

**Our Lady of Lourdes  
Parish School of Religion (PSR)**

233 N. Main Street  
Milltown, NJ 08850

732 325-7005



Dear Parents and Guardians:

WELCOME to OUR LADY OF LOURDES RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM!  
You have already taken the first steps, through their baptism, by making your children adopted children of God and by the example of living your life as Catholic Christians. We are happy that you have chosen us to partner with you to continue their faith journey which will be enriched with the graces they will receive through the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation and beyond.

As partners in your child's faith we ask that you continue to be a living example of our faith to your child/children, because without you and your example the Christian message falls on deaf ears. We urge you to bring your child/children to Sunday/Saturday night Eucharist each week, pray with and over your child/children daily, and talk about our Catholic faith as often as possible. Our Catholic faith has a rich history with many rituals and celebrations which needs to be shared.

Please read this handbook carefully so that you are familiar with our policies and expectations. Please feel free to call us at any time if you have questions or if you need assistance.

Sincerely,

Father Edward Czarcinski  
Pastor Our Lady of Lourdes

Renee Young  
Parish Catechetical Leader

May 2018

## MISSION STATEMENT

**Our Lady of Lourdes Parish** is a Community of the Roman Catholic Tradition in the Diocese of Metuchen.

Our mission is to work with the children and parents/guardians, of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, with the help of the Holy Spirit and through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes; to develop a life long relationship with God, to know, love and serve God and their neighbors in their parish, in the community and beyond, to love one another as Jesus loves us, and to reach out to all people especially those who are in need.

## GOALS

1. To partner with parents/guardians and expound on what has already been taught in the home about our faith.
2. To foster an environment in which each child can build a unique relationship with God.
3. To present the Catholic faith in a manner children will understand at all age levels.
4. To recognize and understand the Grace received from the Sacraments and to develop an ongoing relationship with God throughout their lives.
5. To give children faith tools to fall back on in hard times throughout their life.
6. To increase their knowledge in a loving, living and merciful God.
7. To foster an understanding and the need for the Holy Mass and the Holy Eucharist through worship and prayer.

## PURPOSE

We ask you to be our faith partners in delivering the Christian message by example, knowledge and spirituality. Therefore we, Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education Program, and the parish community look to the family, the “**domestic church**”, as the most important Christian influence since it is in the home that the child learns that faith. Religious formation reinforces the traditions of faith and each child’s individual Roman Catholic identity while the parish supports the child in learning to celebrate that faith in community. We will work in close collaboration with each family and the parish community to fulfill its purpose and goals.

## CLASS TIMES

Evening Session Grades 7 - 8 Tuesday 6:30 to 8:00

Wednesday Evening Session Grades 1 - 3 5:30 to 6:50

Thursday Evening Session Grades 4 - 6 5:30 to 6:50

### ARRIVAL:

The door will be open 5 minutes before classes begin. Classes begin with opening prayer. Please arrive before classes begin, as late arrivals disrupt a prayerful attitude. For children in grades 1 to 6 please escort your child/children into the building.

### DEPARTURE:

The door will be open 5 minutes before classes end. All children in grades 1 to 6 will be released by grade to a parent/guardian or authorized person. **No child will be allowed to leave the building unless accompanied by an authorized adult.** For children in grades 7 & 8 PCL or representative from the Religious Ed Program will accompany students to the parking lot. All parents must park in the school parking lot and walk to the convent. Do not drop off or pick up your child on Willow Street. If your child is leaving with someone other than you or an authorized adult, on the registration/re-registration form, you must send in a letter stating that you give your permission for your child to leave with said adult each time they leave with said adult. Children will not be allowed to leave another parent without that child's parent first contacting the PCL. This is for your protection as well as the child's.

## POLICIES

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Children **“learn”** religion through experience; particularly by watching and imitating those they love best, their parents. Faith is something that is **“caught”** rather than **“taught”**. Classroom learning informs, gives data, and reinforces what the children should be experiencing outside of the classroom in the home.

