



**Queen *of the*
Apostles**
CATHOLIC PARISH
& SCHOOL

TOMAH-WARRENS, WISCONSIN

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
HANDBOOK
2026-2027**

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

DIRECTOR: JON BURBACH

303 WEST MONROE STREET, TOMAH

608-372-4516 x3

DRE@QUEENOFTHEAPOSTLESTOMAH.COM

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Queen of the Apostles Parish Mission Statement

Forming saints by proclaiming our Catholic faith, inspiring hope in serving our neighbor, and inviting all to encounter the saving love of Jesus Christ.

We the members of Queen of the Apostles Parish acknowledge the call to teach as Jesus did and commit ourselves to assisting the parish in carrying out the catechetical mission of the Catholic Church. We:

- believe that growth in our faith begins at an early age and is an ongoing process throughout our lives. In this journey of faith, we share not only the Catholic, Christian story and vision, but also our own personal journey of faith.
- realize that in order for the faith of the Church to continue to grow, we must treat the instruction of adults as importantly as the instruction of children.
- recognize that parents are the primary sources and role models in the faith development of their children. Our role is to assist parents not only in the instruction of their children in the doctrines, tradition and customs of the Catholic Church, but also in forming community and helping them live their faith in Christian service.
- acknowledge that the parish community as a whole is responsible for promoting the catechetical mission of the Church and for supporting catechists and the Education Committee in their work. Evangelization and conversion require a response from the whole person involving mind, heart and will.
- accept the challenge of meeting the needs of our youth and adults, taking into consideration their various cultures, social environments, learning style and schedules.

Catholic Education Committee

The Catholic Education Committee is a subcommittee of the Parish Pastoral Council that assists in fostering the educational aspects of the pastoral mission of the Parish, including the Religious Education Program. It also assists the pastor in the formulation and establishment of policy related to Catholic Education.

Members of the parish Catholic Education Committee can be found on the Parish website.

Family Involvement

The family is the first place a child is catechized and forms his/her vision of who God is. Before a child is baptized in the Catholic Church, his or her parents are asked to make a promise. Here is what they are asked:

You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

The most influential and foundational formation of faith in children is from the example and involvement of their parents. Parents should teach their children our Catholic faith, but even more important is to show them by example how to live the faith. This is most meaningfully demonstrated through:

- praying as a family
- regular attendance at Sunday Mass and on Holy Days of Obligation
- participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession)
- reading the Bible

We are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ and to teach our children to be the same. When we make our relationship with Jesus a priority in our own lives, it is much more likely that they will seek to grow in their own relationship with him.

The Parish Religious Education Program is an extension of what you are teaching your child(ren) at home, not a substitute. In fact, without at least some level of family formation and practice, Religious Education may actually have a negative impact on a child's understanding of and future practice of the faith.

If you have a desire to form and be an example for your children but maybe lack confidence in your knowledge of the faith, we offer opportunities and resources for you to learn and be formed as well. If you would like to learn about any of these to help with your own faith formation, just reach out to the Director of Religious Education (hereafter "DRE").

A very simple way to both grow in your own faith and to be more involved in your child's formation is to attend Religious Education classes with them. Although the curriculum is designed for younger students, adults can learn a lot from what is taught. As a parent, you are welcome to simply sit in the back of the class and observe. If you would like to be more involved, such as in the role of a catechist or assistant catechist, please contact the DRE.

Religious Education Registration Policies

Registration: Before students can be registered in Queen of the Apostles Religious Education, the student's family should establish Parish membership. If not a member, contact the Parish Office to receive parish registration information or register via our website.

Tuition: Yearly tuition for Religious Education is \$75 per child. Additional sacramental fees of \$15 are applied to Level 2 (First Communion) and Level 10 (Confirmation).

No child will be turned away if the family is unable to afford tuition. If you have financial hardship, please contact the DRE.

Religious Education Program Policies

Change of Information:

If your family information changes due to moving, marital status, etc., please contact the office so that we may keep our records up to date.

