

# ST. ALPHONSUS PARISH

## Religious Education Program

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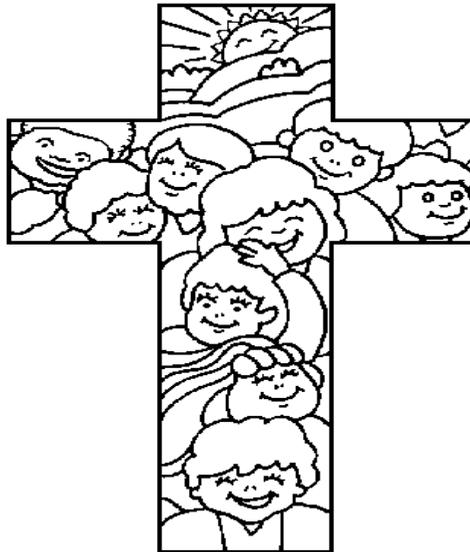
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Pastor:	Fr. Brian Ardagh
Director:	Kevin Cody
Administrative Assistant:	Tricia Latz
Advisory Board:	
Brian Sullivan (Chair)	Melanie Terrazas
Angela Crutchfield	Open
Deacon Dan Rittenhouse	Open



## Catechist Handbook

### 2013-2014

#### PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

St. Alphonsus Parish is a Catholic Faith-family rooted in history and growing with the community.

We strive to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God by our participation in the areas of Prayer, Education, Service, Social Activities, and Worship.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we respond to Christ's call, "Come Follow Me!"  
Thus as families, we are...welcoming, creating, serving, healing, sharing, reaching out.

## **ST. ALPHONSUS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT**

The seed of a rich and deep spirituality is present within each child. In their earliest years, children grow in relationship with God and understanding of their faith. It is our mission to help parents in their responsibility to nurture their children's faith. Faith is based not only on an intellectual understanding of doctrine, but also on a conversion of the heart (adopting a way of life).

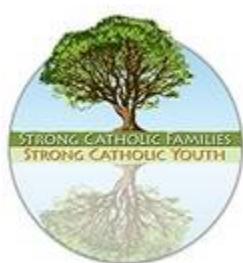
We proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God through prayer, education, service, social activities and worship. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we respond to Christ's call to "Come Follow Me", and carry on his teaching mission. We follow Jesus' example of teaching what to believe and then showing how to put those beliefs into practice.

Our purpose is to assist parents in:

- Teaching a Catholic way of life: laying the foundations for developing Christian attitudes, values and behavior in their children's early years;
- Presenting religious concepts in accord with their children's age and capacity for understanding and growth in faith;
- Helping their children make an increasingly personal response to God through their unique gifts; [best achieved through faith sharing & prayer]
- Integrating liturgical and eucharistic formation with religious education [Liturgical celebrations shape a child's faith every bit as much as Catholic schooling];
- Nurturing growth by providing a proper environment and witness of other adults;
- Fostering a sense of community, and belonging;  
[Faith is something to be lived and is lived best in community]
- Recognizing and fulfilling their role as the first and foremost catechists of their children.

Our agenda is *conversion*, leading to *discipleship*, within the context of *community*.

Dear Catechist... Thank you for answering the call to serve God and our parish families this year through catechetical ministry. This handbook is meant as a resource for you to turn to when trying to remember the many policies and procedures necessary to run a big program. Of course, feel free to call the RE Office if you have any questions or concerns.... Kevin Cody, DRE



### **2013-2014 Theme: *Strong Catholic Families***

All across the United States, pastors and parish leaders are asking for effective ways to engage parents in the life and mission of the parish as well as seeking ways to help them take ownership as the primary leader of faith within their families. That is why the Archdiocese of Chicago has dedicated this 3<sup>rd</sup> year of its strategic plan to Catholic parents and families. Of course, those of us involved in the RE program at St. Al's have always recognized our role as assisting parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children in leading them into relationship with Jesus and living the Catholic way of life.