Homework and quizzes are meaningful activities they supplement or reinforce the classroom experience. There will be time during the year when your child's Faith Formation Catechist will assign supplemental work that will need your supervision. In addition, parents/guardians of children in all grades, are asked to teach their children the prayers assigned to each level (see *“Curriculum”*). At the discretion of the Faith Formation Catechist and Administration, a student may not be allowed to continue to the next level if he/she has not completed assigned work and memorized prayers.

Students are expected to bring all material, books writing implement and folders weekly. We supply a small backpack and ink pen for all students.

If your child becomes ill, you will be notified and asked to pick up your child in the Faith Formation Office. **Children are not allowed to call a parent to come pick them up if they do not feel well.** They must come to the Faith Formation Office so we can contact you.

**The Diocese of Metuchen allows only 3 absences per year no matter what the reason.** If a student missed 3 or more sessions the child may be asked to complete summer home study under the guidance of a parent/guardian before advancing to the next level. You will be notified in April if summer home study is necessary. A nominal book fee will be charged.

**Please do not schedule Doctor/Dentist appointments during class times. Please keep sports activities, gymnastics, dance and/or any other activities (during classes) to a minimum during scheduled class time. Too many late arrivals, early departures and missed classes could results in your child not advancing to the next grade level.**

## **Behavior**

Jesus has asked us to love our neighbor as ourselves. As we all strive to follow Jesus, we ask that everyone show respect and courtesy to each other. **Parents/Guardians** your encouragement and cooperation are expected in helping your children live God's law of love in the classroom. For students who have a problem with classroom behavior or attendance, home study may be the solution. This would require the parent/guardian to work with the child at home. To measure the child's progress, dates and ties will be set up to assess your child's progress.

**Any student who is unwilling to cooperate with the "Student Code of Behavior" will be asked to withdraw from the Faith Formation Program. Parents/Guardians are expected to sign the contract on the registration form each year promising to follow what is in the handbook and Student Code of Behavior.**

## STUDENT CODE OF BEHAVIOR

**Students are expected to show respect for all persons in words and actions.**

**Students must conform to the attendance policy stated in the handbook.**

**Students should comply with the classroom rules set out by their Faith Formation Catechist in the interest of providing a good learning environment and experience.**

**Student must not do anything that could cause physical harm to themselves or to another.**

**Students must not destroy, deface or remove property from the building.**

**Students are responsible for completing all in-class and homework assignments to the best of their ability and according to the time schedule provided.**

**Students who exhibit any inappropriate behavior (in judgement of the Administration) will be asked to withdraw from the program.**

## CALENDARS

Each family will receive a calendar schedule for the year when we will not have sessions as well as other important activities. Please post the calendar in a prominent place at home and review it periodically. If dates are changed you will receive a notice to updated your calendar. Calendar will be posted on the Faith Formation (CCD) page of the parish website.

## Cell Phones

Students **are not permitted** to use cell phones during Faith Formation classes (**from the time the enter the building until the time they leave the building.**) Cell phones must be turned OFF and out of sight for the entire duration of all Faith Formation classes and activities. Violation of these rules will results in cell phone being confiscated and will only be returned to a parent/guardian. Second offense student will be asked to withdraw from the program.

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBERS (home and/or cell), EMAIL ADDRESS**

Please notify the Faith Formation Office immediately if you have changed your address, home telephone, cell phone or email address. It is vital to keep our records up to date in case of an emergency.

## **CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

New Jersey State Statutes require that the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) be notified immediately if a Faith Formation Catechist and/or Parish Catechetical Leader suspects that a child has been abused.

## **CUSTODY/DIVORCE**

In cases where the custody of a student/s has been restricted by the courts, a copy of the court document **MUST BE ON FILE IN OUR OFFICE**. Like wise , in case of divorce and/or separation we need a copy of the court document regarding custody arrangements for our files even though you may have designated said person as an Authorized Adult to pick up a student/s. If custody arrangements change we need a copy of the current court document.