Emergency Information:

Parents should complete online registration or return student registration forms to the parish office. These forms provide us with the necessary information in case an emergency situation arises. Students should not bring medication of any kind to class. If medications are absolutely needed during class time, they must be brought to the DRE before class with a note from the parent/guardian as to the purpose of the medication, and the time to administer it.

Homeschool Religious Education:

The parish does not offer virtual or at-home options for Religious Education. However, as the primary catechists of their children, parents may choose to offer catechesis at home. Parents who elect this option should be sufficiently formed and knowledgeable in the Catholic faith themselves. Parents are encouraged to contact the DRE for recommended resources and curriculum that may be used at home. For children who are homeschooled, a meeting with the DRE and/or pastor may be required to determine the child's readiness before enrolling in the parish RE program, especially for sacramental years.

For sacramental years (Grades 2 and 9-10) children are required to attend parish classes unless an exception is made by the DRE and pastor.

Field trips:

Field trips for the RE program are rare, but in the event they are scheduled, permission forms are needed to take students off Queen of the Apostles property. Be sure to return the forms promptly if they have been sent home.

Dress code:

Students are expected to dress appropriately for class. Students are not to wear clothing with alcohol or drug references or with questionable messages or pictures. Clothing and style of dress should be in keeping with Catholic teaching. Hats or hoods are not to be worn in the building. When students attend Mass as part of their class, they should be dressed appropriately.

Attendance:

Enrolling your child in the RE program means you are making a commitment to the program and to your child. You are accepting the responsibility to make sure your child attends classes regularly and fulfills class requirements. Our program is a continuous process with each year building on previous years. Frequent attendance underscores the importance of learning and growing with their Catholic Family. Since the curriculum is presented in developmental sequence, children may not arbitrarily skip levels. If children register with some or no previous instruction, they may or may not be placed in the same level that they are at in their secular schooling. This matter must be discussed with the DRE and pastor.

- Please email, text, or call the DRE if your child will be late or absent from class.
- It is expected that students have no more than two excused absences per semester. If the student misses a significant number of classes, they may be referred to the DRE or pastor to determine a readiness for the following level.

- Wednesday evenings should be reserved for Religious Education in order to communicate the importance of faith formation to children. Missing class for things such as sports or other extracurricular activities conveys a message that the faith is secondary.
- If a situation arises in which the parent can see that the student will miss more than the expected amount of classes, the parent should discuss the situation with the DRE to make other arrangements.
- If for some reason a child needs to be excused early from class, please observe the following: An email or written note must be turned into the DRE prior to or at the beginning of class. The note must contain the reason for dismissal if the child is to be permitted to leave.

Drop-off & Pick-up:

- Students should be dropped off no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of classes (5:45pm) Students will gather in the gym until 5 minutes prior to class, and then report to their assigned classrooms. Parents of younger students may escort their child to the classroom if desired.
- Students in Grades K-8 may enter/exit through **Doors C** (street-facing double-door next to the church/elevator door) **Door E** (southwest door off the playground).
Students in Grades 9-10 will enter/exit through **Door C**
- Students will be picked up immediately following class. Parents are welcome to wait quietly in the hallway outside of their child's classroom. RE staff will wait to ensure all students are picked up.

Communication with Families:

The RE program uses a platform to communicate with parents and families called **Flocknote™**. Parents are asked to register using their preferred email address and/or cell phone number to receive messages via email and/or text. This will be the primary means to communicate cancellations, schedule changes, and general information. Families can register at: <https://QueenoftheApostles.flocknote.com/ReligiousEducation>

Once registered, you may need to ensure that messages from Flocknote are not delivered to your spam folder.

Class cancellations:

Due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances, it may be necessary to cancel class. A message (email and text) will be sent to parents through **Flocknote** if classes are canceled. If the Tomah Area Schools have closed for the day or have an early release due to inclement weather, RE classes will automatically be canceled for that evening.

Safety concerns:

Parents are always welcome to observe their child's class. If a child is injured or sick, parents will be called immediately if seriousness warrants. Parents may contact the DRE with any concerns regarding their child's class.

