

**OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL  
Religious Education Program  
HANDBOOK**

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**PERSONNEL**

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**OFFICE ASSISTANT:**

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**CATECHISTS**

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## **PHILOSOPHY**

**Parents are the first educators for their children in faith.** They remain the most important ones, no matter how long a child goes to school. Pope John Paul II repeatedly wrote about the importance of the family in religious education. In 1979 (Catechesis in Our Time), he said, "The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable.... Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. ...Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere.

The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.

**Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis. Parents and the parish function as partners in this enterprise.**

With communication and cooperation, we create an environment in which children can grow in their faith. As participants in the religious education program, **parents make a commitment to the religious formation of their children at home, which includes:**

- Learning prayer and Catholic practices
- Exploring the Scriptures together
- And sharing values and morals.

Parents also commit to making sure that their children attend the sessions and make up any work that is missed.

**An essential part of this commitment is for families to worship with their children and the whole parish at Mass on Sunday and to help prepare their children for the sacraments.**

The role of the parish is to support parents in their role, but not to take it over. A primary goal of our catechetical program is to help parents bring home what their children are learning here and make it a part of family life.

In order to meet these goals, the parish community assists and supports the family by providing a welcoming environment where families can worship together. The parish also provides a religious education program which gives the students an experience of community learning with their age group, but does not replace the parents.

The parish financially supports the religious education program. It recruits and trains qualified catechists, assures that there is a sound curriculum and the necessary materials available to implement it.

## **CURRICULUM**

Each grade level includes learning about church teaching, Scripture, the church's liturgy and prayer, feasts and seasons, Mary and the saints, and Christian morality. In addition, each level concentrates on specific topics and themes. The curriculum is structured so that each year provides a foundation for the next year. Students who skip years are missing valuable background. The entire program, classroom work, activities, Scripture and liturgy, and family discussion works together to give children a well-rounded foundation for their adult faith.

**The goals for each level are outlined below.**

*We will test students in grades 1 through 8 on basic religious literacy. While we will teach these concepts and prayers in class, it is the responsibility of families to see that students master the basic literacy foundation.*

***In order to help families, part 11 is added and a prayer booklet will be given, so that they can work with their children at home.***

The textbook series in grades one through six is Finding God by Loyola Press. In Junior High, there are individual texts to accompany each module. There are also supplemental materials for each grade: to know our Salvation History by becoming familiar with the Bible stories.

**FIRST GRADE:**

The goals of the first year curriculum are to introduce students to a structured study of their faith. The concentration is on God is our Creator and loves us as our Father. Jesus came to tell us about God the Father and saves us through his life... death, and resurrection. The Holy Spirit shares the life of the risen Jesus Christ and forms the community of the Church. We know Jesus through personal prayer and by worshiping God together, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. We can thank Jesus for the gift of himself and the Holy Spirit by obeying the Commandments, caring for one another, and caring for the world. By the end of first year, students will be expected to know the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be, Prayer before and after meal.

**SECOND GRADE:**

The goals of the Second Grade curriculum focus on preparing the students for the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. In the course of this preparation, they concentrate upon; God loves each of us and we are called to act on God's love for us by loving one another, by living as Jesus wants us to live. As we prepare for the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, we give special attention to examination of conscience, how to make a good confession and importance of preparation to receive Jesus Christ in, Holy Communion. There are books which will be used especially to prepare for First Communion and Reconciliation.

By the end of second grade, students will be expected to know; Ten Commandments, Act of Contrition, the basic responses for the mass, and a prayer to say after receiving communion.

**THIRD GRADE:**

The Third Grade curriculum concentrates on what it means to belong to the church. Themes taught in first and second grades are repeated in greater depth, as the students are growing in their understanding. They specifically explore God creates us good and calls us to live in community. We emphasize the role of Jesus calling us to a new way of life-what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus and how close Jesus wants us to be with our Father. We learn how each of the sacraments deepens on our relationship with God and how the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are the foundation for the moral choices we make as we grow to be like Jesus.

By the end of third grade, students will be expected to know the Apostles' Creed and be able to describe basic personnel (priest, bishop, etc.) and basic structures (parish, Vatican, etc.) in the church.

**FOURTH GRADE:**

The focus of the fourth grade curriculum is the foundation for morality in the Beatitudes and the Commandments. Students will learn that God calls us to lead a moral life. He revealed the Ten Commandments to provide us with the parameters to live a life for God and others. Jesus taught us the Beatitudes and their relationship to living a Christian life. We give special attention to Sacraments of Healing and Sacraments at the Service of Communion as part of the moral dimension of our faith. By the end of fourth grade, students will be able to list the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the precepts of the church, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

**FIFTH GRADE:**

The fifth grade curriculum concentrates on the sacraments and the liturgy of the church. In addition, they will explore the Scriptures further. Students will strengthened in sacramental life of the Church, we are better able to live like Jesus in making choices for God and others. We enter into a new way of life when we celebrate the sacraments of Initiation. Through the sacraments we live more fully in the Holy Spirit as members of the Church, united in diversity. The fullness of our life in Jesus Christ will find completion at the Last Judgment when we face our Savior. By the end of fifth grade, students will be able to list, describe and define each sacrament, to list the basic parts of the mass, to be able to describe the principal ministries in the liturgy, the major seasons of the church year and the holy days of obligation. They will also be able to recite the Seven Sacraments and Nicene Creed.

**CONFIRMATION ONE:**

**This is the first of three required years leading to Confirmation. Students beginning later than sixth grade, begin with this course.**

We explore the history of salvation-from Creation, through the Old Testament, to its fulfillment in Jesus-as we share stories of our ancestors in faith: Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon. We recognize the importance of the prophets as witnesses for God and their relevance to our own time. As followers of Jesus, we explore the meaning of the Psalms as the prayers of Jesus and the themes of Wisdom Literature that teach practical ways of living for God in everyday life. We find our connection to Christian worship from its roots in the Old Testament, and we learn of the special connection between the

celebration of Passover and the celebration of the Eucharist. Important themes of Catholic Social Teaching call us to holiness, to care for the earth, and to act in the ways of justice.

By the end of sixth grade (Confirmation One), students will be able to identify and describe in chronological order the major events in the Old Testament and the major events in life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### **CONFIRMATION TWO:**

Confirmation Two consists of two modules: Christian morality and Jesus and discipleship. 1)The first module will help lay the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and give the students information about the Church's guidance in moral decision-making. 2)The second module will give a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told to us in the gospels, and also pose the challenge of discipleship to the students. Is following Jesus, and letting that govern the choices in their lives, a decision that they are ready to make? The understanding of the Mass.

By the end of Confirmation two the students will know Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Theological Virtues, Cardinal Virtues, the Spiritual works of Mercy, The Corporal works of Mercy, Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit.

### **CONFIRMATION THREE:**

Confirmation Three consists of three modules:

- 1) Scripture and Creed
- 2) A review of Catholic teaching and
- 3) Immediate preparation for Confirmation

The review of the Scripture and Creed, what the church believes, provides a foundation to profess that belief in the sacrament of Confirmation. The second half of the year on a review of all aspects of living and praying as a Catholic Christian, as well as immediate preparation for Confirmation. The Goal and Vision Statement is a summary of what those who are to be confirmed should know. The foundations for religious literacy in the earlier grades, the precepts of the Church, The two great Commandments, Four marks of the church, along with the other elements in the curriculum provide the basis for these outcomes.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE FOR 2014 – 2015**

All class sessions will be held on Thursday evenings at 6:30 PM until 7:30 PM for grades one - Confirmation III.

**See the calendar for specific class days.**

### **REINFORCEMENT AT HOME**

The total class time that students experience during the year is just twenty eight hours. In addition, there is at least a week between classes. For these reasons, reinforcement at home is essential for the entire program to work.

Each student will have take-home work each session. The cooperation of parents in making sure that work is completed and returned is essential.

Sometimes homework will consist of activities or memorization of prayers, etc.

Students are expected to make up work when they are absent.