How do we do this? The Archdiocese advises that we should highlight parents' responsibility to raise their children in the faith. Our objective should be to help parents create a family and home life that fosters a knowledge of faith, prayer, and service in the world. In that home and family, one would also value faith that works for justice and an appreciation of one's unique vocation or calling by God. During the course of the year, we should be offering parents tools and materials that will encourage parents to reconnect with their faith and provide them with home-based guidance to raise their children in the faith. I will do this through my monthly Parent Newsletter and parent formation sessions for the sacraments. We will provide opportunities for parents to brush up on the basics of Christianity through the Alpha Course (see below), and we are exploring workshops and talks that address the needs of parents and families.

For your part, make sure you are engaging parents through your weekly parent letters. In the preparation for your lessons, if you come across articles, quotes, resources, or family activities that you think could benefit families, feel free to pass them along with your parent letters.

### **ALPHA Experience**

In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn that God has opened the door of faith for the early Church. But did you know that God has opened the door of faith for each one of us and he invites us to step through the threshold into a deeper relationship with him. The upcoming Year of Strong Catholic Families is an opportunity for every Catholic to turn towards Jesus Christ, encounter him in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and rediscover the Faith and Church. At St. Alphonsus, we are offering a special opportunity for adults to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. We will be running the *Alpha Course* this Fall for anyone who is interested... within or without the parish..

Alpha is a practical introduction to the Christian faith, a place where guests have an opportunity to explore the meaning of life in a relaxed, friendly setting. In each of the 10 sessions, people enjoy great food, laughter and learning about the teachings of Jesus in a fun and friendly atmosphere. Participants come to investigate questions about the existence of God, the purpose of life, what happens after death, the teachings of Jesus and more. It's aim is to foster a personal encounter with Jesus that leads to a newly rekindled faith. Consider taking the journey yourself!

### **Clergy**

**Pastor****Fr. Brian Ardagh**

Fr. Brian was appointed as the 16th pastor in 2008 by Francis Cardinal George after serving as an associate pastor the previous 6 years as Sacred Heart Parish in Palos Hills and St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Tinley Park.

**On-site weekend celebrant****Fr. Robert Rohrich, C.M**

Fr. Bob is a full-time marriage/family therapist working out the DePaul Center next to the church. He has been a teacher of Christian morality and sexuality for over 30 years, and has been involved in parish missions. In the Chicago Archdiocese he works with the engaged, married, separated, and divorced.

**Deacon****Daniel Rittenhouse**

Dan was ordained a deacon of the Joliet Diocese in 2005. After ordination, he served St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Bolingbrook.

Dan and his wife, Gisela, implemented and conducted several Alpha programs as well as other evangelistic outreach programs. In January of 2007, Dan was transferred to Our Mother of Good Counsel Parish in Homer Glen and served as the Pastoral Assistant for the last few years. He was involved as a field advocate for annulments, taught Religious Education, conducted marriage preparation classes and actively supported many Pro-Life causes. Dan also (along with Gisela's help) was the director of the parish RCIA program.

**Deacon****Terry McGuire**

We have been blessed to have Deacon Terry serve our faith community for the past 12 years. Terry has done a wonderful job guiding many people in the way of Christ, especially through celebrating the sacraments and offering many spiritual opportunities. As a specialist in the area of organizational mission and human development, Deacon Terry has conducted numerous seminars and retreats in these areas. He holds a doctorate in Education from the University of Notre Dame and is a candidate for the Masters in Pastoral Studies degree from Loyola University.

**R.E. Staff****Director of Religious Education****Kevin Cody**

Kevin is starting his 16<sup>th</sup> year as DRE at St. Alphonsus after having transferred from Boston 34 years ago and working 18 years as an auditor and a director of cost management for Commercial Union Assurance Cos. and CNA Insurance Cos. He attended Catholic Theological Union where he studied for a Masters degree in Theology, and a Masters degree in Pastoral Studies. He was granted certification as a Parish Catechetical Leader by the Archdiocese of Chicago, was commissioned as a lay ecclesial minister 2 years ago by Cardinal George. He serves the ministry outside of the parish on the *Archdiocese of Chicago Advisory Board*, as co-chair of the *Chicago Association of Religious Educators* board, and as an active member of the Southwest Suburban Cluster of DRE's. Kevin, his wife Donna, and their two daughters have been parishioners of St. Alphonsus for 17 years.

