

# *Church of Our Lady of Lourdes*



## *Office of Religious Education Parent/Student Handbook*

**Alicia Erney – Director of Religious Education**

**Religious Education Office:**

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**Session Times:**

Session A Wednesday 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM  
Session B Wednesday 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM  
  
Session C Thursday 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM  
Session D Thursday 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM

Glassboro Intermediate School  
202 North Delsea Drive  
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Our **Parish Religious Education Program** (PREP) is structured to provide catechetical instruction in the Catholic faith to all parish children who are attending non-Catholic schools. Parents, by word and example, teach their children from birth throughout life. At Baptism, the parent undertakes the responsibility of providing for their child's Christian formation. The Religious Education staff is here to assist parents in the spiritual formation and ongoing moral development of their child through a formal program of continuous religious education.

In our program, we seek to provide the catechesis and skills for each child to grow and mature in understanding, positive attitudes, and faithful practice of the Catholic faith. Through the process of catechetical instruction, we hope to deepen the faith and sense of belonging to the Catholic Church in our children, so that they will be moved to sharing of their time, talent and treasure in the life of the Church, now and throughout their lives. We strive to assist children in committing themselves to a personal relationship with God characterized by a vigorous sacramental life, a lifelong pattern of prayer, Christian service, and growth in understanding the Catholic faith. This process is achieved with the joint efforts of our parish staff, catechists, parents, and students.

Committed to this active partnership between parish staff and families, we place our efforts with confidence in God's loving hands.

### **Admission Policies**

All families who register in Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education Program must be registered members of this parish community. All students in the program must re-register each year.

New Students transferring from another parish's Religious Education Program or Catholic school must supply the following information when registering:

- A copy of the child's **Baptismal Certificate**
- Dates of all sacraments received
- A letter of prior Religious education or Catholic school completion (report card, or letter from prior parish)

Students who enter into our program without having celebrated the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation), beyond the usual age for reception of these sacraments, are provided with special transition classes. Parents are asked to contact the Director to discuss making arrangements for the celebration of the particular sacrament.

Children with special learning needs are welcomed and included in our program to the best extent possible. No child will be denied religious education due to a physical or mental disability. When possible, an aide will be provided to work one-on-one with your child. Parents are asked to indicate any special needs during registration.

### **Financial Policies**

Tuition is based on the number of children enrolled per family. Families enrolled in our program are asked to pay their tuition in full prior to the start of class. We ask for your cooperation in this matter.

Families experiencing financial difficulties are asked to contact the Office of Religious Education to explain their situation and request a partial or full waiver. Such requests will be kept in strict confidence. No child will be denied religious instruction due to a financial situation.

In addition to the tuition fee, there is an activity fee for all children who are celebrating sacraments (First Eucharist / Confirmation). This fee will help to defray the cost of the retreats, certificates, program booklets and other costs incurred with the celebration of the sacraments.

Families who withdraw children from the program before the scheduled start date will be entitled to a partial refund of 75%. Withdrawal from the program after the scheduled start date, but before December 1<sup>st</sup>, will be entitled to a partial refund of 25%. No refund will be given after December 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Books/Assignments**

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their children complete all work assigned by their Catechist. It is expected that parents assist their children in remembering to bring their completed assignments, books and a pen or pencil to class each week.

If a textbook is lost, the student will be required to purchase a new book. The fee for a replacement textbook is \$20.00. If a student bible is lost, the replacement cost is \$10.00.

### **Attendance Policies**

Christian principles learned in the classroom and the home makes sense only if they are practiced regularly. ATTENDANCE AT MASS IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM. It is expected that students enrolled in the program be fully aware of their Sunday Mass and Holy Day obligation and fulfill that obligation faithfully by attending Mass with their family.

All PREP classes will be conducted at St. Bridget School unless there is a scheduled activity (Mass, confessions, prayer service) conducted at the Church. Parents are encouraged to see that their children attend religious education classes regularly during the year. There are times, however, when an absence from class is unavoidable. In such cases, parents are asked to send a note to the child's Catechist, on their return, explaining the reason for the absence. When a child is absent from class twice in a row, or a total of three times during the year, a call will be made by the Director inquiring about the child's absence. Excessive absence is cause for retention of a child in any grade. **No more than four (4) absences per school year will be accepted** unless there are extenuating circumstances as determined by the Director of Religious Education and the Pastor. Sporting activities and practices are not excused absences from religious education classes. Please schedule routine doctor and dentist appointments for a day and time which will not conflict with religious education classes.

