

2017 - 2018
PARISH CATECHETICAL OFFICE



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM
FAMILY HANDBOOK

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Office Hours

Monday – Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Other hours by appointment

Please read this handbook and discuss the student policies with your children before signing the back of the registration form.

Families and students registered in the Religious Education Program of the Parish of Our Lady of Peace are responsible for knowing and following the policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook. We are here to serve the religious education needs of all children and their families. Should you have a question or concern, please contact the Parish Catechetical Leaders. Confidentiality is always maintained in sensitive matters.

Table of Contents

Page 3	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM (Classroom and Home-Based)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Options • Registration Information and Requirements • Tuition • Curriculum • ACRE Assessment • Lost Textbooks and Bibles • Communication
Page 6	HOME-BASED PROGRAM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechesis, Grades 1 through 8 • Requirements
Page 7	CLASSROOM-BASED ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements • Student Participation • Absence/Attendance • Make-Up Work • Arriving Late/Leaving Early • Behavior • Progress Reports • Cell Phones and Electronic Items
Page 8	BUILDING SECURITY AND SAFETY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking and Drop-Off/Pick-Up Procedures • Emergency Contact During Sessions • Emergency Closings • Protecting God's Children/Child Abuse Policy
Page 10	SACRAMENT PROGRAM AND PREPARATION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Reconciliation • First Eucharist • Confirmation

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Our Lady of Peace Parish provides religious instruction for children in grades one through eight. Our religious formation includes sacrament preparation for First Reconciliation in second grade and First Eucharist in third grade. Our Confirmation preparation begins after seventh grade and Confirmation is celebrated during Easter Season of the ninth grade (details found on page 11).

- Families must make weekly attendance at Mass with their children a priority and support the parish financially as able. Mass is the highest form of worship and is central to who we are as Catholic Christians.
- All families (classroom and home-based) are invited to attend any of the scheduled spiritual gatherings throughout the liturgical year.
- Students are expected to attend religious education classes in grades one through eight in order to receive a well-rounded foundation in the faith and to be prepared to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

All families (classroom and home-based) are invited to attend any of the scheduled spiritual gatherings throughout the liturgical year.

Program Options

Classroom-Based

Grades 1 through 6
Wednesday Afternoon
3:30 – 4:45 pm

Adult volunteers provide instruction based on RCL *Be My Disciples* text. Doors open at 3:15 p.m. for Grades 1 through 6 to gather. All sessions begin promptly at 3:30 p.m.

Classroom-Based

Grades 7 and 8
Wednesday Evening
7:15 – 8:30 p.m.

Adult volunteers provide instruction based on RCL *Be My Disciples* text. Doors open at 7:05 p.m. for Grades 7 and 8 to gather. All sessions begin promptly at 7:15 p.m.

Home-Based

Grades 1 through 8

For families who prefer to teach their children in an independent home study setting. Under parent supervision, students complete academic work at home. More information can be found on page 6.

Home-Based study is discouraged in Grades 2 and 3 due to at-home sacramental preparation.

Registration Information

The registration process begins in the spring of each year. Registration packets are emailed to families of current students. Class assignments are based on the date your registration is received and availability of catechists.

Registration Requirements for Returning Families

- Submit Religious Education Program registration form by **April 30, 2017**, along with a non-refundable tuition payment.
- Complete the volunteer form. Volunteer service from each family helps to minimize the cost of the Religious Education Program. If you choose not to volunteer, you may opt out by paying an additional fee of \$75.
- Submit a baptismal certificate for siblings new to the program unless baptized at OLP.

Registration Requirements for New Families

- Register as parishioners of Our Lady of Peace.
- Submit Religious Education Program registration form along with a non-refundable tuition payment. As a courtesy, we extend our lowest tuition rate to new families regardless of the timing of the registration.
- Complete the volunteer form. Volunteer service from each family helps to minimize the cost of the Catechetical Program. If you choose not to volunteer, you may opt out by paying an additional fee of \$75.
- Submit a baptismal certificate for each child (unless baptized at OLP), and certificates for reception of other sacraments, if applicable.
- A letter, report card, or attendance record from your previous Religious Education Program or Catholic school indicating the grades your children completed.

