familiar with the following procedures which will be followed as we enter the winter months:

- If Eastchester Schools have a delayed opening, Religious Education classes will go on as scheduled.
- If Eastchester Schools are closed on a given day, Religious Education classes scheduled for that afternoon and evening are also cancelled.
- If Eastchester Schools dismiss early on a given day, our classes will be cancelled.

Whenever a decision is made to cancel, reschedule or delay classes or events pertaining to the Religious Education program, the following will apply:

- A message will be placed on the answering machine in the Religious Ed office (961-1076);
- Phone, text, and email will be sent directly to parents whose child's attendance is directly affected.
- A message will be posted to the web site www.assumption-immaculate.org.

In addition to class cancellations, announcements concerning classes for children and adults, retreats and other Religious Education events will be posted there throughout the year.

Parent/Catechist Conferences

Parents are asked to introduce themselves to their child'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 child's class. In the interest of child 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

Parent sessions also take place throughout the year for those who have children preparing for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

SAFETY AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Crisis Management Plan and Fire Drills

A Crisis Management Plan will be followed in the unlikely event that in the interest of safety the children, catechists and other personnel must be relocated from the school building during class time. Parents will receive additional information under separate cover soon after classes begin in the Fall.

Fire Drills

Fire drills may be held twice a year (once in the Fall and once in the Spring).

Emergency Information Card

Each parent is required to complete a Student Medical Emergency Form for each child enrolled in the program. The information given is vital in case of a medical emergency. A parent's signature validates this form.

Medication

No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) will be administered to, or taken

by, any child during a class session. If an exception needs to be made, the parent should speak to the Director.

Transportation

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

Medical Emergency Procedures

(in case of accident or illness)

If a child 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 Medical Emergency 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 Medical Emergency 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 Child

The parent must inform the Director about any medical condition their child has which could flare up during a session (e.g. allergies, asthma, the possibility of seizures, etc.) or if the child has a condition which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. hyperactivity, ADD, other learning disability, etc.). This confidential information is communicated to the catechist by the Director.

Visitors

Due to insurance issues, children 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 office telephone is for business use and is not to be used by children except in an emergency.

Valuables.

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

Lost and 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 because some children may have medical restrictions or allergies to certain foods or ingredients. Snacks are allowed in the cafeteria while the children are waiting for the start time of sessions.

SOME PARENTING THOUGHTS AND TIPS:

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 difference between appropriate and inappropriate touches. We teach primary grade children 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.

Parents 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.

* * *

A sign-off document will be distributed to all families, and it must be completed by the parents. The verbiage of the document is as follows:

I, the parent of _____, have read and signed this Parent Handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

Date _____