**Administrative Assistant****Tricia Latz**

Tricia has been the Administrative Assistant in the RE office since October 2010. She has been a volunteer catechist, and is currently the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade catechist on Track A. Tricia's responsibilities in the parish also include being the VIRTUS Administrator for the parish, and she is a volunteer wedding coordinator. She has a degree in fashion merchandising from Ray College of Design. She is married with 2 children in high school, and 2 in college..

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD**

Brian Sullivan (Chair)

Angela Crutchfield Dan Rittenhouse Melanie Terrazas

The REAB meets approximately once per month to assist the Office of Religious Education in making continuous improvements to the Religious Education Program

# SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## **ABSENCES - CATECHIST**

If you are a catechist and need to be absent from your class, your first consideration for substitute would be your team partner or aide. If he or she can't do it or need help, your next pool of candidates would be parents of your students. If you are not able to arrange for a substitute, let the RE Office know and we will find a sub for you. Your substitute should be supplied with your lesson plan and a seating chart if you have assigned seating.

## **ABSENCES - STUDENTS**

It is parents' responsibility to report absences to the Religious Education office or to the catechist. The parents of children missing from class will be called to verify that the children are safe at home, and to remind them of class being held at that time. Missed work must be completed. **Please contact absent students** and let them know what was missed in class and what is due for homework. This will let students and parents know that we view their religious education as being very important. After three absences, please remind parent(s) or guardian of our four-absence policy. You can leave assignments and handouts for absent students in the RE office. We will get the materials to a sibling or mail it. A student who has **more than 4 absences must make up a class on another track**. Such students should be looked at closely to determine if all work was made up, and if there is an adequate understanding of grade-level content. Additional work with parents or tutor, or repeat of a grade may be necessary.

**EARLY DISMISSAL** - When a child is required by the parent to leave class early, **a note must be sent to the office**. Children are not allowed to leave the building unescorted while classes are in session. We ask parents to request early dismissal for important situations only because it is disruptive to you and the class, as well as to the child's education.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

Quizzes should be given throughout the year to provide you with feedback on your students' retention. A final written assessment on the grade-level core objectives will be given during the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> session. Parents should be provided with a study guide to work with their children. If a student performed poorly on the assessment, then a catechist should review the questions orally with the student to determine the level of understanding. Cases where it is evident that a student does not have adequate understanding of content for their grade-level should be reported to the DRE. The DRE will contact the student's parents to determine a further course of action.

## **ATTENDANCE FOLDERS**

1. Pick up folders in the Catechist Lounge prior to class.

Use the following tic marks:

✓ - *Present*

⬆ - *Absent*

ⓐ - *Absent and you have been notified by a parent of the absence.* (For safety reasons, we will call the homes of absent students who have not notified us of the absence.)

X - *Late Arrival.* (Have the students arrival reported to the office if folder has already been picked up)

E - *Early Dismissal* (Granted only if contacted directly by parent or guardian)

2. Place folder outside of classroom door. (Make sure all handouts are removed)
3. Handouts for parents will go to the children who are the youngest in their family.

\*\* Accurate recording of attendance and use of tic marks is important when related questions and issues arise.

## **AUDIO/VIDEO**

- VCR's/DVD's  
There are TV's with VCR/DVD players in every room.
- Audio Players – We have audio tape/CD players in each room and a limited selection of music. If you find music that goes well with your lesson plan, we will reimburse you for purchases.

## **BIBLES**

Fourth grade children are required to purchase a Bible. There are two kinds of Bibles available for purchase from the Religious Education Office. One is the Catholic Youth Study Bible, which includes illustrations, maps, notes, origins of Catholic Traditions, etc., for \$25.00. We also have the basic NAB Bible for \$6.00. Students new to our program in grades 5-8 should purchase a Bible if they do not already have one.

## **CANCELLATION OF CLASSES**

If inclement weather or other emergency situations require that classes be canceled, families can check [emergencyclosings.com](http://emergencyclosings.com). You will also be contacted by the RE Office.

## **CATECHIST DEVELOPMENT**

Catechists must share their faith & create environment of sharing for conversion to take place. How we enhance and nurture our children's faith life will ultimately depend on own spirit of ministry. We must tend to our own faith life. All of us understand that faith formation is life-long. And it becomes particularly important when helping others in their faith formation. The Archdiocese strongly encourages catechists to work toward certification. They and the Southwest Suburban Cluster of DRE's offer certification courses and workshops.