Tuition

Tuition covers less than half of the total cost of providing religious instruction for a student. The remaining costs are funded by the parish. Therefore, all families must be registered parishioners of Our Lady of Peace and support the parish through weekly use of envelopes at Mass.

In order to receive our lowest tuition rate, your registration form, volunteer form and payment must be received on or before **April 30, 2017**. We encourage families to register in the spring in order to help us:

- Process registration forms in a timely manner.
- Organize the classrooms, keeping class size small.
- Recruit catechists.
- Create volunteer schedules.
- Take advantage of publisher and vendor discounts.

In gratitude for their service, tuition is waived for children of catechists. See volunteer form for other discounted volunteer opportunities.

Never allow financial concerns to prevent you from registering for religious education. Contact a Parish Catechetical Leader before April 30, 2017, if you are experiencing financial difficulties. All inquiries are kept confidential.

Class assignments are based on the date your registration is received and availability of catechists.

Tuition Schedule

TUITION GRADES 1 – 8	One Child	Two Children	Three Children	Four Children
On or before April 30, 2017	\$130	\$250	\$300	\$325
May 1, 2017 to June 30, 2017	\$180	\$300	\$350	\$375
Registrations received after July 1, 2017 will be placed on a wait list.				

Curriculum

The Catechetical Program of Our Lady of Peace uses RCL Benziger textbooks in grades one through eight. For First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation years, we use Loyola Press textbooks.

The curriculum materials used in our program are designed to provide a rich, authentic, and complete presentation of our Catholic faith for children and adolescents. All textbooks are approved by the Archdiocese of Newark and are in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. All catechists are required to teach the curriculum found in the textbook according to the syllabus that is developed by the Catechetical Office. Families can access additional information on the textbooks used in our program at www.BeMyDisciples.com, www.GodsGift.LoyolaPress.com.

ACRE Assessment

NCEA (National Catholic Educational Association Information for Growth): ACRE (Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education) Edition is a standardized test which the Archdiocese requires of all fifth and eighth-grade students in religious education programs and Catholic schools. IFG: ACRE Edition assesses faith knowledge and the results will be used to determine where and how we can improve our Religious Education Program.

Lost Textbooks

All students are given a textbook and an e-book code at the beginning of the year. If an RCL textbook needs to be replaced, it can be at current cost.

Lost Bibles

Students are presented with a Bible in third grade for use by the child and their family throughout their religious education years. A lost Bible can be replaced at current cost.

Communication

Most communication from the Catechetical Office is sent via email. Select information will be mailed to the home. Please inform our office if you have a change in your email address or mailing address.

Please visit the parish website, www.olpnp.com, click on the Catechetical Office tab for information regarding the Religious Education Program and sacraments. Like us on Facebook!

HOME-BASED PROGRAM

Recognizing that the family is the foundation for all religious catechesis, our parish offers a home-based program for grades one through eight.

Parents choosing this option should possess a strong and authentic foundation in the Catholic faith and/or recognize within themselves a strong desire to grow in faith through catechetical study with their children, and thereby proclaiming the Gospel message through their lifestyle.

When choosing the Home-Based Program, the parent commits to the role of instructor, motivator and living example of faith in relationship with God. They recognize that worship at Mass is the center of their lives and actively participate in the life of the parish.

*The Home-Based Program is **discouraged in Grades 2 and 3**, the sacramental years, due to home preparation and the children's attendance at special teaching sessions and practice held during the Religious Education Program class times.*

Home-Based Requirements

- Parents assist/guide their child to complete the chapter material in the textbook and submit on-line reviews, approximately one chapter per week, following the same syllabus as classroom-based students.
- Attend a required Orientation meeting.
- Families are invited to attend any of the scheduled spiritual gatherings throughout the liturgical year.

