



CATECHIST HANDBOOK 2025-2026



"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." Matt 28:19-20

St. Mary Parish
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM
GRADES K-8

Religious Education Office

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In order to better serve you, please note the following:

To report **absentees, late arrivals and early dismissals**,
please contact the Absentee line:
708-326-9350 (select option 1)

For questions about **registration and billing**,
please contact the Executive Assistant:
Sue Polnaszek: 708-326-9358 or spolnaszek@stmarymokena.org

For questions about **sacraments, curriculum**,
and for **all catechist questions and sub requests**,
please contact the Assistant DRE:
Suzy Olsen: 708-326-9357 or
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For all other questions, please contact the
Front Desk Administrative Assistant:
Kathy Brzeszkiewicz: 708-326-9352 or kbrez@stmarymokena.org

In-Session Office Hours:

Monday	9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Tuesday and Wednesday	3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday	3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Friday	Closed
Sunday	9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

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Welcome to St. Mary Parish

Religious Education

Peace be with you and thank you for responding to your call to serve the Lord as a Catechist! This is a special ministry that calls forth those of us entrusted to pass on the faith to the next generation. Our Religious Education Office (the “RE Office”) exists to support you in this promising endeavor. We are partnering with you to fulfill the great commission of our Lord – ***to go therefore and make disciples.***

This guide contains policies and basic expectations required of each catechist called to serve at St. Mary. After carefully reading these guidelines, we ask that you please sign the last page and return it to the RE Office for your respective file.

Just as we challenge our students to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom, so equally should each of us, as stewards and catechists, be expected to live a life that is consistent with the teachings of Jesus and model Christ-like behavior. In doing so, we exemplify and share the richness of our faith as an authentic witness of truth, beauty, and goodness. May you allow the light of Christ to shine brightly through you so others may also encounter His love for them as sons and daughters of the one true God.

St. Mary’s RE Office team is here to support you throughout the 2025-26 year. If we can assist you in any way, please feel free to contact us at any time by calling 708-326-9352 or email us at re@stmarymokena.org.

Peace and blessings,

Tami Brongiel

Tami Brongiel
Director of Religious Education

Catechist Job Description

Teachers in the Religious Education Program are called Catechists. A Catechist is “one who echoes the Word of God.” Catechists are gifts of the Church.

Each Catechist contributes time and service toward achieving the primary goal and objectives of the Religious Education Program to teach as Jesus taught. Catechists share the curriculum while sharing their faith and love for the Lord. This contribution goes far beyond actual teaching time. It includes the following:

1. Participating in all Catechist Meetings; complying with Diocesan safe environment standards including, but not limited to, completing the VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” and creating/maintaining your VIRTUS account; attend catechists trainings/retreats, participate in continuing faith formation opportunities.
2. Preparing for weekly lessons in cooperation with other Catechists of the same grade. A calendar lesson plan is provided as an overview for each grade and will help aid you as to which chapters should be covered each week; we do, however, ask that the Catechist, as best he/she can, adhere to and follow the plan as closely as possible.

Note:

The Monday before each RE class, the RE Office will email the weekly Catechist newsletter (the “Letter”) to each Catechist. Catechists are asked to read these Letters before arriving on campus. The Letters will contain important information.

3. Providing prayer experiences that enrich the day’s lesson and that offer opportunities for students to grow in relationship with God.
4. Being faithful stewards by consistently using the texts.
5. Being present at least fifteen minutes before class sessions begin.
6. Maintaining discipline during class sessions and liturgical celebrations.
7. Keeping careful records of each student’s progress in studies and absences.
8. Informing parents of the topics to be taught during the school year and requirements to be met by the students in each respective grade. Weekly or monthly email updates to parents are highly encouraged.
9. Being responsible for classroom furnishings and supplies.

10. Each Catechist will be required to keep a seating chart and update it as necessary if changes are made throughout the year. This further helps to keep order in the classroom and if anything is missing from a desk we then know who is responsible.
11. Informing the Assistant DRE in advance if a substitute is required and providing a substitute for the session(s) missed as well as providing the substitute teacher with a lesson plan and all necessary materials, including his/her class list and seating chart. Please ask the substitute to stop in the office to notify the staff that he/she is present.

FORMATION:

Requirements of the Diocese.