Please note that tardiness to and/or early dismissal from class is disruptive to the learning process. We stress that every attempt should be made to arrive for class on time. Children are expected to remain the entire one hour and fifteen minute session. ***3 late occurrences, 3 early dismissals, or a combination of either disruption will be marked as 1 absence.***

### **Class Cancellations**

Whenever inclement weather forces closings for Glassboro or Washington Township schools for the entire day, PREP classes will also be cancelled. In the case of weather or other emergencies that may occur toward the end of the school day, we will do our best to notify the local schools if classes are cancelled; a voice message will be made available on the office telephone, 881-1552; and announcements of Parish Religious Education class cancellations will also be aired over KYW Newsradio1060.

### **Discipline Policies**

Every person is worthy of being treated with care and the respect fitting one made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, classroom behavior needs to be characterized by genuine Christian care, mutual respect, and honesty. Disruptive behavior prevents learning for the whole class and can be frustrating for the Catechist who is volunteering their time for the good of the students. Under no circumstances will a student or an adult be permitted to strike another or use abusive language for any reason. Lack of self-discipline during class will be addressed promptly. Removal of a student from the classroom may lead to suspension.

The normal steps for disciplinary action will be:

1. Verbal correction by the Catechist and parental contact
2. Student will be sent to the office to meet with the Director
3. Parent and child will meet with the Director
4. Child may be removed from the program

A student will be removed from the classroom immediately and suspended for any of the following violations:

- Drugs/Alcohol/Substance abuse
- Verbal or Physical Harassment
- Stealing or damaging parish property
- Jeopardizing a person's safety
- Fighting

A written notice will be given indicating the reason for suspension. The pastor will be notified when such action is taken.

**Roller Sneakers, Heelys, Roller Blades, Wheelies are not permitted in the school.**

### **Substance Abuse Policy**

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, or trafficking in any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, injection or percutaneous means. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property will be immediately suspended from the program. Any student trafficking in illegal substances will be formally removed from the program and the matter turned over to the local authorities.

### **Child Abuse Policy**

Child abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- engaging in a sexual activity with a child
- denial of proper or necessary substance, education, medical care, or other care necessary for the child's health
- use of restraint procedures on a child that cause injury or pain
- administration of prescription drugs or medication without the ongoing supervision of a licensed physician
- providing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances
- commission of any act, other than by accidental means, that threatens or results in any injury or death to the child.

The Parish Religious Education Director is required by the New Jersey Code and Diocesan Policy on Child Abuse to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Catechists and

parents who observe actual or suspected child abuse are encouraged to report the matter in confidence to their Director of Religious Education immediately.

Catechists or parents who witness an act of child abuse perpetrated by a cleric, employee or volunteer of the parish, suspect that such an act has occurred, or receive a report of such an act, must report the incident immediately to the Diocesan Office. The telephone number is 856-583-6115.

### **Progress Reports**

To encourage student accomplishment and accountability for learning, students will be monitored and tested throughout the year. The areas of evaluation included on the progress report are:

- Homework
- Effort
- Class participation (including behavior and attitude)
- Testing (Prayers and understanding of course content)

If a student is not meeting the above requirements, the Catechist will contact the parent and a conference will be held. A successful year will result in advancement to the next level. A student who fails to meet the learning objectives will be required to work with a parent during the summer to complete all work and the student will be tested in September. If competency is achieved, the student will be promoted to the next level. Failure to complete all work will result in the student repeating the grade level. **Flagrant violation of the attendance policy will result in automatic retention.**

Our purpose is not to fail, retain, or punish students, but rather to insure that each child is receiving the knowledge necessary for them to become mature followers of Jesus Christ and to be participating members of the Catholic Church. Progress reports are distributed in January and May. Parents are asked to sign their child's report and return it to the Catechist.