CLASSROOM-BASED ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Requirements

Families are invited to attend any of the scheduled spiritual gatherings throughout the liturgical year.

Student Participation

Students are expected to be prepared for class each week, including completing any assigned homework. Textbooks are always used during class and students must bring their textbook to each session.

Attendance/Absence

Faithful attendance for all classes is expected. For the student's safety, parents are asked to contact the Catechetical Office at 908-464-8156 or catoff@olpnp.com to report a child's absence as early in the day as possible.

Make-Up Work

It is the parents' responsibility to cover the missed lesson with the student. All make-up work should be completed online as soon as possible, but no later than two weeks after the absence. Parents will receive an email with instruction on how to make up the lesson. The Catechetical Office will contact the student's family if the make-up work is not received. Families who may be experiencing extenuating circumstances or serious illness are encouraged to contact us.

Arriving Late

Students must come to the gym to check in with a staff member. Lateness should never be a continuing occurrence. The Catechetical Office should be notified when the parent knows that the student will arrive late. A student who arrives more than 30 minutes late misses a significant amount of the lesson and may be required to make up missed classwork.

Leaving Early

If it is necessary for a child to leave at any time before the end of class, please notify the Catechetical Office by sending in a note. This note should indicate the name of the adult who will be picking up and the time of departure. That adult must come to the gym and sign the child out before leaving. A student who leaves more than 30 minutes early misses a significant amount of the lesson and may be required to complete the make-up work to ensure that a good grasp of the material is attained.

Behavior

Appropriate behavior and common courtesy are presumed and expected from our students at every grade level. Students are expected to behave in a cooperative and respectful manner in their shared class space and towards their fellow classmates, their catechist, all volunteers and parish staff. Persistent behavior situations will result in a warning by the catechist. If the student does not correct the behavior, a Parish Catechetical Leader or appropriate staff member will intervene, the parent will be notified, and corrective measures will be determined.

Progress Reports

We honor the commitment of parents as primary catechists and first heralds of Christian faith. As a courtesy, we provide a student progress report twice a year. It is expected that the parents sign and return the midyear progress report in order to receive a second term report.

Cell Phones and Electronic Items

The use of electronic devices and cell phones (including text messaging, photo taking and video recording), are not permitted during sessions. Abuse of these regulations will result in the removal of the electronic item.

Sport and Other Items

Use of all sports equipment (basketballs, tennis balls, toys) is forbidden in the building.

BUILDING SECURITY AND SAFETY

Please never allow your children to run or play in the parking lot before or after sessions when traffic is arriving and exiting.

Parking and Drop-Off/Pick-Up Procedures

For the safety of our children, please be sure that anyone who drives your children to or from religious education classes is aware of the procedures outlined below. If you have a special situation that prevents you from following the drop-off/pick-up procedures, please contact the Parish Catechetical Office to make special arrangements.

Drop-Off Procedures

- Drivers should never back up or drive in the lane closest to the building.
- Do not drive through orange traffic cones.
- Park on the gym-side parking area with vehicles facing the baseball field.
- Escort children to the curb, and then enter the building through the Parish Hall entrance. Students will gather with their catechists in the gym and then go to their classrooms following announcements and prayers.
- Exit the parking area by pulling away from the building (toward the baseball field) and proceeding via a back lane to the parking lot exit.
- Always observe the 10 mph speed limit.

Pick-Up Procedures

- Observe the same parking procedures shown above.
- Meet your child in the gym. Children are dismissed from the gym and will exit through Parish Hall doors.

Building Procedures

- For the safety of our children, everyone must enter and exit through the Parish Hall doors **only**.
- All catechists, volunteers, and visitors must sign the logbook in the Parish Hall upon entering and exiting the building.
- No one should open any outside doors of the building except for emergencies.

Bringing Friends to Class

For safety reasons, only those children enrolled in our Religious Education Program may be on the premises during class time.