1. Safe Environment: If the Catechist Assistant is 18 years or older they must attend "Protecting God's Children." If the Catechist Assistant is less than 18 years of age, they must complete "Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0" via VIRTUS Online. All Catechist Assistants are invited to attend any and all catechist meetings.
2. Continuing Education: Beginning September 2024 the Diocese requires each Catechist to log 6 hours of continuing education. Catechists will be expected to use Catechetical Institute through Franciscan at Home to complete 1 workshop per year to satisfy 3 of those hours. Further information will be provided at the annual Catechist orientation meetings.



Assistant Catechist Job Description

A Catechist Assistant is an important part of the classroom family. The Catechists, as well as the children, depend on the Catechist Assistant to be present and offer assistance all year long. Please plan on being present at every class.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Arrive in the RE Office at least 15 minutes before class begins.
2. Take needed supplies to your designated classroom. Get Catechist's bin for grades K-2.
3. Open drapes or close if sun reflects on the board, and, if needed, windows for proper ventilation.
4. Take down enough desk chairs needed for the number of children in your class. (Catechist will inform you which desks he/she uses).
5. Arrange supplies, crafts, etc.
6. Help greet the children and get them settled.

DURING CLASS:

1. Take attendance and place the attendance sheet immediately and directly outside the classroom.
2. Help with small group discussions.
3. Help assist projects: cut, paste and clean-up, etc.
4. Hear the children's various prayers that they should be memorizing and record their progress.
5. Help maintain order in the classroom, church, and hallway.
6. Accompany children to the washroom.
7. Help distribute various supplies to children when needed.
8. Minors (under 18) are never to be left alone in any one classroom.

AFTER CLASS:

1. Rearrange furniture as it was, thereby, assuring the classroom has been returned to its original state of entry (i.e. cleanliness and order).
2. Erase board, etc.
3. Discuss needs for the next class.
4. Return supplies to the RE Office.

Requirement of the Diocese:

Safe Environment: If the Catechist Assistant is 18 years or older they must attend "Protecting God's Children." If the Catechist Assistant is less than 18 years of age, they must complete "Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0" via VIRTUS Online. All Catechist Assistants are invited to attend any and all Catechist meetings.

*In addition to various tasks and responsibilities listed above, an individual Catechist may also delegate other responsibilities that he/she deems appropriate to his/her needs. Being a Catechist Assistant is a very IMPORTANT and MUCH NEEDED MINISTRY! Catechists DEPEND ON YOU to come on a weekly basis. If for some reason, you cannot attend a class session, you are expected to inform your Catechist and also the RE Office.

Religious Ed Mission Statement: *To provide an environment in which students, their families, and Catechists grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ and their desire to live according to the principles and values of our Roman Catholic faith.*

Religious Ed Vision Statement: *Inspire families, as members of our parish community, to build the domestic church through an ever growing devotion to the Sacramental life of our Faith, especially the Holy Eucharist.*

Focus for 2025-26:The Eucharist

Patroness: Our Lady of Mount Carmel

CATECHIST FORMATION

1. *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 (also known as Confession or 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*

The Diocese of Joliet has partnered with the Catechetical Institute at Franciscan University of Steubenville called Franciscan at Home *forming those who form others* - for those involved in professional and volunteer ministry. We have provided information on how to create a free account courtesy of the Diocese of Joliet.

The expectation for Catechists will resume this year and remains indicative of the need that every Catechist complete 6 hours of formation in activities offered at the parish or diocesan level. The new diocesan-wide expectation for catechists will begin in August of 2024. At that time, Catechists will be expected to complete 6 hours of ongoing formation as before. The *first Foundational Track workshop* will be required. The remaining 3 hours may come from another formation activity provided at the parish or deanery level or, if desired, a second workshop in the *Foundational Track*.

2. St. Mary Catechist Meetings:

Our Catechist trainings and retreats are designed to provide opportunities of formation and evangelization. These gatherings present a time to pray together, share successes and general concerns, a time to discuss personal faith, and share ideas for class.

PREPARATION FOR A RELIGION CLASS

1. Spend some time reading, thinking, applying, and praying

READ

- Catechist manual: lesson plans and other related materials
- Scripture references
- Weekly Catechist Letter

THINK

- about what you read
- how it affects you
- how it affects your children and families
- how you convey the concept (by using your own words, techniques, anecdotes, visuals, etc.) of the lesson.
- how the various lesson components fit together (be sure you have a proper understanding and comprehension of all material before you try to teach it).

