



Religious Education Family Handbook

Grades K-8

HolyFamilyPoland.org

2026 -2027 Catechetical Year

Introduction

“Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2222-2226). They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators, or catechists. They catechize primarily by their witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith” (*National Directory for Catechesis*, pg. 234).

In the Scriptures, God commands parents to educate their children in faith: “Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

Parents catechize their children primarily through the lived experience of the faith and through conversations often brought about by specific occasions. The parish Religious Education program exists in order to support you in your role as the primary catechists of your household by providing a systematic presentation of the basics of the Catholic faith. When this systematic presentation resonates with the child’s lived experience of the faith in the home, it becomes deeply meaningful and lasts a lifetime.

The systematic presentation of the faith in a gathered setting requires certain policies and guidelines to ensure a smooth program operation. Holy Family Parish’s policies and guidelines are contained in these few pages. Please read them over and use them as a reference throughout the catechetical year.

Please note that it is Diocesan Policy for your child/children to attend all eight years of CCD, Kindergarten being an optional year.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child’s participation in our program, please contact us and we will be happy to discuss your questions or concerns.

Parish Office Hours

Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Personnel

Mrs. Marnie Kelty Director of Religious Education	330-757-1545, ext.105 mkelty@youngstowndiocese.org
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Mrs. Stephanie Markey Religious Education Secretary	330-757-1545, ext. 106 smarkey@youngstowndiocese.org
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During Religious Education Hours

If you have an emergency and need to speak with the Director, please call 330-402-4630.

Communications Regarding Religious Education

Website

www.HolyFamilyPoland.org The website is an important form of communication that we use regularly. It contains all forms and paperwork pertaining to our Religious Education program and sacramental preparation.

Social Media

Our social media accounts provide a quick and easy way to remind our families about special events and schedule changes.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/holyfamilypoland>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/holyfamilyparishpoland/>

X: <https://x.com/HolyFamPoland>

Email

If you would like to receive religious education information via email, please send your email address to Marnie Kelty (mkelty@youngstowndiocese.org) or Stephanie Markey (smarkey@youngstowndiocese.org), if you did not include it on the registration form.

Parish Bulletin

Weekly parish bulletins are an important source of information about our Religious Education programs for children and youth. The upcoming calendar is posted there as well as any special announcements or reminders.

Calendar

A yearly Religious Education calendar is distributed to each family at the beginning of the catechetical year in September and will also be available on the parish website (www.HolyFamilyPoland.org). Updates and information about special events will be sent home as needed. Please keep the calendar for reference throughout the year. We may revise our calendar when unforeseen circumstances arise. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Inclement Weather and Unexpected Closings

If the Poland Public Schools are closed for the day due to inclement weather, the Holy Family Religious Education classes will also be closed. For unexpected closings, we will try to notify the public schools to make the appropriate announcements before the children are dismissed. All closings will also be published via the parish Facebook page and an email will be sent to registered families. If all else fails, look for a sign posted on the main entrance doors of the Holy Family School building. As always, if you feel unsafe bringing your child to class, please stay home.

Curriculum

Purpose and Guidelines

The goal and purpose of all catechesis is to support parents in their task of forming their children into disciples of Jesus Christ and life-long active members of His Church. In a continuing effort to do this, the religious education program of the parish attempts to propose the beliefs of the Catholic faith in a comprehensive and systematic way by following the Diocese of Youngstown's "Curriculum for Catechesis," which is available upon request for parental review.

Textbooks

Students in Kindergarten through Eighth Grade use the "Gospel Weeklies" series, published by Pflaum. Students in Seventh and Eighth Grade may also use "YOUCAT" (the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church), published by Ignatius Press, and the "Catholic Youth Bible," published by Saint Mary's Press.

Sacramental Years and Records

Baptismal Certificates

A baptismal certificate is required for a child not baptized at Holy Family, as well as a certificate for those who celebrated First Communion at another parish. Please submit this information as soon as possible—students in sacramental years cannot receive their next sacraments until Holy Family Parish can verify their reception of the previous sacrament. All sacramental records are kept on file in the office of the parish where the sacrament was received, and parishes will mail the certificate(s) to a parent if you call and request one.

First Reconciliation and First Communion

Second grade is the usual grade for children to receive these sacraments. Children must attend Religious Education in First and Second grade in order to receive these sacraments. Parent meetings, home preparation, and regular attendance at Religious Education are required. If your child was not baptized in the Catholic Church, **please inform us immediately**. Rules have changed regarding reception of the sacraments after the age of reason (7 years old).

Confirmation

Eighth grade is the usual grade for children to receive this sacrament. Children must regularly attend Religious Education from first through eighth grades. Per Diocesan policy, students must attend Seventh and Eighth Grade classes prior to being Confirmed. Confirmation preparation will take place during scheduled Religious Education classes along with special sessions scheduled during the school year. Parents and sponsors will also be responsible for some of the child's Confirmation preparation.

Celebration of Sacraments

Please remember to keep the Sacrament as the center of your celebration. As your child receives First Reconciliation and First Communion or Confirmation, remember that receiving the sacraments of the Church is entirely about your child's growth in faith and the relationship s/he shares with Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Please keep these special days in the life of your son and daughter holy by showing reverence to the sacrament being received. If you feel your child is not ready to receive a sacrament, please call us. Families will receive information regarding meetings, home preparation, dress requirements, etc. Full and Active Participation is expected for sacramental preparation programs.