We will make you aware of a variety of meetings, workshops, and conferences via e-mail, the Catechist Notes newsletter, and flyers inserted into your attendance folder.

## **CATECHIST NEWSLETTER**

The Catechist Newsletter is a weekly Constant Contact e-mailing used to communicate Religious Education Program information and short articles of interest to your ministry. It will be e-mailed to you prior to each class. Please scan over the notes to determine if any of the information applies to the next class.

## **CATECHIST OBSERVATION**

Your core catechist and director will be available to observe your classroom at your request. The purpose of observations is to assist you in your growth within this ministry.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

If you suspect one of the children has been abused or is abusing someone else law requires you, to report this to the Director. The Director will contact the proper authorities. NOTE: Careful observation and documentation of physical abuse should be consistently and accurately kept.

All catechists and aides are required to attend VIRTUS Training.

## **CLASSROOMS**

Grades 6, 7, and 8 generally meet in the Parish Center using the Walnut Street entrance. All other grades meet in the RE Building.

## CLASS TIMES

- *Track A* starts at 8:45 a.m. on Sundays, and are dismissed from class at 10:15 a.m.
- *Track B* starts at 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Mondays
- *Track C* starts at 6: 00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays

(Track schedules can be found on our website [www.st-als.org](http://www.st-als.org))

## COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

There should always be an open line of communication among parents, catechists, and administration. Keep parents apprised of what is going on in class. It is important to communicate with parents frequently. We want to create a partnership between you (the classroom catechist) and parents (the at-home catechists). Provide parents with a summary of what is going on in class and what you are attempting to accomplish after each session. The Director should always be made aware of parental concerns or student needs. All phone calls, written communication, and oral communication with parents should be documented, dated, and retained for future reference. **Copy the Director on weekly parent letter e-mails, or leave a copy of the letter in your attendance folder**

## COPY MACHINE, EQUIPMENT, ETC.

Each grade-level has been assigned it's own code. Available for use: copier, fax, electric stapler, paper punch, paper cutter, and electric pencil sharpener. You may e-mail documents to be copied to the RE Office. Copies will be placed in your folder upon arrival for class.

## COURSE CONTENT

The **core content objectives for your grade must be covered**. You have the flexibility to be creative in presenting the material, and you may introduce topics not covered in the text, so long as you are able to achieve the grade-level objectives. Report additions of topics and resources to your core catechist, so that it can be noted on the syllabus. This is important since each grade is sequential in providing the students a complete religious education over their 8 years in the program. [The grade-level core content objectives are summarized in this handbook]. Don't worry if you can't cover everything in the textbook. We want to create a pleasant learning experience for both the students and you.

## LESSON PLANS

Effective teaching depends on well-planned classes. The Grade Level Core Catechists will work with their catechists to develop a syllabus for the year from which each catechist can develop lesson plans for the year. Catechists are asked to spend time each week reviewing the lesson plan and preparing before teaching class. Catechists have the flexibility to create their own lesson plans that address the topics and themes outlined on the syllabus. Additional resources to supplement the lessons can be found in the R.E. Office or at the Be My disciples website or at other helpful websites (see Websites in this manual). **E-mail or leave a copy of your lesson plan in your attendance folder**. This is helpful to the director in overseeing the coverage of material, in offering suggestions, in answering parent inquiries, in orienting a last-minute substitute, etc.

## DISMISSAL

Students in Grade 1 through Grade 3 are to remain in their rooms until a parent or older sibling picks them up. Although we are responsible for the children only during the regularly scheduled class sessions, stay with children who are waiting to be picked up or bring them to the office. **Do not release students before the scheduled end of the session**. We do not want students running around the busy parking lots & streets, or making noise in the hallways.

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Emergency information is on file in the Religious Education Office. The information must be kept current at all times. **Please contact the R.E. Office immediately if there is an injury to a child, or any situation occurs that could become threatening or dangerous.** A first-aid kit is located in each room and in the supply room off the catechist lounge. Rubber gloves are available in every classroom should you have to attend to a child who is bleeding.

In case of illness or injury, parents will be contacted by phone. Parents must arrange for the child's transportation home. If the parent cannot be reached, emergency phone numbers will be called in order to obtain necessary help for the child. Children are not allowed to walk home if sick or injured.