If students miss a grade, or if they do not know material necessary to be successful at the next level, it is the responsibility of the family to make sure that the work is made up and the material is mastered.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students are expected to be ready to begin class at 6:30 PM. Students who are late must come to the office for a tardy admittance slip. This is so we have a record of who is in the building. Students are expected to attend class every session. If illness interferes, the catechist will send work home so that it can be made up. Because of the limited number of sessions, every session is important. While we understand the family events will mean an occasional missed session, these should be kept to a minimum. If you know that your child will be absent, please call to let us know.

We consider 3 absences to be excessive. Make-up lessons can be obtained from the catechist. Helping the child to complete it is the responsibility of the parents.

For purposes of preparation for sacraments, more than three absences will mean that the student may need to attend make up sessions. Sports activities are not considered legitimate excuses for an absence or early dismissal. We are more than willing to work with coaches to insure that attendance in class does

not impede a child's participation on the team. (In short, it makes more sense for a student to miss the first quarter of a game rather than half of a limited class session.)

### **SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE POLICY**

All the catechists and other volunteers and employees who have contact with children have undergone a security and background check. In addition, each one has participated in *Virtus* training, an initiative of the Archdiocese which is in compliance with "Protecting God's Children." *Virtus* educates those who work with children about preventing child abuse.

Students shall contribute to the learning experience by cooperating with the classroom rules, as explained by the catechist. These rules are:

- Respect yourself, others, and things.
  - Contribute to the learning environment.
  - Follow program and classroom procedures.
- If the child is regularly disruptive, parents will be notified.

Children are not allowed free access to the building unsupervised by adults. This policy is for your child's safety and building security. As students arrive for class, they should gather in the main hall of the school. Their catechist will meet them and they will go as a group to the classroom.

Late arriving students must report for a tardy slip before going to their classes.

### **REPORT CARDS, RECORDS AND PARENT VISITS**

Progress reports are issued twice a year, so that parents can keep track of their child's work in the classroom.

#### **ABOUT ACCESS TO RECORDS:**

Custodial parents can request student records by notifying the Director by phone or in writing. Please give us one week's notice.

We respect the rights of non-custodial parents with regard to religious education records and program related information. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the program administrator will provide the noncustodial parent with access to the religious education records and other religious education program-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given,

it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program administrator with an certified copy of the court order.

#### **ABOUT ACCESS TO CHILDREN:**

We presume that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorced or separated. Thus, unless informed otherwise in writing and with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have unqualified access to the child, the religious education program will permit either parent to have access to a child while at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and will release the child to either parent.

#### **ABOUT PARENTS VISITS:**

Parent visits to class are welcome. Please let both the office and the catechist know in advance when you are planning to visit.

### **SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS AND POLICIES**

Preparing to receive the sacraments is one of the most memorable and exciting times for children. We have designed our programs so that they enjoy the process, learn from the support and example of their families, and are conscious of the care of the parish community for them.

Students must have completed one full year of Catholic religious education (here at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel or elsewhere) immediately prior to beginning preparation for sacrament.

#### **The following are the requirements for reception of the Sacraments**

- \* The child must be Baptized Catholic
- \* The copy of the Baptismal certificate
- \* Confirmation Students will provide the copy of their Baptism / First Communion cards
- \* Regular attendance at the Sunday Mass
- \* Parental involvement in the preparation to receive Sacrament
- \* Parents must attend the meetings and participate at the planed retreats
- \* All children must be in the program from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade OR provide proof of attendance in another parish

program (Religious education for 7 years)

\* Regular attendance for Religious education program

NOTE: If a 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Confirmation 111) candidate has a conflict with the date of the retreat, the candidate must call another parish in the Archdiocese and participate in their retreat. (It is must)

### **BAPTISM**

Children who are old enough for school and who have not been Baptized are invited to join our prep classes along with their parents / guardians in Fall each year

October – Five sessions on Biblical walk through the Mass and one session on Baptism

Once you have completed the required preparation the Baptismal will be schedule. For more information call Deacon Tom Lambert @ 773-525-0453 Ext. 21 OR Razia S. Khokhar @ 773-525- 0453 Ext. 14

### **RECONCILIATION / PENANCE AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION**

Students in the second grade (who have completed the 1<sup>st</sup> year program) are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation / Penance and Eucharist as part of their class sessions. These class sessions are in conjunction with the formation which they receive with their families. The most important preparation children can receive for Eucharist is to be regular participants at Sunday Mass. In addition to Sunday Mass and classes, there is a Reconciliation morning of reflection for parents and children in January and First Communion morning of reflection for parents and children is April. Many students take part in this program in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. However, students of all ages can be part of the process, with older students working in their own group.

### **CONFIRMATION:**

Students celebrate Confirmation in spring. Most students will be confirmed in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, having completed the three years confirmation preparation sequence. (Students beginning the preparation after sixth grade begin with Confirmation 1 and complete all three years before they are confirmed)

Candidates are expected to be part of the worshipping community, coming to Mass each Sunday. As Confirmation marks one's full initiation into the church, it is expected that anyone wishing to be confirmed, is a practicing Catholic. During all these years, students keep a journal chronicling their practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Students must have completed one full year of Religious Education before beginning the Confirmation program. In addition, they need to show mastery of the basic religious literacy objectives for each grade preceding junior high.

#### **Confirmation 1**

\* Study of the major events and themes in the Hebrew Scripture (Old Testament)

\* Attendance at the retreat day focused on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

\* Participation in a group service opportunity

#### **Confirmation 11**

\* Study of the Gospel and module on Christian morality

\* Attendance at the retreat day focused on Discipleship

\* Participation in a "Pilgrimage" to sites important for Catholic history in Chicago

#### **Confirmation 111**

\* Review of the Creed/Sacraments, with concentration on Confirmation and Acts of the Apostles

\* Study and discussion on scripture

\* Attendance at the retreat day focused on Holiness

\* Participation in a group service opportunity in a soup kitchen

### **PARTICIPATION IN LITURGY AND PRAYER**

#### **Sunday Worship**

Gathering to celebrate the Eucharist is both a privilege and responsibility for Christians. Families are strongly encouraged to come and worship with their children every Sunday. On Sundays there are two programs aimed at making family participation in the liturgy appealing for all age groups:

#### **Children's Liturgy of the Word: 9:30 am**

They return to their families for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.



### **Prayer Services**

There are prayer services planned once a month. They help the students to focus on a feast or season. Included in these services will be the Stations of the Cross during Lent and a Rosary and May crowning at end our year. In addition, students have the opportunity to go to confession. Parents are very welcome to attend these services. (Families are expected to take children during the year for confession in the church. In our parish we have confession every Saturday before 4:30 pm Mass – 3:30 to 4:15 pm)

### **Prayer at home and learning prayers**

Like anything else, prayer cannot be learned or become a habit if it is not regularly practiced. The religious education program can provide a framework to introduce prayers and to integrate them with what the children are learning.

**The only way that children can actually learn the prayers is to pray them at home on a daily basis.**

### **REGISTRATION AND TUITION**

All families in the program are expected to be registered members of OLMC parish.

Students are expected to be registered in the program each year that they are in school. The program is developmental and covers a different area of the curriculum each year. Children who skip years are missing important background and will be at a disadvantage when they rejoin the program.

#### **Tuition rates for Parishioner are:**

**One Child:** \$ 125.00

**Two Children:** \$ 225.00

**Three children:** \$ 375.00

**Four or more children:** \$ 425:00

**For the Sacraments of 1<sup>st</sup> Communion \$ 50:00 and for Confirmation \$60:00 per child**

#### **Tuition rates for non Parishioner are:**

**One Child:** \$ 175.00

**Two Children:** \$ 275.00

**Three children:** \$ 375.00

**Four or more children:** \$ 475:00

Tuition and fees pay only a portion of the cost of your child's religious education. The parish community subsidizes the rest. Tuition is used for text books and materials, supplies for art projects, other activities and resources for the classroom.

Tuition and fees can be paid in full at the time of registration *or* paid in two installments - fall and winter. Please let us know your preference.

Genuine financial need is no barrier to registering your child. We are glad to work out an arrangement for your family. We do ask families who apply for scholarship consideration to be registered members of the parish and regular in their Mass attendance.