APPLY

- what you are teaching to real life (ask yourself how does this relate to the present, past, and future situations of my life and the lives of my students).

PRAY

- for guidance and conviction
- for inspiration
- for the ability to teach what you've prepared
- for His presence in your class

2. Grades 1 - 6 provide a **Background for the Catechist** for each chapter to help you understand what the lesson will be about that you are going to be teaching. There is also an **At-a-Glance Planner** before each chapter.

3. Psych yourself up! **Pray before class.** Get into a positive mood. Smile; be confident, full of conviction, and extremely urgent about the Lord's message. Afterall, you represent the good shepherd to God's children!

MANUALS

The manuals are an excellent tool for practical instructions on how to teach religion and will provide necessary background material for the Catechist. However, manuals should be a GUIDE and not a CRUTCH! We wish for our Catechists to bring forth traditional religious studies as well incorporate their own innovative, thought-provoking knowledge and guidance to their students.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

DVDs/videos

Lists are available in the RE Office upon request. The DVDs and videos are located in the office as well. To check out a DVD/Video from the RE Office, simply fill out a request form and place it in the office request box or you may email the R.E. front desk - re@stmarymokena.org. Please return

any item(s) within a week's time so others may use them as well.

Books	Lists are available in the RE Office upon request. The books are located in the office as well. To check out a book from the RE Office, simply fill out a request form and place it in the office request box. Please return within a week's time so others may use them as well.
YOUCAT	Every Catechist will have access to a YOUCAT to use; find them on the back bookcase in the RE Office. This is the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church: one version for K-6, ("For Kids") and one for 7th grade and up.
Bibles	Each Catechist in grades K-8 will receive a bible to use for the year. Children in 7 th and 8 th grade will be given a bible as part of their materials fee, specifically the "Catholic Youth Bible"
Catechetical/Prayer Resources	Additional resources for catechesis and prayer services are available in the RE Office.

One important thing to remember is that even with an excellent catechist manual, sessions don't always go exactly as planned. Sometimes things will take more or less time than you've estimated, or perhaps the class simply doesn't understand what you're trying to present. However, it's always better to OVER PLAN than UNDER PLAN. Experience teaches us that it is much easier to be flexible when you plan more, rather than less. If you've thought out your lesson carefully, you'll feel comfortable in adding or deleting from your established plan and still be able to accomplish the aim of your lesson. This approach is applicable to all grade levels. **Be prepared, be flexible! Don't be hard on yourselves!**

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline is integral for it promotes within each child the development of a solid system of moral values. Good discipline is based on the fundamental Christian principles of thoughtfulness, responsibility, and respect toward others. So that Catechists, children, and parents understand the basic rules of the St. Mary RE Program, below lists the regulations and policies to be followed by the children, families, and RE Staff.

Rules and Regulations:

1. Respect and obey Catechists, Catechist Assistants, and other adults; show respect to classmates.
2. All participants are expected to arrive on time.
3. All participants are expected to demonstrate respect and common courtesy

- at all times. Inappropriate language/behavior/conduct will not be tolerated.
4. Socializing should always be done in public areas.
 5. Dress should reflect the values of modesty and respect, and inscriptions and images on clothing should reflect Christian values. Coats and hats are not to be worn during class.
 6. Bring textbook, bible (7, 8), and other required materials to each class.
 7. Enter and exit school in an orderly fashion.
 8. **The Catechist must be present in the classroom for the student to enter.** Take your assigned place in the classroom.
 9. Stand for the beginning and ending prayers and pray reverently.
 10. Raise your hand and wait for permission before speaking during class. Stay in your seat unless you have permission to leave.
 11. All homework is to be completed on time and done to the best of the child's ability.
 12. All administered tests (if any) and progress reports are to be signed and returned to Catechists.
 13. Do not touch any books or supplies in the desk you are using. Damaging school property or private property on school premises is regarded as a serious offense. Do not touch the property of your classmates.
 14. Swearing/obscenity in any oral, visual, or written form is forbidden.
 15. Cell phone use is prohibited during class. That means any cell phone that rings, is used as a phone or a camera, or to text message is to be claimed by the Catechist.
 16. The possession or consumption of any alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
 17. The possession of any illegal substances is prohibited and subject to legal action.
 18. Smoking, vaping, e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and cannabis in any form are prohibited.
 19. Weapons and/or drug paraphernalia are prohibited.