In the event of an emergency, which requires immediate medical attention, the parent will be notified and the child will be transported by ambulance, if necessary, to the hospital at parent's expense.

## FIELD TRIPS OR RETREATS

If a class plans a field trip or retreat, parents should be notified and written permission will be requested. Students will not be allowed to participate in these trips without written parental consent, and they will be given an alternative equitable assignment.

## HOMEWORK

We view homework as a necessary means of engaging parents in their children's religious education. Since religious education is essentially indoctrination into a way of life, and parents have the primary responsibility for guiding their children's lives, then it is important that parents review with their children what they are learning. We do not want to over-burden children who already have a lot of homework. But we do want to assign small activities, exercises, or discussion questions for the children to complete with their parents. The textbooks for Grades 1-6 have a "With My Family" page at the end of each chapter that provides parents with suggestions for discussions and activities related to the lessons they are covering in the classroom. Engage parents as best you can in the process.

## LITURGY OF THE MASS

"As members of the Christian community, all are called to participate actively in the liturgical prayer of the Church. Religious Education therefore must involve the student in his/her faith community and in that community's liturgy. Liturgy itself educates, it teaches, it forms community, and it forms the individual. It makes possible worship of God." (NCCB, "Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education"). The Mass is the focus of our public worship of God and the focus of our parish worshipping community. Families have committed in writing to regularly attend Mass as part of our RE program.

We will again have a **Young People's Mass** every month where one of the grades 3-7 will sponsor the Mass, and children in the grade will assume liturgical roles such as lector, usher, gift bearers, greeters, etc. We will also have **Children's Liturgy of the Word** twice a month. Children through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade are invited to go down into the Church Hall at the beginning of the Mass to celebrate the liturgy of the Word at their level. They return at the Offertory.

## MEDICATION

Except in extraordinary circumstances, which must be approved by the director of the program, personnel within the Religious Education Program will not maintain, supervise the taking of, or administer medication.

## DISCIPLINE

Good conduct, cooperation, attention and courtesy are expected during class time. Clearly communicate class rules to the students during the first session. If you provide consequences, be prepared to follow through. Sometimes children fail to live up to their own and adults' expectations. You should not have to struggle with someone's behavior, and the education of the rest of the class should not be adversely affected by one individual.

To help students learn how to choose correct behavior, a Stop, Think, and Plan card is available. This card is used when a student has been given a verbal reminder and is not able to choose correct behavior. A Stop, Think, and

Plan card is placed on the student's desk. This is a signal that the student should remove him or herself from the group and think about what actions are appropriate. The catechist confers with the student to learn the plan the student will use to become a working member of the class. The student can then rejoin the group.

If a student chooses incorrect behavior a second time, the card is turned over and the student must complete the questions listed on the back of the card. The card is sent home for discussion with the parents. The card is to be signed and returned the next week. If the student does not return the card at the next class, he or she is sent to the office to call the parent. The student may return to class if the parent agrees to return the card by the end of the class.

If a student chooses to put him/herself or others in:

1. Physical/psychological danger- fighting, rough play, and/or throwing objects that could harm self, others, or property; bringing dangerous or illegal items such as weapons, knives, matches, lighters, smoking materials, drugs, etc. to any area of the parish property; physical or psychological threats, intimidation, force or injury; leaving the parish grounds without permission; using normal objects in a dangerous way.
2. Abuse in tone, gesture, or word-harassment of any kind; any unwanted behavior that makes others feel unsafe or uncomfortable, intimidation/bullying; disrespect in action, tone, or gesture after repeated correction, profanity, vandalism.
3. Out of control behavior-willful misbehavior toward a catechist, program personnel, or volunteer; unable, incapable or unwilling to listen or follow instructions; repeated violations of classroom rules.

Immediate action will be taken. The adult-imposed consequence will be:

1. Immediate removal from the group
2. A one-to-one conversation between the child and the DRE. The student will fill out the office notice form.

The student's parents or legal guardian will be contacted by telephone. A conference will be held before the student may rejoin the class. The students' parent or legal guardian may be required to attend class with their child, or they will remove their child from the class for home study.

**Catechists should notify the DRE immediately when a student acts out physically.**

Parents should inform us of anything about their child that would affect his/her ability to have effective catechesis.