Our Lady of Lourdes abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment. Thus, non-custodial parents will be given access to academic records and to information regarding the academic progress of their child/children, **unless there is a court order specifically stating that the non-custodial parent is denied access to such information.**

## **DISMISSAL**

Dismissal will be grade by grade. Parents/Guardians and authorized adults can pick the children from the convent. **PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST MEET THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN AT THE BACKDOOR OF THE CONVENT UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY THE PCL, A CATECHIST OR OTHER APPOINTED ADULT ASSIGNED BY THE PCL. Do not ask your child to meet you on the parking lot. Children are not permitted to meet their parents/guardians on parking lot of the school without PCL , Catechist or appointed adult .**

If for some urgent reason, a child needs to be excused early, a note must be given in advance to the Office and Catechist with the reason for early dismissal. Before dismissal, parent/guardian must come to the Faith Formation Office to sign their child/children out. **TWO EARLY DISMISSALS EQUAL ONE ABSENCE.**

## **FIRE DRILLS**

Fire Drills may be conducted during the year to insure safety of our students. In case of a real emergency, children will be taken to a prearranged evacuation area at Our Lady of Lourdes Church on North Main Street. Parents/guardians will be notified via telephone. When and where to collect your child. No student will be released to anyone other than the parent/guardian in case of evacuations. Parent/guardian will need to sign their child out before child is released from our care.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

In case of inclement weather, announcement of closing will be made on the WCTC website no later than noon the day of the closing. **Please see the WCTC Storm closing link on the parish website. PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE RECTORY. If Milltown schools are closed, have an early dismissal or Milltown afterschool activities are cancelled, Faith Formation classes will be cancelled.**

There may be times when other emergencies arise. In those instances Milltown Schools will be notified of any emergency closing before parents/guardians are notified. An email will be sent if time permits. If your child attends school outside of Milltown we will try to contact you directly. We ask that parents/guardians check the WCTC website for confirmation of closures. We will make every effort to contact parents/guardians in case of non snow relate emergencies before class begins when possible.

## **FOOD ALLERGIES**

It is the parents/guardians responsibility to inform the Faith Formation Office of your child's allergy condition on the registration form. For those children with life threatening allergies we ask that you provide us with a written list of "**safe foods**" which may be used by the Catechists for special classroom celebrations.

Because there are several children with severe and potential life threatening allergies we have a **NO FOOD OR DRINK POLICY in the classroom.** Students are not allowed to bring in food or drink to celebrate their birthday within the class setting. If you wish to send anything for your child's birthday it will be given to the parent/guardian, for each student in the class, after class., therefore everything must be individually packaged for distribution.



## **LATE ARRIVAL/TARDINESS/EARLY DISMISSAL**

Lateness, being tardy, and/or early dismissal interferes greatly with a child's progress and is disruptive to both the catechist as well as the entire class. Young children become disoriented and upset when arriving late or leaving early. Classmates become disoriented which disrupts the flow of the experience and lesson. Late and early dismissal students may have difficulty grasping the entire lesson being taught. **We ask that parents/guardians make every effort to arrive no later than FIVE minutes after the posted start of class. Students who arrive more than FIVE minutes late and/or leave early two times will incur one absence.**

**Too many late arrivals, early departures and missed classes could result in your child not advancing to the next grade level.**

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

Progress reports may be distributed in mid January. It is good policy to discuss the report with your child. **Please be sure to sign the progress report promptly and return it the following week to your child's Catechist.** You may request a transcript if you are moving out of the parish. The transcript consists of Catechists name, days absent, mass attendance and attendance at Stations of the Cross.