INFRACTION OF THESE RULES CAN MEAN IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL

You may add additional classroom rules. **However, they may not contradict any of the above regulations and they must be reasonable.** If you have any significant additions, copies of your classroom rules must also be provided to the Director before classes begin. **State the rules on the first day of class.**

Misbehavior will lead to appropriate disciplinary measures:

- STEP 1** The Catechist handles misbehavior within the classroom as firmly, privately, and positively as possible. May include a parent phone call or email.
- STEP 2** The child is sent to the Director's Office with the hall monitor for a conference with the Director. Then, if the situation is resolved, the child apologizes to the Catechist, promises to improve, and is immediately returned to the classroom.
- STEP 3** The child is sent to the Director's Office with a hall monitor to call parent(s) to come pick him/her up. Arrangements will be made for a conference with the Director, Catechist, parent(s), and the child. The child and parents will be informed that the child will be allowed back

to the classroom when he/she agrees to comply with the classroom and program rules.

NOTE: The seriousness of the misbehavior also determines the course of disciplinary action. The program rules and regulations and any additional classroom rules that a Catechist may have should be discussed as part of the first class. **However, because each situation is different, do not discuss the disciplinary measures outlined above until a disciplinary situation with a child requires such possible application.**

Should a Catechist become aware of a student's personal issues of a serious nature, the DRE must be contacted so a decision can be made to include parents or other professionals.

If a chronic condition exists with the behavior, attendance, or attitude of a student, Catechists need to contact the parent within a reasonable time frame. If a student is constantly preventing other students from entering into the spirit of the class, it would be unfair to the student, the rest of the class, and the Catechist to ignore or endure the situation for too long. Before contacting the parent, please call the DRE to keep her up-to-date about the situation.

BE REASONABLE (Legal aspects of being a catechist):

REMEMBER:

When in doubt, ask yourself "What would a reasonable person do in these circumstances?" "If someone else were in this situation, what would I advise him or her to do?" "If Jesus were here, what would He do?"

--Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, J.D., Ph.D. (R.E. legal expert)

Therefore...

1. Know what your Catechist Handbook and other appropriate documents say.
2. Be familiar with the rules and regulations of your program and with any particular rules that your Director makes.
3. Enforce program rules.
4. Establish rules for behavior. Be sure to make the rules known to those affected. Be sure young people understand the rules and the consequences attributed for not following them. Be consistent in enforcing rules. (Posting and/or distributing rules are a good idea.)
5. No matter how angry you may become, never discipline a child without explaining what was done that merits a penalty and allowing the child some opportunity to explain the behavior.
6. Take every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of those in your care. When in serious doubt of physical injury, contact office personnel immediately and/or call 911. Report any unsafe building or other conditions to the Director or other appropriate person.
7. If an accident occurs in an area under your supervision, notify the Director immediately and make a written record of the specifics as soon as you can. The RE Office will provide report forms.
8. Do not leave children unattended. Ask another adult, (hall monitor, etc.) to "keep an eye" on your group.

9. Don't make unnecessary negative comments about young people either orally or in writing. If it is necessary to make statements about misconduct or performance, be sure comments are specific, behaviorally oriented, and verifiable. (For example: Bobby was absent six days this month, was late for seven classes, and was sent to the Director's office for fighting three times RATHER than Bobby is absent most of the time, late the rest of the time, and always in trouble.)
10. Keep some kind of plan book so if your professional competency is ever questioned, you will be able to go to the Director immediately and have a written record of what you did and what you intended to do.

CLASSROOM ORDER

Each Catechist is responsible for ORDER in his/her classroom. When you arrive, survey the room and be sure you know what the arrangement is before you begin class. Be CERTAIN that children do not touch materials in the desks to which they are sitting. Before you leave, be sure that drapes, shades, and windows are closed; lights are off, papers picked up, and desks arranged as you found them.

Be sure that the room is ready for the schoolteacher to use the next day.