### **NON – DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

No child will be denied the right to participate in religious education classes due to race, color, national origin, or ability to pay.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Students in need of special education have a right to catechesis and participation in the sacramental life of the church. We will accommodate any such students to the best of our ability. We will also assist parents in finding other resources that will meet their child's needs. If your child has special needs which are addressed in school, please meet with us and let us know of procedures and strategies used in those classes. Maintaining a consistent approach is very helpful both for the student and for the catechist.

### **EMERGENCIES INFORMATION**

Emergency information is required at the time of registration. We need to keep the following on file:

The name and telephone of your doctor.

The name and telephone of a relative or friend to contact in case you are not available.

Any information about medication or physical conditions that we should know

Catechists cannot give medication to children. If your child needs medication during class time, please stop in the office before delivering the medicine.

### **EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION**

During severe cold or on snowy days, we have a calling tree system in place. I will call the catechists and they will call you to let you know about the emergency closing.

**MONTHLY CALENDAR**

The calendar is enclosed for your convenience. During the course of the year, it is necessary to change dates. Please be sure to read our Sunday bulletin or our Parish website for updates.

**ENRICHMENT SERIES FOR PARENTS – PLAN FOR FIVE YEARS (3<sup>rd</sup> year -2013-2014)**

We plan to have a spiritual enrichment series for the parents to grow in your own relationship with Jesus, and also to help your child in his/her spiritual journey.

All parents are required to participate. We plan to have session for parents once a month. Please see the schedule

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**PART TWO**

**PRAYER, PRACTICES AND RELIGIOUS LITERACY OBJECTIVES**

**INTRODUCTION**

**THE FOUNDATION FOR THIS APPROACH**

*For centuries the living tradition of the faith was handed on principally through the oral tradition. From the earliest times catechesis has relied on the Creed, the sacraments, the Decalogue, and prayers, especially the Our Father, as primary instruments of transmitting the faith. In order to learn the principal truths of the faith, these instruments were easily committed to memory in lieu of textbooks or other printed materials and could be recalled often as the basis of catechetical instruction. From the National Directory for Catechesis (2005), p. 102*

One of my favorite passages from Scripture is from Deuteronomy 6. As the Israelites prepare to cross into the Promised Land, they are read to from the Covenant, the Ten Commandments. Then they are told to pass this on to their children. And a technique is offered (among others): put a small scroll into a capsule and place it on the doorposts of their homes and the gates of the cities. This tradition is called a *mezzuzah*. As one goes in and out, one kisses the fingertips and touches the mezzuzah. The idea is that one day a toddler will ask, "Why do we do that?" And this opens up the opportunity to tell the child, "This is what we believe, these are the wonderful things God has done for us and this is how we are to live."

*Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are at busy or at rest. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)* As the *National Directory for Catechesis* mentions, this is precisely the way that faith has always been passed down. Parents have told children, who have told their children. It works. It is why the Jewish tradition is vibrant today, thousands of years after these words from Deuteronomy were first written down.

The elements contained in this booklet have been part of the curriculum for students in the parish and they are certainly nothing new. What is new is that we plan to systematically test the students to make sure that they have acquired the knowledge that constitutes a **basic religious literacy**. Of course, we have other goals in our curriculum. But they need to know the framework and language for the more complex concepts of our faith. Each student will be expected to know this material as he/she progresses from level to level. It will be taught and tested in class, but it is the responsibility of families to make sure that children know these elements.

Pope John Paul II made a special point of this in his exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (#68) in 1979: As noted in the 1<sup>st</sup> part of this book.

***Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.***

We can drill and encourage for eight to ten years in class, but nothing replaces the influence and training that children receive in their families.

**Why Memorization?**

While the content of the faith cannot be reduced to formulas that are repeated without being properly understood, learning by heart has had a special place in catechesis and should continue to have that place in catechesis today. "The blossoms, if we may call them that, of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory-less catechesis. What is essential is that the texts that are memorized must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life

on the personal level and the community level." (Catechesi Tradendae, # 55) It should be introduced through a process that, begun early, continues gradually, flexibly, and never slavishly. In this way certain elements of the Catholic faith, tradition, and practice are learned for a lifetime, form a basis for communication, allow people to pray together in a common language, and contribute to the individual's continued growth in understanding and living the faith. From the National Directory for Catechesis (2005) p.102. We hope that children advance to higher mathematics, learning theory that undergirds the study of other scientific disciplines. But they need to know the multiplication tables. We hope that children enjoy the world of literature and that they communicate gracefully orally and in writing. But first they need to know the rules of grammar and how to spell.

These elements to memorize are not the faith. Faith is a gift that is lived and deepens as one matures. But they are the 'grammar' of faith. They give us a common language and structure. They also connect us to the foundation of our tradition. These elements have been memorized for centuries and centuries for the same reason that we need to - it is the way that we know what our ancestors discovered about what we believe, how we worship and how we live.

#### **How should families use this resource?**

- Become acquainted with what your child is covering in class this year.
- Find out what your child knows already.
- Be sure that your child has memorized the material from earlier grades.

While we may review or make connections to this material, if your child does not know necessary information, you are responsible for making sure that he or she comes up to grade level. If your child was here for an earlier grade, the material should not be unfamiliar, but your child may need your help to firmly master the material. If your child has skipped years of religious education or is coming into the program later, he or she will need your help to master the earlier material.

#### **Passing on the Faith**

As we engage in this project together as a faith community, we are participating in a great endeavor. It began around campfires of nomads who believed in the one God, it continued through the great events of the Exodus and the giving of the Covenant. Jesus learned to memorize some of what is contained here along with all the children of his time and he showed us more of God's love for us and how to celebrate this love. The church was given the commission to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) We are just the latest chapter in this long story of faith, passing on this treasure to another generation.

### **VISION OF CATECHIZED STUDENTS AT OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL**

*Know the meanings of the following and why they are important concepts:*

Faith,

Grace,

Being a Christian

Know the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds and be able to explain the articles in them.

#### **Be familiar with the Bible and be able to use it for study/prayer**

Be able to distinguish between the Old and New Testaments.

Be able to locate books of the Bible and specific passages.

Be able to tell briefly about the major stories in the Old Testament

Be able to tell briefly the story of Jesus' birth, preaching, healings, death/ resurrection.

Be able to recount specific stories from Jesus' life and ministry, Miracles and parables.

Be able to tell specific stories from the Acts of the Apostles and the life of Paul

Be able to locate the psalms, know how they are used for prayer in the church and have practice using them.

#### **Learn about the Bible**

The Bible both expresses and nourishes our faith. It tells us of God's great deeds and how our ancestors in faith discovered the action of the God who created us and loves us. It tells of the great redemption in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It gives us a model for our faith and our prayer. As St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." As parents, one of your primary responsibilities in helping your children grow in faith is to introduce them to the Scriptures. You might be saying, "But, I don't know anything about the Bible!" The wonderful thing about this is that you can discover the riches of Scripture along with your children. In addition to the ways to read the Bible as a family mentioned below, we hear the Scriptures each Sunday as we gather for the Eucharist. We offer Children's Liturgy of the

Word at the 9:30 Mass. This program is appropriate for children about the age of three to about fourth or fifth grades. The leaders take the children to the Chapel of the Word below the church and there read and discuss the Scriptures in a way that children can understand. Then they return for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. There is no need to sign up; children can just come up for the blessing.

### **For Children**

Children love stories and these are some of the most interesting. (They've caught the imagination of children for millennia and yours will love them too.) The easiest way to help your child with a basic knowledge of these stories is to read to them. There are many children's Bible story books on the market. One that we would recommend is *My First Picture Bible Stories: Catholic Edition* by Kenneth N. Taylor, published by Our Sunday Visitor. It is available in stores and also online.

**You should have a Bible in your home** that has language children can understand. The translation which we use in the school and religious education program is the "Break Through – The Bible for young Catholic" by St. Mary's Press

**Read the Sunday gospel with your children** and discuss it with them. We offer two aids to help you with this.

**Help your child make the time to read the Bible.** Make it a part of his/her bedtime ritual. For example, reading a chapter of a Gospel each evening is a wonderful way to end the day.