Program Policies and Guidelines

General Policies and Guidelines

Sunday Worship

Sunday Mass is a vital component of every Catholic's formation, whether they are children or adults. Weekly Mass attendance as a family is critical for effective faith development and community building. During religious education sessions the children are being taught the importance of participating in the liturgy and need to have an opportunity to do this.

Home-based Catechesis

Home – based Catechesis is offered only in cases of extreme circumstance. Please contact Mrs. Kelty to discuss options.

Child Protection Policy-VIRTUS

The Diocese of Youngstown and Holy Family Parish take your child's safety seriously. The Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation screen each Catechist and Volunteer prior to beginning their ministry. In addition, all catechists and adult office aides must complete the VIRTUS online training class.

Attendance

Children are expected to attend all sessions. We appreciate your commitment to prioritizing religious education, even amidst busy family schedules. When planning family trips or events, please refer to the calendar to avoid scheduling during class sessions.

Absences

Occasionally, a child will be unable to attend a class due to sickness or for other reasons. If your child is absent from Religious Education class, we will assume that you, as a parent, have determined that your child(ren) is/are unable to attend for a valid reason. Please contact the Religious Education Director or Secretary when your children will be absent. Students are responsible for completing and returning the material that they miss with their parents/guardians. **The students are expected to turn these completed assignments in to their catechist when they return to class.** There should be no more than four excused absences during the catechetical year. If absenteeism becomes a problem, the Director will contact the parents.

Makeup material

All students will need to complete the pamphlet for the class they missed, along with the grade specific Missed Class Make-up Form. The pamphlets are dated for the Sundays of the year. Students in Grades 7 & 8 should complete the pamphlet for the current Sunday. Students in Grades K-6 should complete the pamphlet for the upcoming Sunday.

Illness or Injury Outside of Religious Education

If your child is ill or unable to attend class due to injury, please do not send him or her to Religious Education. Please contact Mrs. Kelty or Mrs. Markey anytime your child will be absent. If your child will not be in attendance at Religious Education for an extended time due to illness or injury, please let us know, and we will make arrangements for him/her to remain current with his/her class.

During Religious Education Classes

Please remind your son or daughter to be respectful of the space we are using, whether it is the school, church, parish hall or grounds, and especially their catechist and classmates.

Attire

We ask that all children in grades K-8 come to Religious Education with clothing appropriate for a church setting. Specifically, no exposed midriffs or shoulders and no offensive t-shirts. Any type of "cleat" footwear, flip flops or "heelys" (shoes with rollers on the bottom) are not permitted. These are not safe indoor shoes and can also cause damage to the flooring.

Arrival

Please do not bring your children to class before 9:30 a.m. on Sundays or 4:30 p.m. Tuesdays/Wednesdays unless instructed otherwise. The majority of our catechists have jobs and families that prohibit them from arriving before the scheduled time. Students in grades K-8 will wait in the main entrance lobby until their catechist arrives before being released to their classroom.

Tardy Arrival and Building Security

Please make every effort for your child to arrive on time as tardiness is disruptive and causes the student to miss important announcements. Arriving on time also ensures your child is here before the doors are locked—the doors of the school will be locked at 9:55 a.m. on Sundays and 4:55 p.m. on Tuesdays/Wednesdays and will remain locked the entire time Religious Education classes are in session. If you arrive after the doors have been locked, please use the intercom system that is located to the right of the main doors. An office aide will let you in. Your child should then stop in at the Teachers' Lounge to check in before going to the classroom.

Illness or Injury During Religious Education

If your child is hurt or becomes ill, you or the emergency contact will be notified. For minor scrapes or cuts, we will give the child the necessary items to clean the wound and offer an adhesive strip. All injuries or illnesses will be documented. Please inform us of changes in health or emergency contacts.

Behavior and the Code of Conduct

We expect all of the children in attendance to behave in a respectful manner towards all other students and all adults. It is understood that all parents and students have read and agree to the Code of Conduct (found on the parish website on the Religious Education page), which details our discipline policy.

Fire, Tornado and Lockdown Drills

Fire, tornado and lockdown drills will take place once at the beginning of the school year. Please remind your children that these are important for their safety and that of their classmates.

Cell Phone Policy

All students' cell phones must be turned off (not merely put on silent) and will be collected at the beginning of each class. The catechists are equipped to make a telephone call if there is an emergency. There are telephones in each classroom, and each catechist has the home and emergency contact phone numbers for each of their students. At dismissal the catechist will return the phones to the students.

Dismissal

Early Dismissal

If your child must leave early, a dated and signed (by a parent or guardian) note must be brought in that day. Your child may not leave the building until you come to the Teachers' Lounge to sign her or him out. Children will not be permitted to wait in the parking lot for early dismissal. We will get your child when you arrive.

Regular Dismissal-Tuesday and Wednesday

Kindergarten through 3rd grade parents must be on the porch, waiting to safely escort their child/ren to the car. With written permission, students in grades 4-6 may escort their younger sibling to their car. Please send a note that will be kept on file. Children in grades 4-6 may go directly to their car.

Conclusion

We exist to help you catechize your family. Please do not hesitate to contact the Director if you need resources or support, or if you have any questions or concerns. May all of our families become "Holy Families!"