Please leave the "Friend in Ministry" letter for the teacher whose room you will be using.

ABSENTEES & TARDY

The code for recording attendance in pencil is as follows (please use only these symbols):

✓ = PRESENT

X = ABSENT

T = TARDY

It is important that each child and adult leaders are accounted for on the attendance card. Please make your markings in pencil only. Please keep an accurate account of absenteeism. As a Catechist, if you notice a pattern beginning to develop, it is your responsibility to call the parent(s). Then, kindly inform the RE Office as to the status of the situation. If any further communication regarding this situation is needed at that point, the RE Office will pursue it. For drop-in students or substitute leaders, kindly write in their name for the drop-in/sub date.

If a student is TARDY:

1. If a child arrives late to your class AND you still have your attendance card either in your classroom or outside your door, erase the A by the child's name and change it to a T yourself, before sending your attendance card to the RE Office.
2. If a child arrives after attendance cards have been collected, the child must report to the RE Office first with a note or verbal explanation from the parent explaining the tardiness.
3. The child will then be sent to the classroom with the Office Tardy Slip.

Put the attendance card outside your classroom no later than 10 minutes after the start of class. The volunteer office helper/hall monitor will bring them to the REOffice and the office will call all absences that have not been called in.

A FAMILY/CLASS LIST will be given to each CATECHIST. This list will contain the phone number, email, address of each student, and any allergy/special notes, applicable. PLEASE update this as you are notified to do so. **Catechist-Parent contact is essential for good communication and rapport. Many problems can be rectified by a simple phone call from you.**

PLEASE NOTE: If you are aware of special situations that are affecting the attendance of some of your students, please inform the RE Office so that we are not making unnecessary phone calls home.

MAKE-UP WORK

Students are responsible for making-up the chapters with their parents that were missed in the event of an absence. Catechists need to communicate with the parents, by phone or email, what was missed and needs to be made up. All make-up work will be handled by the Catechist. Catechists need to follow through and check the work to make sure it was completed.

If the student is gone for an extended length of time because of illness, the Catechist should contact the parent with information about the work to be completed, as well as keep the DRE informed.

ADDITIONAL CATECHIST RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Family Handbook needs to be read thoroughly by each Catechist. Reading the handbook will provide information that the Catechist may need when communicating with parents about policies, events, changes, etc.
2. **Please wear your nametag each week.**
3. Stop and pick up your attendance card along with the emergency black binder and any information from your Catechist mailbox in the RE Office, as well as any supplies you will need for class. All Catechists should be in their classrooms no later than 15 minutes before class is to begin. The children may not enter the classroom until the Catechist arrives. The Catechist (or adult assistant) must be present in the classroom at all times when the children are in the room. Children must never be left in a room alone.
4. Correspondence with the RE Office and with the parents is welcome at all times. All Catechists should make it a point to be in contact with the parents of his/her children, particularly if a problem arises. **Communication is our most important management tool.**
5. Progress Reports are sent home twice during the year. Try to keep your own record of progress as the year goes along so you are able to fill out the progress reports quickly and accurately.
6. **If you require a substitute, please speak to your assistant first** and email the Assistant DRE that the assistant is stepping in. If your assistant catechist is unable to fill in for you, then it is the responsibility of the RE Office to procure one. The office will maintain a list of qualified substitute Catechists. If possible, give us at least a week's notice. We understand that some instances may prevent advanced notice.

7. **Check your classroom weekly, both BEFORE and AFTER class.** Note any lack of cleanliness or property damage you may find before class begins and after class ends. Be certain that your space has been cleared on the schoolteacher's desk for you to use. Immediately notify the REOffice, in writing, of any discrepancies.
8. If using the A/V equipment, please be certain that you shut down and turn it off at the end of class.
9. The Catechist may **NOT** maintain, administer, or supervise the taking of medicine.
10. No Catechist has permission to teach in a space outside of the assigned classroom. We do not permit teaching outside-even on nice days.
11. State law requires minor injuries to be treated with water, disinfectant, and band-aids. Every Catechist has, in his/her black emergency binder, a plastic sleeve that contains gloves, band-aids, and disinfectant to use to clean a wound. If there is a serious injury, please call 911 and notify the RE Office and parents immediately.
12. Should any illness or accident arise, please contact the RE Office immediately informing them of the situation. An ACCIDENT/INJURY/INCIDENT REPORT must be filed in the office on the day of any kind of accident before the catechist leaves.
13. Calendar changes are made occasionally. Please look at the calendar each week. Remind the children of dates, change of events, etc. and remind the parents.