**Discuss the Sunday readings and homily with your child.** This can be a casual conversation on the way home. A simple, "What did you think?" can be enough to let your child know that this is important to you, that you value his or her opinion and contribution to the conversation, and that perhaps they should listen!

### **Scripture resources for adults:**

A wonderful edition of the Bible is *The Catholic Study Bible: Personal Study Edition*, published by Oxford. It has a 500-page reading guide at the beginning which gives you outlines, study helps and explanations of each book of the Bible.

If you would like to read and understand a particular book of the Bible, the *Collegeville Bible Commentary* is very good. It was written by excellent scholars, but in a way that non-specialists can easily understand. You can buy the whole thing, but you can also buy it book-by-book. These are in pamphlet form and cost about \$7.95 each.

## **CURRICULUM OUTLINR AND BASELINE TESTING**

### **Know about and feel that s/he is a member of the Roman Catholic Church**

Will know that the marks of the church are that it is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic

Will know the imagery of the church as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ and the People of God.

Will know that the vocation of every Christian believer is to become holy.

Will be able to describe how the holy Spirit is active in the church.

Will be able to describe the church's role to worship God, to spread the Gospel, to serve the world.

Will be able to describe how one prepares for ministry in the church. Know the name of the parish and archdiocese s/he belongs to. Know the name of the pastor of the parish and ordinary of the archdiocese.

Know the name of the Pope. Will be able to describe the respective roles of the Pope, archbishop, pastor.

Will know that the bishops are the successors to the apostles.

Will be able to name the other members of the pastoral staff of the parish. Will know how the parish is connected to the larger church. Will know how a Pope is chosen.

Will know how the Roman Catholic Church is related to Eastern Rite churches, Orthodox churches, Protestant churches, Judaism, Islam.

Will know what it meant by the 'communion of saints.' Will be able to describe his/her participation in the communion of saints. Will be able to describe Mary's place in the communion of saints. Will be able to describe the church's faith in each of these doctrines about Mary: Mother of God, Immaculate Conception, Virginal conception of Jesus, Assumption

Will be able to describe the traditions surrounding the apparitions of Mary at Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima

Will be able to explain how and why we ask for the intercession of the saints

Will be able to briefly explain about the saints / heroes in our faith

### **Be familiar with the liturgy of the Church**

Know the basic structure of the mass: Gathering rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Dismissal. Know the responses, prayers and acclamations for the mass. Know a basic repertoire of sung responses. Know the four main seasons of the church year (Liturgical year): when they occur and what they celebrate. Know what Ordinary time is. Will know how Catholic Christians observe Lent. Will know the laws about abstinence and fasting. Know what the lectionary is - and that we read the Scriptures in a 3-year cycle. Be able to name the main 'furniture' in the church: altar, ambo, font, tabernacle, shrines. Be able to name the vestments worn by the priest and/or deacon. Knows what the following ministers do during the liturgy: Cantor, Lector, Servers and Ministers of Communion. Know the regulations of the Church about worship on Sundays and holy days. Know the holy days of obligation in the United States.

**Will be able to describe the sacramental life of the Church**

Will be able to list the sacraments from memory. Will be able to describe the outward sign and the inner grace of each sacrament. Will be able to describe what it means to be a fully initiated Catholic. Will be able to list the sacraments of initiation. Will be able to describe what happens to us in baptism. Will be able to describe what the church means by Original Sin. Will know who is able to baptize and how. Will know the difference between infant baptism and those over the age of seven. Will be able to describe what we say we believe in order to be baptized or to renew our baptism. Will be able to describe what happens to us in Confirmation. Will know who is able to confirm and how. Will be able to list the gifts of the Holy Spirit and discuss how they are used in everyday life. Will be able to list the fruits of the Holy Spirit and discuss how they can be seen in everyday life. Will be able to describe what the church believes about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Will be able to define 'transubstantiation.' Will know the meaning of the word 'Eucharist.'" Will be able to describe how one worthily receives the Eucharist. Will be able to describe the effects of the Eucharist in the life of a Christian. Will be able to describe how we show reverence for the Eucharist. Will know the position of the Catholic church about intercommunion with non-Catholics. Will be able to describe why sacramental confession is necessary. Will be able to describe the steps in celebrating the sacrament of penance. Will be able to describe how to prepare to celebrate the sacrament of penance. Will be able to describe other ways that less serious sins can be forgiven. Will be able to describe the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and when it is celebrated. Will be able to explain why marriage is a sacrament. Will know that the couple are the ministers of the sacrament. Will be able to describe how Catholics marry and the requirements to marry. Will be able to describe what Catholics believe about the indissolubility of marriage. Will be able to describe what an annulment is and why it is sometimes granted. Will be able to describe the three levels of holy orders. Will be able to describe what a deacon, a priest and a bishop do. Will be able to describe how one prepares for ordination. Will be able to describe how one is ordained.

**Have an appreciation of and be able to engage in the prayer of the church and traditional devotions.**

Will know the following prayers:

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be-- , Ten Commandments, Seven Sacraments, Apostle' Creed / Nicene Creed, Act of Contrition, Hail Holy Queen, Prayer of St. Francis, Magnificat, Benedictus, The prayer to the Holy Spirit, Morning Prayer / Evening Prayer , Prayer to guardian Angel, Hail holy queen, Memorare, Theological Virtues /Cardinal Virtues, Morning Prayer / Evening Prayer, Will be able to list five common sacramental and be able to describe how they aid us in prayer. Will be able to describe why a Christian prays daily. Will know how to engage in the Examination of conscience at the end of the day. Will know how to say the Rosary and be able to list each of the mysteries. Will know how to pray the Stations of the Cross and will be able to identify each one.

**Will be able to describe the moral tradition of the church:**

Will have memorized the Ten Commandments. Will have memorized the Beatitudes.

Will have memorized the precepts of the church. Will have memorized the "Law of Love" and be able to relate this to the commandments. Will have memorized the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and can give examples of putting each one into practice. Will be able to describe the moral life in terms of living as a disciple of Christ. Will be able to describe the moral life in terms of virtues to be lived, not just evils to be avoided. Will be able to define a grave (mortal) and venial sin and give examples. Will be able to describe the role of the Spirit in helping to keep us from sin. Will be able to define the concept of conscience and discuss how one forms one's conscience. Will be able to give examples of using one's conscience in moral decision making. Will be able to discuss the relationship between personal action and one's life in the community. Will be able to discuss the responsibility of each person for the good of the social order.

**Will be able to discuss the ten commandments e.g.**

Will be able to give examples of 'false idols' in our society. Will be able to give examples of the misuse of God's or Jesus' name. Will know what keeping the Sabbath means for Jews. Will know why Christians worship on Sundays. Will be able to discuss what it means to keep Sundays holy. Will be able to discuss: What it means to respect one's parents. What it means to respect other lawful authority, including government. What the obligations are for each person to care for the physical and emotional needs of family members. Will be able to discuss why human life is so valued by God. Why we have no right to take human life through abortion, euthanasia, suicide or assisted suicide, capital punishment. Why war is always a failure and due to human sin. Why Christians are called to be peacemakers. Why Christians are obligated to help reduce violence. Will be able to discuss why sexuality is a valuable gift from God. The ends of sexual expression: procreation of children and intimate giving between spouses. Why all sexual expression is reserved for marriage. Why pornography, promiscuity and lack of respect for the sexuality of others damages the human community. Will be able to discuss why we respect the possessions of others. Why we need to pay taxes in order to finance common services in our community and nation. Why everyone is entitled to work for their living. Why we need to give adequate support for those who can't care for themselves or are unable to find work. Why we have an obligation to exercise good stewardship of our own money. Why we have an obligation to share with the poor. Why we have an obligation to care for the earth. Will be able to discuss why honesty is a virtue and lying is a sin. Why slander and gossip are injurious to other people. Why we are obliged to speak the truth, even when others don't want to hear it. Will be able to discuss why envy and greed distort the human spirit. Why envy and greed cause a distorted sense of what one needs. The difference between what one needs and what one wants.