### **Rights of Non-Custodial Parents**

Both parents have the right of access to a child's religious education progress reports and achievement information unless one parent produces a legal (court certified) document to the contrary. Upon reception of such a document, it will be attached to the child's record and all Catechists to whom the child is assigned will be informed of all special directions. Progress reports to the non-custodial parent will be provided upon request, which must be in writing. Changes in the child's normal routine must be approved by the custodial parent to the Religious Education Office and catechists will be notified of these changes. No child will be dismissed from the program to the non-custodial parent without the written consent of the custodial parent.

### **Parking and Dismissal**

In order to insure the safety of all students before and after Religious Education classes, parental cooperation is necessary. Therefore, **DROP OFF and PICK UP** for students is at the front of the Glassboro Intermediate Schol. Students **must be picked up** at the classroom door and signed out by a parent unless other arrangements are made, in writing, with the Director. This is for everyone's safety.

### **Class Content**

**Grade 1 - God Loves Us** - God created each person to live in a caring and loving environment. Jesus is God's Son, who died and rose for us. Students will learn the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, and Hail Mary.

**Grade 2 – Jesus Shares God's Life** - Through the study of Jesus' life, the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are studied. Students will review the basic prayers and learn the Act of Contrition. Students will participate in a structured retreat experience.

**Grade 3 – We are the Church** - Jesus, our friend, invites us to teach others about our Church. There will be reinforcement of prayers, and the introduction to the Apostles Creed, Stations of the Cross and the Rosary.

**Grade 4 - God's Law Guides Us** - Through the study of the Ten Commandments, we learn how to love others. The students will learn the Apostles Creed and gain a deeper understanding of the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary.

**Grade 5 – We Meet Jesus in the Sacraments** - Jesus is human and divine. There is an in depth study of each of the sacraments and continued reinforcement of prayers learned in previous grades.

**Grade 6 – We Are God's People** - Intense examination of the Old Testament and Jesus' roots in the Jewish community. Students will discuss God as He is made known through divine Revelation and the events of the Bible.

**Grade 7** – Students begin the two year program in preparation for Confirmation. The students will study the sacraments and the life of Jesus through the Gospels. Class instruction incorporates review of the content contained within the Knowledge of Faith Study Guide which includes all basic prayers, the Beatitudes, Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and other tenets of the Church.

**Grade 8** – Students will complete the final phase in preparation for Confirmation through the study of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Studies include a look at various ways we express and celebrate our Catholic faith as members of the Church. Students will reflect on their values, self-image and relationships as they see the decisions we make determine who we are and who we will become. Students are responsible to know all the prayers and content of the Knowledge of Faith Study Guide. Students will participate in a structured retreat experience and a formal interview with a member of the parish clergy prior to Confirmation.

#### **Service**

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Community is a stewardship community, thus we all give of our time, talent and treasure. As part of our classroom instruction, it is important that we instruct our students so that they may have a true understanding of stewardship. As part of the stewardship lesson of time and talent, each child will be required to participate in Christian service projects. Service projects for Grades 1 through 6 will be performed as a group and may be completed during class time. Grades 7 and 8 will participate in both group and individual service projects.

Based on the grade level, the minimum service requirement is as follows:

- Grade 1 & 2 - 1 service activity per year
- Grade 3, 4, 5, 6 - 1 service activity per semester
- Grade 7 - Minimum 10 hours per year, at least 3 different activities
- Grade 8 - Minimum 12 hours per year, at least 4 different activities

#### **Parent Sacramental Preparation**

Parents of students preparing for First Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation are required to attend Parent Sacramental Preparation meetings. These dates are listed on the Religious Education calendar. Attendance by at least one parent at all sacramental meetings is mandatory.

#### **Communications**

The church bulletin is the most important vehicle of communication. It is distributed at all weekend masses. All parents will be provided a calendar of activities and important dates in the beginning of the school year. A monthly flyer will distributed in classes and posted on the parish website, [www.churchofourladyoflourdes.org](http://www.churchofourladyoflourdes.org), providing adjustments and changes to the schedule along with any updates to the program.

#### **FORMS**

*All parents are required to complete an **Emergency Medical Form** prior to the beginning of classes. Health information is important to have on file in case a problem should arise with your child. If new health problems occur during the school year, please notify our office. In the case of a non-life threatening emergency, you will be contacted before any medical treatment is provided to your child.*