Classroom Observation - it is the responsibility of the Director to be aware of the classroom situations - both good and bad during our sessions. We are pleased to support our Catechists and offer suggestions for teaching and discipline throughout the year.

Food Policy

Food is not permitted in the classroom. We request Catechists' cooperation on this policy and we will follow up. The reasons are listed below:

1. To ensure the many children with food allergies are safe in our program
2. To maintain an insect-free and rodent-free school building
3. To eliminate the wasting of serious class time
4. To eliminate unnecessary financial burdens on the catechist

VENTILATION & LIGHTS

While classes are in session, please see to proper ventilation in the room. If the room is too warm and stuffy, the children will not be attentive. Feel free to open windows and turn on ceiling fans. ALL CHILDREN are to take off their COATS and HATS when they come into the room. Boys ARE NOT to wear baseball caps either in the hallway or in the classroom. If the building is exceptionally cold, you will be notified before class begins that permission is given for children to wear coats and hats. Please turn on the lights in the classroom while classes are in session.

After class, close any windows you may have opened and turn off lights or fans you may have turned on.

DISMISSAL

Dismissal duty is the responsibility of every Catechist, office staff members and office assistants. We need you to be present for the safety of our children.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES FOR 2025-2026

Parents and guardians are urged to use extreme caution when dropping off or picking up their children. Religious Education Staff, Catechists, and Assistants will be assigned to help with dismissal at 195th Street and Door 4 Circle Drive only. **Please make sure your children know from which exit you will pick them up based on the first letter of the driving family's last name.**

Please follow the directions given below.

All STUDENTS will be dropped off at DOORS #3B and 4 in the Circle Drive.

The Circle Drive is the ONLY Drop-Off Station. All other doors will be locked.

Pick-Up Stations (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday classes):

1. Pick-up Lane. Eastbound on 195th Street: students last names of A-K

This driveway provides safety for children and very easy access and exit for drivers. Children will leave the building via Door #9. We are requesting that families whose last name begins with the letters "A-K" pick up their children at the **195th Street** lane.

2. Pick up for Door #4: students last names of L-Z

We are requesting that families whose last name begins with "L-Z" arrange to meet their children in the circle drive.

PLEASE NOTE: The RE Staff will monitor dismissal at the above-mentioned two locations only. There will be no supervision or responsibility for dismissal at the upper lot, or at any other location. Students will not be allowed to walk to the upper lot or elsewhere on St. Mary's grounds to meet their parent. In the event that parents park elsewhere on St. Mary's grounds for pick-up, they will be responsible for walking to the correct door to pick up their child/ren.

Pick-Up Stations (Sunday classes only):

All families will pick up their children at Door #4 in the Circle Drive.

Please be aware that people will be coming to and from Mass during Sunday RE dismissal.

Safety Alert

- Cell phones are a DISTRACTION. Please turn off when you are in the pick-up lane. *Illinois law prohibits use of cell phones in a school zone. This is a "ticketable" offense.*
- Calling children to cross the road to come to your car is dangerous and will not be allowed.

EARLY DISMISSAL

A student attending class is expected to attend the entire class. Early dismissals are discouraged, as they are disruptive to the entire class. Please inform the RE Office of any children who are to be released early and the time(s) that the child/ren are to be released. Send a permission note from parent(s) to the office with your Attendance Sheet. Please provide assignments ahead of time to these child/ren should they miss significant class time, or if you are giving homework. Call the hall monitor over (or ask your catechist assistant) to assist in escorting children to the RE Office. If the parents communicate with the office first regarding an early dismissal, we will inform you as quickly as possible.

CATECHIST ASSISTANTS

We will try to obtain a Catechist Assistant for each Catechist. These assistants can be very helpful when your class is involved in some sort of activity or when you're working with small groups or individuals. Therefore, it is important to plan something specific for them to do each week. Make good use of your assistants! They should escort a child if a need arises to leave the classroom for any reason.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Special Needs Buddies will be assigned as needed to students needing special attention in a classroom so they and the rest of the class can succeed. Parents/Catechists may request a "buddy" from the Director.

