

Parish of THE IMMACULATE



Parish Faith Formation Catechist Handbook

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Catechist Certification

Catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation. The catechist should continue his or her own spiritual formation through frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation, through spiritual direction, and through continued study of the faith. The catechist should also be provided with opportunities for spiritual growth such as retreats, conferences, etc. In addition to spiritual formation, the catechist is also in need of pedagogical formation especially as society, teaching methods, and culture change. NDC Ch 8, C

Opportunities are provided for all Catechists in the areas of spiritual and pedagogical formation. Immaculate is requiring that each Catechist take at least two offerings a year. If you are enrolled in Bible Studies, online courses, attend a retreat, read a book and write a reflection on it, or some other form of formation, please let the Director of Faith Formation know.

Reading any of these Loyola Press books by Joe Paprocki will qualify toward certification: The Catechist Toolbox (Getting Started), A Well Built Faith (Creed), or The Bible Blueprint (Bible).

Catechist Weekly Procedures

Preparation for the Catechist

- In order for the catechist to communicate to their class, they must know their material well.
- Pray regularly for guidance from the Holy Spirit for you and your students.
- Be present for class each week. The students need contact with the catechist to build up their trust and to appreciate the importance of religion class.

The Attitude of the Catechist

- Be confident, yet have a humble sense of your mission to speak the Good News.
- Be realistic about your abilities, your responsibilities and your limitations as a catechist.
- Be enthusiastic, interested, cheerful and unafraid to show a sense of humor.
- Be open to learn and to grow in your faith from experiences in the classroom and from your students.
- Use pleasant speech and conversational tone.
- Be sympathetic and understanding of each student. Make each one feel important and a part of the group.
- Learn to listen to what each student says, verbally and non-verbally, before, during and after class.
- Be fair and treat each student alike during class. Do not "pick favorites."
- Try to discover each individual's need and work from there.
- Keep the class moving. Be prepared & have alternate activities ready if you finish early.
- Any discipline should be done with love and understanding. Do not allow a behavior problem to continue. Immediately speak to the student about their behavior. (Each student will have signed the Code of Conduct.) Inform the Director about any situation that needs further assistance. The Director will be willing to call the parents.

Lesson Planning

Map out a tentative plan for the year. Our texts are in accordance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and if you skip or omit lessons, the children miss the faith and doctrine that is to be taught in each grade level. Remember, everything in our faith is important. If you do not feel qualified to teach about a particular aspect of the faith, or have difficulty understanding what the lesson plan is trying to communicate, do not skip over the lesson. Instead, please contact the DRE for support.

The following activities will be scheduled during class time:

- ACRE Testing for 5th and 8th Grade
- Safe Environment Training for Students
- Emergency Drills
- You may add other activities to the schedule, but complete lesson plans first. Check with DRE before planning other activities.

Arrival

- Please arrive at least fifteen minutes before class begins.
- Read the Memo for the night.
- Set up your classroom and come to the cafeteria. When your aide arrives, if they are not needed in the classroom for set-up, please send them to the cafeteria for crowd control and to take attendance.
- The supply closet is available for colored paper, crayons, markers, scissors and other craft items. If other supplies are needed, they should be requested one week prior to the time you need them. These items will be on your desk.

Copies - we can make copies for you if you request this before class starts. You may also use the copy machine in Immaculate's office during the week or before R.E. class starts.

Dismissal

- A bell will ring at 7:25. This is the signal to put away material, put disks back in order, pick up trash and get ready for dismissal.
- End your class with prayer.
- Take your students to the dismissal area. A final prayer/song will be prayed.
- Names will be called and students lined up in groups of 4.
- Traffic volunteers and catechists will help expedite dismissal. Please try to keep the children quiet.
- When your students have left, go back to your room and finish cleaning up, put materials away, etc.

Opening Session

- When students arrive, they will come to the cafeteria. Each child is encouraged to use their booklet.
- When aide or teacher arrives to the cafeteria, they should greet the students by name. Take attendance and record it on the white attendance sheet. Just circle the "P" for those present and circle the "A" if you know the student is absent. These sheets will be left on the cafeteria table when classes are dismissed. (Any child who comes in late will report to the attendance office.) DRE will call the homes of those who are absent so take attendance with accuracy and integrity.
- A book for Intercessory Prayer will be placed near the front of the cafeteria. Those with intentions should write their intentions in the book.

- Director will lead the students in memorized prayer, recognize baptisms once a month, talk about a saint, pray, and make any announcements. Afterwards, classes will be dismissed by grade.

Lesson for the Day

- You may want to start your individual class with a prayer too.
- Discuss the readings for the week, especially Gospel.
- Briefly review last week's lessons and concepts.
- Follow the lesson plan for the week.
- Discuss any holy days or saint's feast days for the coming week.

Homework

Homework is an option. You can assign prayers to memorize, a page in their text to complete or one of the family activities in the text. Be creative and ask them to do a good deed, be nice to a brother or sister, help their parents without being asked, etc. You will have a list of parents; emails to write letters home (with assignments, praise, etc.) Catechists need to be prepared to give director classwork for those who are not present (which will be sent home with a sibling or via mail the next day.)

Safe Environment Training

- "As stated in the diocesan policy, those specifically obligated to comply with Safe Environment, including training and background checks, are: Anyone placed in a **position of authority, trust, or supervision** (of a minor or vulnerable adult) who serves for more than twelve hours in one year. "
- Safe Environment Training includes the following:
 - Completing Background Check
 - Completing Safe Environment Training (VIRTUS online class)
 - Reviewing the Supervisory Adult Code of Conduct at least once a year.
 - Acknowledge receipt of "Revised Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedures"

The Director and/or the Parish Secretary will notify those in need of safe environment renewal.

Stipends

Stipends will be paid to catechists and aides according to the level of certification and number of classes taught. If a catechist will be absent, they are to prepare the lesson and have all the material ready for the substitute.

Certified Catechists - \$10/week

Catechists - \$8/week

Aides - \$5/week

Substitutes

The catechist should inform the Director if they need a substitute as soon as they realize they will be absent. The catechist is responsible to submit their lesson plan for the class. If your assistant can substitute for you, ask them, otherwise, we will find a substitute for you. Only the DRE can cancel a class.

Emergency Procedures

Student Illness or Injury

If a student becomes sick or injured during class, bring her/him to the office. Do not under any circumstances dispense medication to the child even if you know the child and the parent. If a student requires medication during class time; the parent must have signed the form and given us permission and then medicine will be dispensed.

Fire Drill Procedure

A plan for an emergency exit is posted in your classroom. Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself and your class with the specifics. When a fire drill will be conducted you will be given advance notice.

- Stay calm— students will follow your cue.
- Count students before you leave. Office will take class list.
- Quietly take the students to the designated exit.
- If you are the last one out, close the door.
- Once outside, line up the students. Count the students again.
- The students should be quiet at all times so they can hear instructions.
- Return to the classroom after the clear signal has been given.
- Recount the students once you are back in the classroom

Other Drills

OCMS has prepared a binder with Emergency Procedure Guidelines. These policies will be discussed at Catechist meetings to prepare you in case of emergencies.