Class atmosphere and conduct:

Catechists (RE teachers) are volunteers and have their own work and family responsibilities. They have spent time preparing their classrooms, their lessons, and their hearts. They have also committed additional time to workshops, seminars and meetings in order to provide their class with the best faith-sharing leadership possible.

In order to demonstrate support of these dedicated members of our parish, we ask the parents to observe the following:

- Send and pick up children from all sessions on time.
- Communicate the importance of participating in class.
- Discuss the day's lessons with your child and continue to develop their faith life.
- Help to ensure children complete assignments and bring them to the next class.

Student responsibilities:

In the classroom, students are asked to:

- Respect the authority of the catechist as the leader in the classroom.
- Participate fully and appropriately in class activities.
- Treat others and property of others with respect.
- Complete all assigned homework.
- RESPECT GOD, OTHERS, AND SELF.

Occasionally there may be situations where disciplinary action is necessary. Parents will be notified by the DRE, the catechist, or both as to the nature of the disruption. If a continuous or severe disruption takes place, the parents will be called and asked to remove the child from the premises. If a child is removed from a class, the responsibility will fall on the parent to complete the course work with the child so that the child may obtain credit for the year. The pastor and DRE will determine if the child will be allowed to be readmitted.

Cell Phone Policy:

Students will be asked to silence and put away all cell phones and electronics at the beginning of class. After this, if a teacher sees a cell phone being used, he/she has the right to take the phone away from the student. In order to regain the phone, the student's parents may be required to pick up the phone from the classroom at the end of class. If deemed necessary, a teacher may also adopt a policy of collecting phones before class and returning them upon dismissal.

Weapons Policy:

No person (teacher, student, parent/guardian, or other person) shall possess a dangerous weapon (Wis. Stat. Sec. 948.60, 948.605, and 948.61) while on Queen of the Apostles School premises; certain legal exceptions may apply. For the purposes of this policy, Saint Mary's Church is not considered part of the school premises.

Mandatory Reporting:

Wisconsin law (48.981(2)) requires that any mandated reporter who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child seen by the person in the course of professional duties has been abused or neglected, or who has reason to believe that a child seen by the person in the course of professional duties has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect of the child will occur, make a report to county CPS or law enforcement.

In addition, Wisconsin law (175.32) requires that any mandated reporter who believes in good faith, based on a threat made by an individual seen in the course of professional duties regarding violence in or targeted at a school, that there is a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a student or school employee or the public, make a report to law enforcement.

Sacraments

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist: Students prepare for these sacraments in Level 2. At points during Level 2 preparation the parents, pastor and DRE will determine the readiness of the child using the criteria listed below. If a student is beyond second grade in school but has not received their First Holy Communion, the DRE, in consultation with the parents, will determine if the child will participate in the Level 2 curriculum or require an individualized curriculum due to age or other circumstances. In order to receive First Reconciliation and Eucharist, the following are required:

- Child must be baptized in the Catholic Church or have made a Profession of Faith
- Child's baptismal certificate is on file at the Parish
- Regular attendance at Sunday Mass
- Regular attendance at Religious Education Classes
- A basic ability to distinguish right from wrong
- An awareness for the need for forgiveness
- An ability to articulate one's wrongdoings
- A basic trust in the love and forgiveness of Jesus
- Knowledge of basic Catholic prayers (e.g. Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be)
- Active participation in classroom discussion and activities
- A recognition of the Real Presence in the Eucharist
- Basic knowledge of the Mass
- Participation in a First Communion Retreat

*See [here](#) for more information on First Reconciliation and First Communion from the Diocese of La Crosse.