XEROXING

The costs of paper in particular and duplicating in general continue to increase dramatically each year. Please give very careful consideration to your requests for duplication of materials.

The Front Desk Administrator will assist with all materials that you may need to have xeroxed for your class. The following procedure should be followed:

1. The material and/or completed Xerox Requisition Form (pink sheets located in your binders) should be put in the “xerox” box located in the RE Office.
2. A good rule of thumb is to hand in material to be xeroxed the week before you need it.
3. Feel free to call in or email your request a day in advance, if it is necessary.
4. Xeroxing the day of class should be done in cases of absolute emergency!

REQUESTING THE USE OF CHURCH AND CLERGY INVITATIONS

1. Requesting Church and/or Clergy Use:

Call the RE Office and place your request. You will be informed of the availability of the facility and/or Clergy. It is a good idea to submit more than one date for the clergy to choose from. It is wise to plan ahead and give ADVANCE NOTICE of the date(s) desired.

MASS REFLECTION FORMS

Mass reflection forms are available upon request. These are optional and the Pastor discourages giving any type of rewards for attending Mass.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS AT ST. MARY

The RE Office collaborates with parents of both RE and School children preparing for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation. At St. Mary sacraments are usually celebrated in:

Grade 2 – Reconciliation and Eucharist

Grade 8 – Confirmation

Candidates must have satisfactorily completed TWO consecutive years of preparation for Eucharist (Grades 1 & 2) and TWO consecutive years of preparation for Confirmation (Grades 7 & 8). ***This is a Diocesan requirement.***

First Reconciliation

The primary responsibility for the preparation for Reconciliation rests with the parents, the primary educators of their children. However, as religious educators, we assist these parents so that their task of developing an understanding of Reconciliation will be meaningful to their child. Catechists and Catechists' Assistants are asked to be in attendance at the parent meetings and the First Reconciliation.

Our second grade program incorporates the Sacrament of Reconciliation within its content and most of the children who receive this sacrament for the first time are in

second grade. Parental participation and attendance at the meetings is an expectation of the sacramental preparation process.

The Celebration of First Reconciliation for these children and their families are on the list of important dates.

First Eucharist

As with Reconciliation, the primary responsibility for preparing the children for this Sacrament is with the parents. Parents attend meetings regarding their role just as they do for Reconciliation. Catechists and Catechists' Assistants are asked to be in attendance at the parent meetings, the retreats, practices and rehearsals for First Eucharist, and the First Eucharist Celebrations.

Once again, the second grade program incorporates the Sacrament of Eucharist within its content. Attendance at the retreat is a required part of the child's preparation. Parental participation and attendance at the meetings is an expectation of the sacramental preparation process.

The children will receive the Eucharist in two groups in May.

Confirmation Year I and II

The catechists prepare the children for this sacrament, along with the parents. Parents and candidates attend a meeting to go over what is expected of them. Catechists and Catechists' Assistants are asked to be in attendance at the parent meetings, the retreat, practice, and Confirmation.

Out of Sequence Sacraments (Delayed)

Baptized children, who did not make their First Reconciliation and/or First Communion in Grade 2, will attend "Intermediate Sacramental Prep" (or "ISP"). The Diocese of Joliet requires 2 years of preparation before receiving these sacraments. Therefore, children will attend their appropriate grade level religious ed classes, and monthly be brought out of that class to attend their sacramental prep class. This ensures that they do not lose out on their regularly scheduled progression, and at the same time be able to join in the sacraments with the proper preparation.

***Each child comes to ISP with different circumstances; please call the Director of Religious Education with any questions or concerns before registering your child.

TUITION

The tuition charge for the St. Mary Religious Education Program is as follows:

\$ \$290.00 for one child

\$ 410.00 for two children

\$ 500.00 for three or more children

There are Additional fees for books and supplies by grade level. No child will be excluded from the program due to genuine financial difficulty. Any family unable to pay tuition should contact the DRE.