Emergency Contact During Sessions

Should a parent or guardian need to contact a Catechetical Office staff member when classes are in session and our office is closed, please call the rectory at (908) 464-7600. Let them know the general nature of the emergency and your contact information. They will get a message to us in the school gym.

Emergency Closings

Our program follows the guidelines of the New Providence School District for emergency closings due to inclement weather. If New Providence public schools are closed for the day, then Religious Education classes are cancelled as well. If a decision is made during the school day to cancel afternoon or evening classes, we will notify parents via email. You may call the Parish Catechetical Office at (908) 464-8156 to listen to the message if in doubt about cancellation. In addition, check the parish website www.olpnp.com and Like us on Facebook.

Protecting God's Children/Child Abuse Policy

Consistent with Archdiocesan policy and local legal code, the Parish Catechetical Office staff and volunteers have a moral and legal obligation to report any suspected child abuse to authorities to ensure the welfare of a child.

All staff, catechists, and weekly dedicated volunteers are required to:

- Acknowledge receipt of and compliance with the *Archdiocesan Policy Regarding Conduct with Minors*.
- Provide satisfactory results of a criminal background check.
- Participate in the "Protecting God's Children" training program.

SACRAMENT PROGRAM

Our Lady of Peace has developed a comprehensive Sacrament Preparation Program which is designed to help each child and his/her family to become actively involved in the parish community. We want each person who comes to our parish to feel welcomed by our community, grow in participation in the Mass and in understanding of the sacraments.

The sacrament policies of the Archdiocese of Newark state that:

- Your family should be registered in the parish in which your child receives the sacraments.
- The immediate preparation period of catechesis for sacraments should be parish-based and not school-based; it should involve both Catholic school and public school students in a coordinated and unified fashion.

The sacraments are celebrations of the parish community. All sacraments, including First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation, should be received in the parish in which the family is registered and worships. Families who are not registered and contributing members of Our Lady of Peace should contact the parish in which they are registered for information regarding the preparation of children for the sacraments.

The Sacrament Preparation Program for OLP is coordinated and administered by the Catechetical Office in collaboration with parents, the Academy of OLP principal and teachers. The students of the preparation program include parish children who attend our Religious Education Program, the Academy and other Catholic schools.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

*Recognizing that parents are the primary educators of the faith for their children, the immediate preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist **takes place within the family.** Our parish program provides parents with the materials, resources, and support they need. Sacrament preparation takes place at home in conjunction with your child's grade-level faith formation in the parish Religious Education Program or Catholic school. We hope that as parents help their child learn about Jesus and His Presence in the Eucharist, both parent and child will grow closer to Christ and gain a fuller understanding of our Catholic faith.*

First Reconciliation

After completing one year of religious education, children receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in second grade. Detailed program requirements are explained during a parent meeting generally held in the fall of second grade.

A Reconciliation preparation fee of \$50 will be due in the fall of second grade to defray the cost of materials and a retreat.

First Eucharist

Preparation for the sacrament begins when the child enters first grade religious education and continues in second grade as the child prepares for First Reconciliation. Children receive the Sacrament of First Eucharist in third grade. Detailed program requirements are explained during a parent meeting generally held in the fall of third grade.

A First Eucharist preparation fee of \$60 will be due in the fall of third grade to defrays the cost of materials and a retreat.

Confirmation

A candidate must have experienced ongoing religious education in grades one through eight either in a Catholic school or parish religious education program. If formal religious education has lapsed, the student must make up grade levels missed. Families new to the parish should contact the Parish Catechetical Office.

In recognition of an adolescent's faith maturity, the preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation begins after seventh grade and takes place over two years, typically within the student's community of peers, and is led by Catechetical Office and BOLD Youth Ministry staff. The Rite of Confirmation takes place during Easter Season of ninth grade.

Information regarding our two-year Confirmation program is explained during a meeting generally held in the fall of eighth grade. Detailed program requirements for rising 8th graders and rising 9th graders are communicated through BOLD Youth Ministry.

A one-time Confirmation preparation fee in ninth grade defrays the cost of guest speakers and retreats.