### **The Liturgical Year / Seasons and Feasts**

**Feast days** There are a number of special holy days and feasts celebrated throughout the year. Some are traditional "days of obligation" which vary from country to country. In the United States, besides Christmas and New Year's, they include:

December 8, the feast of the **Immaculate Conception**

August 15, the feast of the **Assumption**

November 1, the feast of **All Saints**

There are a number of other special feast days which are not days of obligation but are important celebrations. Among them are:

February 2, the feast of the **Presentation of the Lord**

March 25, the feast of the **Annunciation**

June 24, the feast of the **Birth of John the Baptist**

June 29, the feast of **Sts. Peter and Paul**

August 6, the feast of the **Transfiguration**

September 14, the feast of the **Triumph of the Cross**

November 2, the feast of **All Souls**

November 9, the feast of the **Dedication of St. John Lateran**. (This is the cathedral church in Rome, and so the anniversary of its dedication is celebrated throughout the church.) There are, of course, many others, including other days that honor Mary, the apostles, other saints and other events in the life of Jesus and in the church.

### **OUTLINE OF THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY**

#### **Introductory Rites**

Procession

Greeting

Penitential Rite

Gloria (omitted in Advent and Lent)

Opening Prayer

#### **Liturgy of the Word**

First reading (On Sundays this is usually from the Hebrew Scriptures - Old Testament.)

Response (Psalm)

Second reading (This is usually from one of the New Testament letters.)

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Proclamation

Homily

Profession of Faith (Creed or Baptismal promises)

Prayer of the Faithful

## **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

Preparation of the Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Preface

Holy, Holy, Holy

Canon

Amen

Communion Rite

Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace

Breaking of the Bread (Lamb of God)

Communion

Prayer after Communion

## **Concluding Rites**

Blessing

Dismissal

## **PRAYERS TO LEARN**

### **PRAYERS THAT ARE NOT IN THE GREEN BUT IMPORTANT TO LEARN**

**The Ten Commandments** - *The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20*

- 1: I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange Gods before me.
- 2: Do not take the name of the Lord in vain.
- 3: Remember to keep holy the Sabbath.
- 4: Honor your father and your mother.
- 5: Do not kill.
- 6: Do not commit adultery.
- 7: Do not steal.
- 8: Do not lie. (Do not bear false witness.)
- 9: Do not covet your neighbor's wife or husband.
- 10: Do not covet your neighbor's goods.

### **The Precepts of the Church**

*The precepts of the Church are principles to be followed. They are a rule and guide to what it means to be a Catholic Christian. In a sense they are the bare minimum to be a 'practicing Catholic.' (For example, we are certainly encouraged to go to communion frequently, but the minimum is once a year.)*

- 1: You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. You should also rest from unnecessary ('servile') labor on Sunday.
- 2: You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
- 3: You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
- 4: You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence prescribed by the Church. (The laws of fasting and abstinence are published by each diocese, usually at the beginning of Lent.)
- 5: The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his or her abilities.

There are two other precepts commonly thought to be necessary as well:

- 6: To obey the laws of the church regarding marriage.
- 7: To participate in the Church's mission of spreading the Gospel.

### **The Beatitudes**

*The Beatitudes are found in Matthew 5:3-12. The Beatitudes are the way of holiness that Jesus preached. (Beatus in Latin means 'blessed' or 'holy'.)*

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.  
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

### **The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy**

*The Corporal Works of Mercy have to do with taking care of peoples' bodies (corpus is 'body' in Latin.) The Spiritual Works of Mercy have to do with taking care of people's souls or spirits. The Corporal Works of Mercy come from Matthew 25, where Jesus reminds us that "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me." When we take care of the poor, the homeless, the hungry, we are caring for the Body of Christ.*

#### **Corporal Works of Mercy**

Feed the hungry  
Give drink to the thirsty  
Clothe the naked  
Visit the imprisoned  
Shelter the homeless  
Visit the sick  
Bury the dead

#### **Spiritual Works of Mercy**

Admonish the sinner  
Instruct the ignorant  
Counsel the doubtful  
Comfort the sorrowful  
Bear wrongs patiently.  
Forgive all injuries  
Pray for the living and the dead

**THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:** The Holy Spirit is given to us in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. God created us to live in holiness and peace. The gifts of the Spirit, if we accept them and use them, lead us to holiness. The fruits of the Spirit are some evidence that we are living according to God's will for us.

The list of these fruits is taken from Galatians 5:22-23.

#### **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

Wisdom , Understanding, Right Judgment (Counsel), Courage, Knowledge, Reverence (Piety), Wonder and Awe in God's presence (Fear of the Lord)

*The names in parentheses are an older translation and more familiar to some.*

#### **Fruits of the Holy Spirit**

Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty ,Self-control, Chastity

### **THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

*The Stations of the Cross are a way to meditate on the Passion and death of Christ. They are a kind of 'virtual pilgrimage.' We may not be fortunate enough to walk the streets of Jerusalem, following the path that took Jesus to the Cross. But in our imagination and prayer, we can follow Christ's journey to Calvary and learn from this prayer more about the path of discipleship.*

**The First Station:** Jesus is Condemned to Death *Mark 15:6-15*

**The Second Station:** Jesus Bears His Cross *Matthew 27:31*

**The Third Station:** Jesus Falls for the First Time *Isaiah 50:6-7*

**The Fourth Station:** Jesus Meets His Mother *Luke 2:33-35*

**The Fifth Station:** Jesus is Helped by Simon of Cyrene *Matthew 27:32*

**The Sixth Station:** Veronica Helps Jesus *Matthew 25:35-40*

**The Seventh Station:** Jesus Falls the Second Time *Isaiah 53: 3-5*

**The Eighth Station:** Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem *Luke 23:27-28*

**The Ninth Station:** Jesus Falls the Third Time *Isaiah 53:7-8*

**The Tenth Station:** Jesus is Stripped of His Clothing *John 19:23-24*

**Eleventh Station:** Jesus is Crucified *Luke 23: 32-34*

**Twelfth Station:** Jesus Dies on the Cross *Luke 23:44-46*

**Thirteenth Station:** Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross *Matthew 27:58-59*

**Fourteenth Station:** Jesus is Laid in the Tomb *John 19: 39-42*



## **THE DAILY PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

There is a long tradition, founded in the spiritual life of the Jewish people, of Christian prayer throughout the day. **The Liturgy of the Hours** is the official 'daily prayer' of the church. You can find this cycle of prayer, with psalms, readings and canticles, online

at [www.divineoffice.org](http://www.divineoffice.org) There are three canticles from Luke's Gospel which are prayed as part of the Liturgy of the Hours. Even if you don't pray all of the Liturgy, it is good to pray these at morning, evening and before bed. These canticles are found in Luke 1 and 2. It is the custom to say the "Glory Be..." after each one of these prayers.

### **Benedictus**

This was prayed by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist and is prayed in the morning.

### **Magnificat**

This canticle was prayed by Mary when her cousin Elizabeth recognized that she was pregnant with the Messiah. It is prayed in the evening.

### **Nunc Dimittis**

This canticle was prayed by Simeon, an old man, when he saw the infant Christ after a long life of waiting. It is the original 'bedtime prayer' in the Christian tradition.

### **The Jesus Prayer**

Praying throughout the day is part of the Christian call to holiness. One tradition, from Eastern Christianity is to pray quietly one line over and over until it becomes a refrain through one's life. This prayer is a favorite of many.

O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner! Or Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us!

**THE CREEDS:** Why do we have two Creeds in the first place? The Apostles' Creed was developed from the questions asked of those to be baptized in the church at Rome. We answer these same questions at our own baptism and renew them when celebrating the sacraments of initiation and during the Easter season.

The answer to all these questions is "I do."

Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

Later in the church's life, by the fourth century, various controversies had arisen about the nature of who Jesus was. The Creed we recite on Sundays was first developed at the Council of Nicea in 325 and added to slightly at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It was based on the Apostles' Creed, with some additions to clarify that Jesus was truly God and truly human.