Sacrament fees for Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation are flexible from year to year depending upon the costs of additional activities utilized to enhance the children's preparation for these sacraments. **For 2025/26 the Sacramental fees are in the amount of \$65.00.**

VITAL THINGS FOR A CATECHIST TO REMEMBER

1. Each of us has our own style - know your own basic style, develop it, and expand upon it, as much as possible.
2. Be enthusiastic...it always affects the children positively.
3. Attend workshops during the year to restore your energy and feed your spirit.
4. Remember to draw your energy from the Lord. This can only happen if you allow yourself enough quiet time for prayer.
5. Share your joy of the Good News with your children.
6. Believe the Spirit is working in and through you.
7. The role of the catechist is central to the continuing life of the Church.
8. Communication is also important with your RE Office support staff. Share your joys, concerns, questions - you'll be a better catechist for it!

Catechesis is the learning of a faith-filled way of life, in a lifelong process of conversion. May we be honest and open in our own faith journey. May we be instruments of God's ever-loving presence via the conduit of patience, understanding, and joy we share with our children. May we claim our mission to teach so that the echo of faith will continue on.

Prayers and Requirements to be Memorized

*The Catechist Assistants should listen to the children's prayers. The Catechist should continue teaching. The children need to be instructed to go out into the hall with the Assistants one by one.

Grade K:

- Sign of the Cross
- Glory Be
- Prayer to Guardian Angel

Grade 1:

Same as Grade K

- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Grace before meals

Grade 2:

Same as Grade K, 1

- Act of Contrition
- Morning Offering

Grade 3:

Same as Grade K, 1, 2

- Apostles' Creed
- Seven Sacraments

Grade 4:

Same as Grade K, 1, 2, 3

- 10 Commandments
- Memorare to the Blessed Virgin

Grade 5:

Same as Grade K, 1, 2, 3, 4

- Beatitudes
- Prayers of the Mass
- Prayer to St. Michael

Grade 6:

Same as Grade K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

- Nicene Creed

Grade 7:

Same as Grade K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

- Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy
- Seven Corporal Works of Mercy

Grade 8:

Same as Grade K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

- 7 gifts of the Spirit
- Prayer to the Holy Spirit

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Proceed to the next two pages to complete and return to the R.E. Office

REQUIREMENTS OF A CATECHIST

Statement of Faith

Catechists for the Religious Education Program must be Catholics of at least 18 years of age who have been baptized and have already received the Sacrament of the Eucharist and Confirmation. Catechists practice a life of Faith in conformity to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

I hereby affirm:

- ✠ *my faith in Christ and my fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Including, but not limited to, teachings on Mary and about the sanctity of life from conception to natural death as well as embracing the God given gender of each child at birth.*
- ✠ *that I practice my Catholic Faith by regularly joining in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist and the sacramental life of the Church.*
- ✠ *if married, my marriage was celebrated in the Catholic Church.*
- ✠ *if I have children, my children are being educated in the Catholic Faith.*
- ✠ *that I am a registered member of _____
Church City*
and fulfill my obligation to my parish to the best of my ability.
- ✠ *that I have received the Sacraments of ___ Baptism ___ Holy Eucharist ___ Confirmation.*
- ✠ *that I am fully aware of my responsibilities as a Catechist to provide the children in the program with the proper example of active, adult membership in the Church, and to encourage the children to follow this example.*

I do, therefore, affirm that I meet all the conditions desired of a Catechist.

DATE: _____

Catechist Name – Signature

Catechist Name – PLEASE PRINT

Address

Phone

Email

PLEASE RETURN TO THE R.E. OFFICE TO BE PLACED ON FILE

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Catechist Volunteer Handbook

This is to acknowledge that I have received a copy of the 2025-2026 Catechist Handbook and understand that it contains important information pertaining to St. Mary's Religious Education Program and its general policies and specific obligations and guidelines for the volunteer catechist.

I acknowledge that I have read the Catechist Handbook and have been given the opportunity to ask questions about anything contained in the handbook. Also, that St. Mary Religious Education has the sole and absolute discretion to amend, supplement, or rescind any provisions of this handbook as it deems appropriate.

- ☐ I have read and understood the contents of the handbook.
- ☐ I agree to abide by the conditions specified in this handbook and by any other rules, practices, or procedures that the St. Mary Religious Education Program adopts.

Catechist's Printed Name

Catechist's Signature

(Date)

PLEASE RETURN TO THE R.E. OFFICE

TO BE PLACED ON FILE