The essence of Christian discipline is self-discipline. Children learn that the observance of rules is a safeguard to their liberties, and not a curbing of them. We ask your cooperation in maintaining an efficient and consistent form of discipline from the outset, so that the final steps above need not be taken.

## **PARENTAL CONCERNS AND PROCEDURES**

A parent who has a question or concern regarding a situation involving a student is urged to follow these procedures:

1. Contact the student's catechist to discuss the situation and work with the catechist to arrive at possible solutions.
2. If the concern cannot be resolved with the catechist, the parent should then request a conference with the Director of Religious Education. After discussing the situation with both parties, the Director will act as a facilitator, making every effort to resolve the problem and initiate reconciliation between the two parties.
3. If resolution and reconciliation have not been achieved after discussion with the catechist and the Director, and the parent still feels the issue has not been addressed, the pastor may be asked to assist in the resolution and reconciliation of the problem.
4. Every effort should be made to resolve questions, concerns, and problems at the earliest possible stage in a manner appropriate for Christians.

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

In sending their child to the St. Alphonsus Religious Education Program, parents are asked to contribute to, accept, and support the philosophy, goals and objectives of the program. Every parent, catechist, and Office of Religious Education make a written commitment to the program so that there is a clear understanding of the expectations between all parties working together in the program. [See the Commitment of Mutual Agreements form for specific commitments.]

The faith life of St. Alphonsus will grow only as the faith life of each family is enlightened and enriched by the gospel message of Jesus and each family lives out this reality as best it can. The family that lives in relationship

with God becomes a living expression of the Gospel. Growth in spirituality by a parent or parents overflows into lived family life. Growing in faith takes on a new meaning when a family claims time for prayer, worship, faith sharing, symbol making and ritual.

## **PARISH CENTER MONITORS**

We will try to have 8th grade students outside the classrooms in the Parish Center to assist catechists. The monitors can deliver attendance folders, take a disruptive student to the office, supervise bathroom breaks, run for forgotten supplies, etc.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

Progress Reports will be prepared for each student two times during the year—following the 11<sup>th</sup> session and the 19<sup>th</sup> session. Even though we use a classroom model, we are not a school, we are a parish program for faith formation. It involves leading our children to growth in heart as well as mind. We don't want this to be a continued quest for good grades, consequently, we don't assign grades. The purpose of the progress reports is to provide parents and their children with formal feedback on how children are doing in the classroom.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD**

The mission of the REAB is to support the Director of Religious Education in the development and integration of effective religious education practices. Through research, evaluation and recommendations, the Advisory Board meets monthly to assist the Director in ensuring our young people receive the highest caliber of educational opportunities, spiritual growth and quality care in a loving and Christian-based environment.

## **RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Books, magazines, catalogues, videos, CD's, and tapes are available to borrow in the Resource Center. Just sign them out on the appropriate control sheets.

## **REGISTRATION POLICY**

Application packets for the next program year will be given to your youngest child on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last day of class. 50% of the tuition and book fee payments, or arrangements for payment, are due with the application. An early registration discount can be realized if the admission application is received prior to the deadline stated on the application. Assignment to the three tracks will be on a first-come-first-serve basis in the event of significant disparities between the sizes of the classes.

## **ROOM SHARING ISSUES (RE Building)**

Catechists will work together as Christian professionals to support each other in providing a welcoming environment to parish children and to resolve conflicts concerning shared space that may arise during the year. Decorating class space and hanging classwork should be worked out by the catechists on each grade in an equitable manner.

Conflict Resolution Procedures:

1. Communicate your concern to the catechist with whom you share space via phone, e-mail, or grade-level team meeting.
2. Openly discuss and support one another in working together to identify and resolve the concern.
3. If the two parties are unable to agree upon a resolution, then the concerned parties need to direct their concern to the Director.

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Students receive special preparation for Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. This is done in cooperation with the parent/guardian. Students will receive the sacraments only if they are adequately prepared. Families in both the Parish School and Religious Education Program celebrate reception of the sacraments jointly.

Students in Gr. 2 celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist for the first time. Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation is a 2-year process beginning in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, and requires candidates to participate in a retreat, special events, and service activities.