### **Apostles' Creed**

### **Nicene Creed**

## **THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY**

The Rosary began as a way to meditate on the first lines the 150 Psalms. Over time, this form of meditation began to center on the prayer, Hail Mary. Breaking up these 150 prayers were points of meditation on the life of Christ and the mystery of the redemption. Saying the Rosary always leads us back to these stories from Scripture and through them to the mystery of our salvation through Christ. The mysteries of the rosary are scenes from the life of Jesus and Mary. By meditating on these, we come to a better understanding of our faith: the Incarnation of the Lord, Christ's ministry and gifts to us, the Redemption, and the Christian life-present and future.

### **The Joyful Mysteries**

### **The Mysteries of Light**

### **The Sorrowful Mysteries**

### **The Glorious Mysteries**

The following are much loved prayers which are appropriate to say after receiving Communion

\_ Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will. All I have and call my own. Whatever I have or hold, you have given me. I return it all to you to be used according to your will. Give me only your love and grace and I am rich enough and ask for nothing more.

*St. Ignatius of Loyola*

\_ Soul of Christ, make me holy. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, let me drink your wine. Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me. Within your wounds, hide me. Do not let me be separated from you. From every evil, defend me. At the hour of my death, call me. Ask me to come to you, That I may praise you in the company of your saints, for all eternity. *Traditional prayer, translated by John Henry Newman*

\_ Peace prayer of St. Francis - *Traditionally attributed to St. Francis of Assisi*

*The following is a daily prayer, commending our lives to God, popularized by the Apostleship of Prayer. You can find the monthly intentions which accompany this prayer at [www.apostleship-prayer.org](http://www.apostleship-prayer.org)*

\_ Loving Father, I offer you everything I do this day - my thoughts, works, joys and sufferings. I desire to join my heart this day to the heart of your Son, who gave himself up totally to your service and to the service of others. Give me your Spirit so that I can live like him. joined to his offering in the Eucharist. I pray with Mary and the whole Church for the Pope's intentions this month.

## **WHAT A STUDENT SHOULD KNOW BEFORE CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS OF RECONCILIATION, FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION**

### **THE SACRAMENTS**

*The sacraments are divided into three categories.*

**Sacraments of Initiation** - *Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. These make us members of the Catholic church.*

**Sacraments of Healing** – *Penance (Reconciliation) and Anointing of the Sick. These bring us Christ's grace and mercy when we are ill in soul and body.*

**Sacraments of Vocation** - *Marriage and Holy Orders. These are signs of Christ's life in families and the larger community, lived out on a day to day basis.*

### **SACRAMENTS / OUTWARD SIGN / INNER MEANING**

#### **BAPTISM**

Water is poured while baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

- 1) Original Sin and all sins committed up to this point are forgiven;
- 2) beginning of a new life in Christ;
- 3) become a member of the church

#### **CONFIRMATION**

The bishop lays hands on the candidate and calls down the Holy Spirit;

anoints the candidate with chrism

Sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit

#### **EUCHARIST**

We receive the host and from the chalice under the appearances of bread and wine The bread and wine have become really and truly the Body and Blood of Christ

#### **RECONCILIATION OR PENANCE**

The priest prays the words of absolution

All sins are forgiven by Christ if one is truly sorry

#### **ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

One is anointed with the Oil of the Sick

- 1) Healing of one's spirit;
- 2) Healing of one's body if that is God's will;
- 3) Forgiveness of sins

#### **MARRIAGE**

A man and woman promise to love and be faithful to each other for their entire lives In their love for each other, they grow closer to Christ

#### **HOLY ORDERS**

A man becomes a deacon, a priest or a bishop In a life of service to the church, a man grows closer to Christ

### **BEFORE CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION / EUCHARIST**

Before celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, your child should know the following:

God forgives us, no matter what we do. We have the ability to make good and bad choices. We have the ability to sin by making bad choices and by disobeying what God has asked of us. There is a difference between a sin and a mistake. We can ask for forgiveness from God because God is always willing to forgive us. God never withholds forgiveness. The reconciliation we are offered has its roots in the ministry of Jesus - he healed and forgave all who asked. By participating in the sacrament, we experience the same healing and forgiving love. There are different ways to be reconciled with God: prayer, including the Our Father, apologizing to those we have hurt, making up for wrongs we have done, celebrating the Eucharist, participating in the sacrament of reconciliation. The sacrament of reconciliation is an opportunity not an obligation. It is God's free offer of forgiving grace to us. The elements of celebrating the sacrament are contrition (sorrow for our sins), confession, absolution and penance.

### **STUDENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO DEFINE EACH OF THESE**

Penance is a way to help us on the road to holiness - a kind of "training." That is why we are asked to pray or do good deeds for a penance, not as a punishment. There are two ways of celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation - individually and as a group. The students will be able to describe what happens in each kind of celebration. They should know what happens during the sacrament of penance. They should know an Act of Contrition and how to examine their conscience.

### **CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

#### ***Why do people shy away from this sacrament?***

Most people dislike going to the dentist. (Some so much that they don't go at all!) The exception to this rule is when there is a real dental emergency. When you are in pain and unable to sleep at 3 AM, there is no question about procrastination. You want to get into that dentist's chair as quickly as you can. There are many parallels between our attitudes toward dentistry and our attitudes toward reconciliation. We will do our best to put off an uncomfortable encounter as long as possible, unless something drastic happens. Then we are willing to try anything that can take the pain away. Instead of a visit to a dentist, consider getting a massage. There is nothing that makes you feel more like you are pampering yourself. You feel so wonderful, you might even feel a teeny bit guilty, but you figure that it is good for you in the long run. It relaxes you, it stretches your muscles and gets the kinks out, it makes you a happier, healthier person. No one dreads this and hopes for painkillers to dull the experience! What we need to do, as adults, is to learn to see reconciliation more like a massage and less like a visit to the dentist.

#### **WHAT SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION IS:**

**It is an encounter of God's grace.** God is present and anxious to heal the wounds in our life due to sin and to help us grow.

**It is a way to experience the mercy of the living Christ.** We sometimes think it would be different if we could have met and talked to the earthly Jesus. In this sacrament, we have the same chance that those in first century Palestine had. Through the power of the resurrection and Christ's continuing presence in the church, we can hear Christ's words of forgiveness and consolation.

**We can actually hear words of forgiveness.** Many say, "I can just pray and ask God to forgive me." That is true, on one level. Yet as human beings, we need to have a real and tangible response. This sacrament offers us the words spoken in a human voice, "You are forgiven."

**Celebrating reconciliation reminds us that we are meant to move in the direction of God's call for us.** We are loved and forgiven. Until the day we die we always have the opportunity to turn to God and hear those words again.

#### **WHAT THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION IS NOT:**

**It is NOT an appearance before a judge.** We don't come to this sacrament to be convicted and sentenced. We come to hear of mercy and forgiveness, not to be yelled at. Also, the priest hearing our confession is not immune from sin himself. He knows that he has sinned and been forgiven and shares with us the grace of being a forgiven sinner.

**It is NOT a punishment for our sins.** Guilt and separation from God are the punishment for our sins. This sacrament is way for us to freed of our guilt and reconciled with God.

**It is NOT a 'easy in, easy out' way to continue in our sins.** This sacrament has also been called the 'sacrament of conversion.' Some complain that "You can do what you want and just get forgiven and do it again." You could, but this is an abuse of the sacrament. We go to this sacrament sorry for what we have done and intending to avoid doing it again. And we ask for God's help in our resolution. We may (and probably will) sin again, but that is a failure on our part and not in the design of this sacrament. Yet, we can always return for another try, realizing God's mercy is always available.

### **How does it work these days?**

There are two common ways that the sacrament is celebrated today.

The first form is familiar to most of us. This is individual confession in a conversation between a priest and a penitent. It can take place anonymously or face-to-face.

The second form is called communal reconciliation. People who haven't experienced this sometimes guess that it means that a whole group of people confess to each other. Far from it! What happens is that people gather to pray together. The first part of the liturgy looks like what you would expect at a mass, with readings and a homily. Then, people are invited to come forward and confess privately. Usually people summarize what they have done, or focus on one thing in their life that they especially want to change. Each person is absolved. Then the congregation prays or sings its praise and thanksgiving.