Confirmation: The process of Confirmation begins long before the student comes to the Parish for formal religious education classes. The immediate preparation for the sacrament requires the following:

- Age appropriate understanding of the Catholic faith.
- Regular attendance at Sunday Mass
- Attendance and active participation in *The Disciples Way* (Levels 9 & 10)
- Baptized Catholic or have made a profession of faith
- Shows signs of a growing relationship with God
- Able to articulate the role of the Holy Spirit in their life
- Attendance at a Confirmation retreat (normally held in early spring)
- Recommendation from the Pastor to the Bishop that this person understands and accepts the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Diocesan guidelines have been met (see [here](#) for information from the Diocese of La Crosse)

Safe Environment

Per the Diocese of La Crosse, our catechists are trained in Safe Environment. This can be reviewed on the Diocese of La Crosse website, or a hard copy will be available in the Religious Education office. We offer Safe Environment instruction to our students as well. This curriculum is provided by the Diocese of La Crosse and can be viewed online. We instruct the children about how to stay safe and healthy because they are God's children. If parents do not want their child to be trained in the Safe environment program, they must complete and return the required form as provided by the Diocese of La Crosse, as on the following page and also sent with registration materials or found at www.diolc.org.

All who are involved in catechesis seek to provide a safe, healthy place to learn and experience the love of God. Every child is welcome and important to our parish program.

We look forward to helping your child grow in his/her faith!



PROMISE TO PROTECT

PLEDGE TO HEAL

BELIEVE IN THE REALITY OF HELP AND HEALING. THERE IS HOPE.

The Diocese of La Crosse is committed to creating a safe environment within the Church and within our society for children and youth. We continue to express a special care for and a commitment to reaching out to the victims of sexual abuse and their families.

To report allegations of sexual abuse of a child by any diocesan agent (bishop, priest, deacon, employee, religious, vendor or volunteer) please fill out the report form found at:

diolc.org/safe-environment/reporting

Alternatively, you can contact:

Mrs. Karen Becker, Complaint Intake Agent at 608.791.0179

Victims of sexual abuse, in addition to contacting civil authorities, are invited to come forward in order to receive pastoral assistance. Such assistance can be received from:

Deacon Tom Skemp, Victim Assistance Coordinator at 608.792.9684



Verification of Protect and Heal Training

Diocese of La Crosse



The Diocese of La Crosse provides *Protect and Heal* training FROM THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE to participating individuals in its programs.

The substance and focus of *Protect and Heal* training is as follows:

Kindergarten-Second Grade: Students will learn about their **dignity** (their incredible worth) as **children of God** and the respect that each person deserves as a child of God. Students will learn about safety, safe environment and the care that surrounds them, the difference between appropriate, kind actions and behavior that makes them feel safe, secure and loved, and inappropriate, harmful actions and behaviors that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Grade Three-Five: Students will learn about the virtue of **respect**, which is based upon the **dignity of each human person**. Students will learn the importance of saying "no" to inappropriate, harmful actions, behavior and touch that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Children will be encouraged to tell immediately a trusted adult when these situations arise and will learn about the buddy system.

Grade Six-Eight: Students will learn about how each person, including themselves, must be treated with **respect**. Students will learn about, and seek to develop or further develop, the virtue of **prudence**-making good decisions. Students will learn practical tips for keeping themselves safe and will discuss defensive and assertive body language to protect themselves.

High School: Students will understand virtue, which are **good moral habits**, and vice, which are bad moral habits. Students will discuss the virtue of **chastity** and **modesty**; learn practical steps for protecting themselves and others from sexual abuse, including the ability to recognize warning signs and how to react to abuse and to the possible threat of abuse.

Family Name: _____

- ☐ I acknowledge that I have reviewed the (red book), *On Sexual Misconduct for the Diocese of La Crosse* and (green book), *Child Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedures of the Diocese of La Crosse* and have also had a chance to view the Protect and Heal Training Video on the Diocesan website.
- ☐ I have attended the training held at the school/parish. ☐ I am unable to complete the training online and am unable to attend the training at the school/parish.

Student Training Declination

- ☐ I acknowledge that the Diocese of La Crosse has offered my child Protect and Heal education by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and by the Protect and Heal Program of the Diocese of La Crosse and I am declining the training and do not want my student(s) to participate in the Protect and Heal Program.