It is presumed that children preparing for these sacraments have previously been involved in religious education through a religious education program or through a Catholic school. It is the responsibility of the parents/legal guardians to let the Religious Education office know if the above is not true.

Meetings are scheduled during the year so that parents may review the content of preparation, deepen their own understanding of the sacrament being received, and help prepare their children for receiving these sacraments.

All candidates for sacraments must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate to the Religious Education office.

Children in the third grade or above who have not received Baptism, Reconciliation, or First Communion can receive preparation through the Rite of Christian Initiation for children. Please contact the Director of Religious Education if one of the students in your class needs special preparation for the sacraments.

### **SERVICE PROJECTS: Grade-level**

Catechists for each grade (1-7) will decide on a service project for their students to participate in. All proposed projects are subject to the approval of the DRE. If a child does not participate with classmates in the project, then he or she should engage in his or her own service project under the supervision a parent. A report on the project should be presented to the catechist or the class.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students commit to:

- Worship with the parish community each week at Saturday or Sunday Eucharist.
- Attend each grade level in grades 1-8 for ongoing faith formation.
- Attention and regular participation in class. This is necessary in order to learn the required doctrine, scriptures, liturgical knowledge, and prayers, as well as to being receptive to the presence of Jesus Christ in their lives. Students must demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts being taught at each grade level in order to proceed to the next level. These concepts will be communicated to parents to assist them in their role.
- If absent, arrangements should be made to complete missed classwork and homework at home.

Students are expected to respect the materials in the classroom and church property.

### **SUBSTITUTE CATECHIST**

In the event that you cannot make it to a class and you do not have an aide who can conduct the class, try to get a parent of one of your students to substitute.

### **SUPPLIES**

- Grades 1 – 5<sup>th</sup>: supplies can be kept in your desk and/or classroom supply closet
- Grades 6-8: Supplies such as crayons, markers, paper, glue, scissors, can be picked up before each class from the RE office. Please return the supplies as you found them.

Please let me know if we are low on supplies, or if you are in need of supplies not in the cabinet. We will reimburse you for supplies you purchase.

### **TEAM MEETINGS – Grade-Level**

Catechists will meet with their core catechist at least four times during the program year to coordinate efforts, share ideas, gather in prayer, and join in fellowship. It is up to each grade as to whether they want to meet more than four times. The core catechist will provide minutes of each meeting to the DRE.

### **VISITORS**

Students are permitted to bring guests to class, provided a note from the host parent accompanies the student to class. This note should indicate that the guest has the parent's permission to be at the class. Visitors without such permission will not be allowed in the classroom. Parents, of course, are welcome to visit their child's class at any time.

### **VIRTUS TRAINING & BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Everyone who works with children in the Archdiocese is required to go through a background check and a “Protecting God’s Children” seminar. See the director for details

## **WEBSITES:**

Visit the following helpful websites:

[www.faithfirst.com](http://www.faithfirst.com)

[www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)

[www.loyolapress.com/blogs-catechists-journey.htm](http://www.loyolapress.com/blogs-catechists-journey.htm)

[www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org)

[www.catechist.com](http://www.catechist.com)

[www.makingfriends.com](http://www.makingfriends.com) (crafts)

[www.dltk-kids.com](http://www.dltk-kids.com) (crafts)

[www.catechesis-chicago.org](http://www.catechesis-chicago.org) (formation forms)

[www.blestarewe.com](http://www.blestarewe.com)

[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

[www.familyfaithbuilders.com](http://www.familyfaithbuilders.com)

[www.christjesustheway.com](http://www.christjesustheway.com)

[www.creativeempowerment.com](http://www.creativeempowerment.com)

[www.e-catholicism.com](http://www.e-catholicism.com)

[www.homefaith.com](http://www.homefaith.com)

[www.lifeteen.com](http://www.lifeteen.com)

[www.loyolapress.com/online-community-3-minute-retreats.htm](http://www.loyolapress.com/online-community-3-minute-retreats.htm)

Let us know if you come across other websites useful to our ministry

## **TUITION REFUNDS AND STIPENDS**

If at all possible, we try to express our appreciation of our catechists’ dedication to the children and their families in our program by gifting them with stipends. Our ability to do so will depend on the success of our fundraising efforts due to these expenditures being cut from the budget this year.