### **OK, but how do you go to Confession?**

If you haven't been for awhile, this is a very reasonable question. The sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated in most parishes on Saturdays. In addition, communal reconciliation services are usually scheduled during Advent and Lent. If these times are inconvenient for you, you can make an appointment to see a priest. The reconciliation room may be a remodeled confessional or a room built for this purpose. If you cannot find it, feel free to ask someone to point the way. In most reconciliation rooms, you have an option to either kneel behind a screen or sit in a chair face-to-face with the priest. The form that you use is your choice. The room should be fairly comfortable, and convey the idea that this is a spiritual conversation and an opportunity for God's grace to work, and not surgery without anesthesia.

The priest can take it from there. He will begin by inviting you to make the Sign of the Cross. Many people begin with "Bless me Father, for I have sinned." It is a formula, but it gives you something to start with.

You can say that you are new to this, or how long it has been since you last confessed. This gives the priest the clue to take the lead. He may share a short Scripture passage with you, and then invite you to confess your sins. There may be a short discussion. The priest will invite you to pray a short prayer. You can say the Act of Contrition, or some other prayer. You don't have to memorize a prayer. You can pray a prayer of sorrow for your sins in your own words. Or you can ask the priest to help you with it.

Then the priest offers absolution and a short concluding prayer.

That's all that there is to it.

### **USING THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

*Many of us remember long lists, based on the Commandments, which we used to find out if we had sinned. Sin is not always a question of "breaking a rule," but of our attitudes and patterns of behavior. At the same time, reflecting on our actions in light of the Commandments and the teachings of the church can be helpful in calling us to change our lives and to live more fully as disciples of the Lord. The following list can be used as a guide. Ideally, we should examine our conscience every day. As you begin to reflect on this list, say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit to help you to remember what you have done and to help you to see it clearly.*

### **Children's' Version of the Examination of Conscience**

- 1: Do I honor God above everything else?
- 2: Do I ask God's help in my decisions?
- 3: Do I pray to God regularly?
- 4: Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
- 5: Do I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday?
- 6: Do I obey the adults who care for me?
- 7: Do I take care of my own body with good food, rest and exercise?
- 8: Have I physically hurt anyone, or have I hurt someone's feelings, or have I been so angry that I might have hurt someone?
- 9: Have I been loyal and faithful to my family and friends?

- 10: Have I taken what is not mine?
- 11: Have I told the truth?
- 12: Have I been jealous of other people or of other things?
- 13: Have I done what I can to help the poor?
- 14: Have I done what I can to make the earth a good place to live?
- 15: Have I done what I can to be part of my church and school communities?
- 16: Have I shared my possessions and my talents with others?

**Adults' Version of the Examination of Conscience**

- Have I honored God above everything else?
- Have I ignored God's guidance in making my decisions? Have I neglected praying to God regularly?
- Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
- Have I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays?
- Have I cared for my parents and other adults in my family? Have I cared for my children and grandchildren in a responsible way?
- Have I failed to look at someone lovingly, or have I seen them as a burden or a bother?
- Have I failed to take good care of my own body with good food, rest and exercise?
- Have I abused drugs or alcohol?

**BEFORE RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST, YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW**

Jesus became human for us, taught us to be disciples, was crucified and rose. Because he offered his life as a sacrifice and rose from the dead, Jesus is able to be present to us in the Eucharist, giving us a share of his Body and Blood. It is as if we have a window in time to be with Christ in his death and resurrection. We believe that Christ is truly present under the signs of bread and wine. It looks like bread and wine, but it is the Body and Blood of Christ. We gather as a church community, because we all became members of the Body of Christ when we were baptized. As members of the church, we do what he commanded, to share a meal in his memory. When we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we are all participants. We are not there to only watch. As participants we:

**Listen.** We listen to the Word of God in Scripture, which is the presence of Christ speaking to us, showing us how to live as disciples.

**Remember.** We remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection. We celebrate the Eucharist, as he asked his disciples "Do this in remembrance of me."

**Give Thanks and Praise.** As members of the Body of Christ, we celebrate *Eucharist* which means "thanksgiving" in Greek. We give thanks with Christ to the Father. We give thanks for Christ's life and for ours, and for the victory of life over death. As the priest gives voice to our prayer, we join together in praising God for these wonders.

**Receive and Share.** We receive the Body and Blood of Christ, which joins us more completely to Christ and to the community of the church. Nourished by his Body and Blood, we are sent forth to be Christ's presence in the world.

**IN ORDER TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE EUCHARIST, YOUR CHILD SHOULD BE ABLE TO JOIN IN SINGING AT THE MASS / AND RESPOND TO THE PRAYERS AT MASS.**

**CONFIRMATION**

"The grace conferred by the Sacrament of Confirmation is more specifically a gift of strength. This gift corresponds to the need for greater zeal in facing the spiritual battle of faith and charity in order to resist temptation and give witness of Christian word and deed to the world with courage, fervor, and perseverance. This zeal is conferred by the Holy Spirit." *John Paul the Great*

**A sponsor**

Since the earliest centuries of the church, people wishing to be initiated into Christianity have had sponsors - guides and mentors who guide them in the Christian faith. To be a sponsor, one must be:

A Baptized and practicing Catholic. At least 16 years old

Not parent or adoptive parent - the sponsor may be a grandparent or sibling

**A letter to the pastor**

In the first few centuries of the Christian church, the local bishop would meet each person preparing for

baptism and would ask questions of the individual, making sure the person was well prepared. The local bishop is still considered ordinary minister of Confirmation. (Sometimes certain pastors are given faculties to confirm.) Each candidate is asked to write a letter to the pastor requesting the sacrament of Confirmation and his or her reasons for doing so. This is an Archdiocesan requirement. The letter is to be one page, typed, dated, and signed. The main point of the letter is to state the candidate's request to be confirmed and his or her reasons for wanting to be confirmed.

### **Interview**

While the local bishop cannot meet with each candidate individually, contact with each candidate is done on the parish level. The pastor or associate priest will visit your class and ask you questions/ or any question you might have. No preparation is necessary for the interview as focus is on the candidate's relationship with God and the church.

### **Preparation sessions**

The Catholic Church asks that those who celebrate and receive Sacraments be adequately prepared. The goal of our Confirmation program is to pass on the Catholic faith to our candidates in a personal way, in which each candidate has a chance to ask questions and are treated with dignity and respect, so that they can begin to reach full potential that God has for them. They learn prayerfully to discern the direction God has for their life. The sessions are meant to be a combination of formation and information, preparation of the head as well as preparation of the heart. It is important that all participants attend all the sessions and fulfill all the requirements.

NOTE: The formation sessions are meant to be immediate preparation for the Sacrament, not a make - up of several years of missing instruction in the faith from grades one to eight.

### **Service**

Jesus served others, and Christians are commissioned to serve as well. The purpose of requiring Christian service for Confirmation is to help develop in the candidate a lifestyle of being of service to people in need. It is important to understand this service as "Christian service" as opposed to "community service." Community service is sometimes performed by someone as a requirement or sometimes as punishment. It is important that candidates should understand their service through Christian eyes, it is a service done within the context of a relationship with Jesus Christ and the church. While counting a certain number of hours is certainly not the ultimate goal of Christian service, a set number of hours helps ensure a sense of accountability. Candidates for Confirmation are therefore asked to complete 15 hours of Christian service. Candidates are responsible for coordinating their own service experiences. Accepting money for a particular service negates the concept that the action being done is service. Service is only when it is done to help those in need.

### **A Confirmation Retreat**

Christians have been going on retreat ever since Jesus "went off to pray," which he did several times throughout the Gospels. Retreats are common before receiving the other Sacraments as well. As Catholics we strive to know, love and serve God. A Confirmation retreat not only help us to know God more but to truly learn to love Him by recognizing Him in our everyday life and by learning to communicate with Him through prayer. We also learn to serve Him by being aware of our actions as we learn to avoid evil and pursue good and say "Yes" to God as we discover the purpose of our lives. The Archdiocese of Chicago requires a Confirmation Retreat before a candidate is confirmed. There will be retreat for each Confirmation year.

NOTE: Candidates and their parents participate in a retreat prior to Confirmation. Information will be given to parents and teens at their Sacramental Preparation Meeting.