My reasons for opting out are: _____

Parent Name (printed): _____ Parent Signature: _____

Children(s) Name(s): _____ Date: _____

School/Parish: _____ System/City: _____

Please return this form to the parish/school office no later than: _____

VERIFICATION/DECLINATION OF PROTECT & HEAL TRAINING (FORM 644-D) | UPDATED MARCH 2026

The Disciples Way

High school students participate in a course of faith formation called The Disciples Way (TDW). TDW is a two-year journey for students to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ as his disciples.

TDW is also the parish's means of preparing students for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Upon completion of the two-year journey, students will have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The journey centers around two important aspects:

1. Large group presentations
2. Small groups

Large group presentations are based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC).

❖ Year One

- The Creed (To grow in our thinking as a disciple)
- Prayer Life (To grow in our prayer as a disciple)

❖ Year Two

- Moral and Just Life (To grow in living the life of a disciple)
- Sacramental Life (To grow in our celebrating as a disciple)
 - Leads to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

Small groups are facilitated by adult mentors from the parish and provide an opportunity for the disciples (students) to process the moments of their journey. Each small group will consist of four to six students of the same gender and will remain the same through the entire year.

Large group presentations and small groups will alternate weekly per the schedule. On weeks when freshmen have Large Group, sophomores have Small Groups and vice versa.

Retreats. Freshmen will participate in a one day retreat in the fall and sophomores in the spring. These typically take place on Sundays and are held at an offsite location, relatively close to the Parish.

Service component. Disciples are called to serve our Lord and each other. As such, students will participate in various acts of service, either as a group or individually. These will generally be what are called corporal or spiritual acts of mercy. Students will be provided with opportunities or ideas and asked to fulfill a certain amount of service per year.

Attendance. Regular attendance is critical for The Disciples Way to be fruitful in forming students as disciples and preparing them for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Students are allowed a limited number of excused absences per year for any reason (illness, conflicting event, etc.). If a student exceeds the number of excused absences, they will be required to repeat the year beginning the next fall. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis in the event of a significant unforeseen circumstance (e.g. family tragedy, serious prolonged illness).

Students and parents will be advised of the number of allowable excused absences at the beginning of each year. Year One will be typically allowed five (5) total absences and Year Two three (3) total absences.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an approach to the religious formation of children based on the educational principles of Maria Montessori and rooted in Sacred Scripture and the Sacred Liturgy. Queen of the Apostles Parish currently offers Level I Catechesis of the Good Shepherd formation for children ages 3-6 years old.

Aspects of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

- **Atrium.** The atrium is a room specially prepared for the children with simple yet beautiful materials. The atrium is not a classroom, but a place of solemn contemplation and prayer.
- **Catechist.** A catechist is an adult specially trained in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. He or she prepares the atrium and presents things to the children such as passages from Scripture, and serves as a guide for the children in the atrium. A catechist is not a teacher, but a co-worker of the child, helping him or her to contemplate and wonder about God and ourselves.
- **Materials.** In the atrium, children receive presentations from the catechist. The presentation might be a passage from the Bible or a prayer from the liturgy. During the presentation, the child is introduced to special materials associated with the presentation. After receiving the presentation, the child can work with these materials as a way to ponder what they received in the presentation. Materials may include figures of sheep in the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd or models of items used in the Mass, such as an altar and sacred vessels.

What do children learn in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd?

In Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, children spend time enjoying and nurturing their relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. While what they do in the atrium might appear as play to those who are unfamiliar, they are deeply affected by the presentations and working with the materials which make the mystery of who God is more accessible and understandable for someone of their age. Through geography, the words of the prophets, and the infancy narratives, Jesus is established as a real person who lived in a real time. Through the presentation of certain parables, the child's curiosity and wonder about the mystery of the Kingdom of God is awakened. Children become familiar with the sacraments through working with the articles of the Eucharist and Baptism. Children learn to pray in their own unique way.

Session Times

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd requires a longer period of time than traditional Religious Education classes. Parents should expect sessions to last approximately 90 minutes. Because of this, session times may begin earlier than classes for other levels of Religious Education. A session will be held on Wednesday afternoon/evening. Additional sessions may be added as needed.