## **CURRICULUM**

### **WORSHIP**

Family worship at Mass is the most important part of our curriculum. All children will be given a folder in which to place the weekly bulletin which tells us their mass attendance. Information must be completed on the inside of the bulletin. All must be completed for weekend Liturgy including Christmas and Easter. If you attend mass at another parish, other than Our Lady of Lourdes, your child must get a bulletin from that church to be placed in their envelope. Envelopes will be collected at the end of the year and mass attendance will be marked on their permanent record. As the primary educators of your children, it is important that you are faithful to Church. Worship with your children at the weekend Liturgy let them see young and old alike at Mass in community prayer and celebration. Remember they cannot bring themselves, so you who are their greatest influence, must show them the way. **Stations of the Cross is not an optional part of our program. Each child must attend at least once during Lent. Good Friday Service is not counted as attending Stations of the Cross. Attendance is marked on their permanent record.**

## **PRAYER**

In each grade level, parents are asked to teach and help their child/children memorize the following prayers:

- Grade One:** Sign of the Cross ~ Our Father ~ Hail Mary ~ Glory Be ~ Angel of God ~ Grace Before Meals
- Grade Two:** Above plus ~ Ten Commandments ~ Act of Contrition ~ Mass Responses
- Grade Three:** Above plus ~ Apostles Creed (not the Nicene Creed used in the Mass)
- Grade Four:** Above plus ~ Basic Prayers of the Rosary (Hail Holy Queen, Fatima Prayer)
- Grade Five:** Above plus ~ All the Mysteries of the Rosary
- Grade Six:** Above plus ~ Beatitudes ~ Order of the Mass
- Grade Seven:** Above plus ~ The Creed ~ Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Grade Eight:** Above plus ~ Spiritual and Corporal Virtues ~ All Prayers of the Mass and Responses

## **FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION**

**As mandated by our Bishop,** our program includes Family Life Education grades 1 through 8. The text is published by RCL Benziger. This program specifically address four needs of today's developing young Catholics:

1. Young people need skills and knowledge for family living, both now and for the future when they, too, may become mature Catholic parents.
2. Young people need to understand their own physical, emotional and spiritual development, as well as the diversity of people around them.
3. Young people need to cultivate a deep respect for all life, especially human life.
4. Young people need to relate to others outside the family, and thereby take their responsible place in society. Parent's Handbooks accompany your child's text for home study and discussion.

## Home School Catechesis

To accommodate families with schedules which fall outside the parameters of our regularly scheduled class times we offer Home School Catechesis. Home School Catechesis consists of the parental duty to catechize your child. To be enrolled in Home School Catechesis a parent must first call the Pastor to be placed on home instruction. All fees apply. Home School Catechesis is available for those in Levels 3 through 6 unless specified by Pastor. The Home School Catechesis uses the **Loyola Press's "Finding God" and RCL Benziger's "Family Life"** which is in use in our formal class setting. Parents/guardians will be given all student material during a meeting at a predetermined time, before formal classes begin, to get the initial first 5 lessons along with the Catechist guide. Every 5 weeks you and your child need to come, at a predetermined time, to take the "Check-up" and receive the next 5 weeks of material. **If at anytime during the school year a student fails to take any Check-up the student will be dropped from the Faith Formation Program. This will result in an incomplete for that particular grade level. Child will need to repeat the incomplete grade level. The parent/guardian must contact the pastor to be reinstated into the Faith Formation Program.** All students on Home School Catechesis will be asked to and expected to participate in special activities and adhere to all requirements regarding mass attendance, proof of mass attendance as well as attending Stations of the Cross during Lent.

## SERVICE

All of our Faith Formation Catechists are volunteers. We are most grateful for their dedication and the amount of time and preparation they give to this ministry. Our parish program serves approximately 140 children yearly. Please consider volunteering as a Faith Formation Catechist, Substitute or Classroom Aide.

**If you are interested in volunteering please contact the Faith Formation Office at 732 325-7005**

**Please Note: The Diocese of Metuchen requires fingerprinting and background checks on all those over the age of 18 who regularly come in contact with minors. Fees are refunded by the parish. Virtus Training "Protecting God's Children" is another requirement.**