**If a candidate has a conflict with the date of the retreat, the candidate must call another parish in the Archdiocese and participate in their retreat. (it is an absolute must)**

## THE EXAMEN

The **Examine** is a short prayer devised by St. Ignatius of Loyola in which you try to see how God was active during your day. Using this method of prayer can help you become conscious of how God is helping you to grow in holiness. It is a good way to remember that we depend upon God to become holy people. It can be prayed at midday or before going to bed.

### **THE FIRST is to give thanks to God our Lord for the gifts received.**

Ignatius once said that the most abominable sin he could imagine was the sin of ingratitude. He knew that an awareness of God's goodness and generosity is the foundation of our relationship with God. Once we recognize God's goodness, we spontaneously feel gratitude. In this first point, we express gratitude for the experiences and encounters during the day that have been good or pleasant or meaningful, whether they seem trivial or important. We also express gratitude for the larger gifts we have received: our faith and our salvation, our life, our talents and abilities, significant relationships, whatever comes to mind. We might sometimes find ourselves in a mood of resentment or depression where a feeling of gratitude is hard to muster. At that time, it is all the more important for us to express thanks to God. Not to pretend to feelings we don't feel, but to acknowledge, at whatever level we can, the truth of God's goodness to us.

**For children:** *What do you want to thank God for today?*

### **THE SECOND is to ask for the grace to know my sins and to root them out.**

Ignatius gives his second point a moralistic tone. The particular grace we are seeking here can be expressed more broadly as the light to see our life the way that God sees it, without the illusions and deceptions that we commonly live by. If we are to ask for this grace wholeheartedly, it is important for us to know how desperately we are in need of it. Psychology has shown that many of our true feelings and motivations are genuinely hidden from us. The unconscious part of ourselves can have a powerful influence on what we feel and how we act. Even apart from this, there is a natural tendency to rationalize our actions and to believe the sort of front we put on for other people. Or we can deny or repress unpleasant or embarrassing things about ourselves. Or we can have attitudes of self-deprecation or contempt that distort our view of ourselves and others. The possibilities for self-deception are endless. To truly know ourselves is not something that we are able to do alone. We need to ask the Holy Spirit for the light that can reveal us to ourselves.

**For children:** *What have you done today that you are sorry for? Why do you think you did it?*

### **THE THIRD is to demand an account of my soul from the moment of rising to that of the present examination, hour by hour or period by period. The thoughts should be examined first, then the words, and finally the actions.**

The third point is the heart of the *Examen*. Our actions, words, thoughts, feelings can come from an internal source of freedom and openness to other people and God. Or they can come from what St. Paul calls the "flesh" or the "law of sin"; that is to say from the self-centeredness that inhabits all of us. We examine the events of our day methodically in order to uncover the source and the direction of our life that day. Ignatius suggests we move from thoughts to words to actions. However, it can be more fruitful to move the other way, to look at words and actions and then reflect on the real motivations, intentions and feelings that underlay them. Actions that are apparently good can be done for bad motives, such as a desire for praise. Such an action might be considered praiseworthy but really springs from self-centeredness. Some people are free from actions that are obviously sinful. But when we go to a deeper level of intention and feeling, we can discover that sin has a larger hold on our life than we suspect, that there are all sorts of subtle ways that we focus on self rather than moving outward, towards others and towards the other. The Christian life aims at a purity of intention, where all our actions spring from freedom and grace. At first we achieve this type of freedom only sporadically and often fall short. But we can grow towards it. The examination of our day is not simply earnest introspection, it is prayer. It is going through our day with God, attentive to the inner feelings and desires which is where we experience God's call in the midst of everyday activity.

**For children:** *'Rewind' your day like a video. What happened during each part of the day? Go through it with God. Ask God to show you what happened to you and by you during the day. How has God been present to you? When did you remember this and when did you forget this?*

### **THE FOURTH is to ask pardon of God our Lord for my faults.**

Once we have reviewed our day, we may have come to a sense of the dynamic of sin and grace that has been operating in our life that day. The fourth point is our response to that awareness. Insofar as we have discovered grace and freedom operative during the day, our response is gratitude and wonder for the work of God in our soul. Genuine freedom always comes as a surprise to us, because it involves a sort of self-transcendence that we know we don't have in ourselves. When we discover that in our day, we need to praise God for it. Conversely, when we discover sinfulness and self-centeredness, our response is remorse and contrition. Contrition does not mean dwelling in guilt and shame and beating ourselves for not being perfect. It means recognizing our distance from God, our moving away from God, and asking for and receiving God's forgiveness. The difference between contrition and shame is that contrition is a feeling that moves us out of ourselves and towards God. Shame simply moves us deeper into ourselves. Like gratitude in the first point, we may not be able to deeply feel the contrition that is the proper response to recognition of our self-centeredness. But it is important then to express it, even if it doesn't seem very deep, by asking for pardon. **For children:** *What do you want to ask God's forgiveness for?*

***THE FIFTH is to resolve to amend with the help of God's grace. Close with the Lord's Prayer.***

We end the *Examen* by looking towards tomorrow with the desire and resolve to effect changes in action or attitude that God has called us to today. Alcoholics Anonymous has a slogan, "One Day at a Time" by which they mean that sobriety is not achieved by big and noble resolutions, but by trying to stay sober for one day. It can be useful to look at our spiritual life in that way. We deal with it one day at a time. In this fifth point we don't look at changing our whole lives, we simply look at what we want to change tomorrow, and ask God's help for it. Our lives are a drama of sin and grace. But this drama is being played out on the rather humble stage of our day to day life. Ignatius adds our need for God's grace, an important point. We are not resolving to perfect ourselves by force of our own will. We are resolving to open ourselves to grace through awareness of where we need it. **For children:** *Ask for God's help and grace to live as a Christian tomorrow. End with the Our Father.*

**CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Just as children are expected to attend their Religious Education classes, children are also expected to be present in the Church community, through attendance at Mass and service opportunities. **4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade** children are expected to become altar servers – training will be provided. Call Mr. Stephen Palanca @ 773 – 525 – 0453 Ext. 22

**Eighth graders** are asked to contact Deacon Richard Johnson 773-525-0453 Ext.55 to participate in outreach opportunities. Following each service activity, children will complete a reflection form, and discuss how they felt about completing the service activity.

**SERVICE:**

Grade level appropriate activities for service will be offered. Also, each grade level will have an expectation of service hours to complete each year. Children can do service at Church, at home, at school, and through outreach ministries. The goal of Service is that children develop a spirit of helping and serving others.

**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades:** Complete a minimum of 6 Hours of Service each year.

**3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Graders:** Complete a minimum of 8 Hours of Service each year.

**5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Graders:** Complete a minimum of 10 Hours of Service each year.

**7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders:** Complete a minimum of 20 Hours of Service each year.

We will offer service activities that children can participate as a group, as well as service activities that children can participate in together with their family.

**EXAMPLES:**

**Lake View pantry:** (food drive)

All Religious Education families are asked to take a grocery bag and fill it with non-perishable food for the poor. Bags are to be brought to Our Lady of Mount Carmel on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month.

**Advent / Christmas – CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE:**

This is a great opportunity for the students and their families to participate in the reach out to others at



this happy occasion. The names and age of the recipient will be on the bulletin board during Advent. You can pick a name and pray for the person and their family during this Holy season and bring your gift on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent.

**Lent and Easter – Rice bowl**

Each family is invited and expected to pick up a rice bowl on Ash Wednesday. Put it on you dinner table, so you can pray for the cause you are saving and contributing. It is our effort to reach out to our global family to make their lives little easier with our little sacrifice.

Dear Parents/Guardians:

After you have read through the handbook with your children, please sign below and return this page to your child's catechist on the first day of the class

I have reviewed the material in the handbook with my child/children. We have discussed the expectations of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Religious Education Program

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name/ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name/ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name/ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name/ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name/ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions regarding the material in this handbook, please feel free to call the Religious Education Office @ 773 – 525 – 0453 Ext. 14 so that we can discuss your concerns. God Bless you for all you do for your children's faith formation.