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

233 N. Main Street

Milltown, NJ 08850

732 786-4411

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 them 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 Reconciliation, Eucharist, 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 a 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 your have questions or if you need assistance.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Renee Young
Parish Catechetical Leader

Father Edward Czarcinski Pastor Our Lady of Lourdes



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 intercessions 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 on going 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 reinforce 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—See COVID-19 Addendum on last page

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.

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 wait on the parking lot. Do not drop off or pick up your child on Cleveland Avenue. If your child is leaving with someone other than you or an authorized adult, on the 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 with another parent without you 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 may 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.

ATTENDANCE

Each faith experience at each grade level is done sequentially. Frequent absence or tardiness makes it impossible for your child to grasp concepts or faith experiences. Perhaps more importantly - a child who only comes occasionally will not have a sense of "belonging". Developing a sense of community and an identity with the parish are vital aspects of our overall program. Likewise if a child is habitually tardy, leaves early or misses more than 3 classes in a row important concepts and classroom experiences are missed.

Students in Grade Level 1,2,3,4,5,,&6 are expected to bring all material, (i.e. pens, scissors, crayons, folders) and books for those in Grade Levels 2, 7, & 8 weekly. We supply a pen, folder and a backpack the first day of class for students to put all work and supplies in.

Students are expected to be present for each session unless illness or other serious reason prevents attendance. Please email us if your child/children will be absent.

If your child becomes ill, you will be notified and asked to pick up your child in the Faith Formation Office. <u>Children are not allowed to call a parent to come pick them up if they do not feel well.</u> 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 misses 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 home study is necessary. A nominal book fee will be charged.

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

BEHAVIOR

Jesus has asked us to love God and 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 to 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 to work with the child at home. To measure the child's progress weekly Session Reviews will need to be don online 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 a contract on the registration form each year acknowledging the Student Code of Behavior and to follow same..

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 will 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 building property for 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. Three Strikes and you're OUT. First Offence - Child is sent to PCL and given a warning. Second Offence—PCL will contact parent with a warning. Third Offence - PCL will contact parent to pick child up. At this point parent will need to contact Father Ed for child to remain in program.

CALENDARS

Each family will receive a calendar, via email, of the year's schedule when we will not have sessions as well as 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. Same calendar will be posted on the Faith Formation page of the parish website.

CELL PHONES

Students <u>are not permitted</u> to use cell phones during Faith Formation sessions (from the time they enter the building until the time they leave the building,) Cell phones must be turned OFF and kept out of sight for the entire duration of all Faith Formation sessions and activities. Violation of these rules will result 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 Statures 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

In cases where the custody of a student/s has been restricted by the courts, a copy of the court document <u>MUST</u> <u>BE ON FILE IN OUR OFFICE</u>. 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 common meeting area. PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST MEET THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN IN THE COMMON AREA ONLY. Children are not permitted to meet their parents/guardians on the street outside of the building roaming around looking for their ride home.

If for some <u>urgent</u> 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. Do Not call your child and expect your he/she to leave the classroom when you arrive. The PCL will bring your child to the door to met you. 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 and parents will be notified via telephone.

EMERGENCY CLOSING.

In case of inclement weather, announcements of closing will be made on the WCTC website no later than noon that day. Please see the WCTC Storm Closing link on the parish website. PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE RECTORY. If Milltown schools are closed, Milltown school have an early dismissal, Milltown afterschool activities are cancelled, Faith Formation session will be cancelled. There may be times when other emergencies arise. In those instances Milltown schools will be notified of any emergency closings before parents are notified. If your child attends school outside of Milltown we will try to contact you directly. We ask that parents/guardians please check the WCTC website for confirmation of closure., or the parish Facebook page. We will make every effort to contact parents/guardians in case of non snow related emergencies before classes begin when possible.

FOOD ALLERGIES

Because there are several children with severe and potentially life threatening allergies to peanuts, tree nuts and gluten, our policy is that NO food or drink is to be brought in by any student. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform the Faith Formation staff of your child's allergy condition on the registration form. If your child requires an Epi-Pen you must bring it to the PCL. It must be marked with your child's name and contact information and given to the PCL the first day of class. In the event we need to use an Epi-Pen we will call 911 first and then the contact information given with the Epi-Pen. Unused Epi-Pen will be returned at the end of the school year.

LATENESS/TARDINESS

Lateness, being tardy, 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. Classmates become disoriented which disrupts the flow of the experience and lesson. Late students may have difficulty grasping the entire lesson being taught. Parents/guardians make every effort to arrive no later that <u>TEN minutes</u> after the posted start of class. <u>Students who arrive more than TEN minutes late more that two times will incur one absence each time they are late!</u>

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.

SERVICE

ALL of our Faith Formation Catechists and Aides 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 100 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 732 786-4411.

<u>Please note:</u> As in the public school system, the Dioceses of Metuchen requires fingerprinting and background checks of all those over age 18 who regularly come in contact with minors. Fees are refunded by the parish. The Dioceses also requires each volunteer to enroll in and participate in a program to Protect God's Children known as VIRTUS.

CURRICULUM

WORSHIP

Family worship at Mass is the most important part of our curriculum. As the primary and principal educators of your child/children, it is important that you are faithful to Church. Worship with your child/children at a weekend Liturgy. Let them see young and old alike at Mass in community prayer and celebration. Remember that 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 one time during Lent. 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 Level One: Sign of the Cross ~ Our Father ~ Hail Mary ~ Glory Be ~ Angel of God ~ Grace Before Meals ~ Act of Contrition

Grade Levels Two and Three: Above plus ~ Basic Ten Commandments ~ Examination of Conscience ~ Mass Responses

Grade Levels Four and Grade 5 Above plus ~ Basis Prayers of the Rosary (Apostle Creed, Fatima Prayer, Hail Holy Queen)

Grade Levels Six and Seven: Above plus ~ Beatitudes ~ Mysteries of the Rosary ~ Nicene Creed ~ Order of the Mass ~ Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Grade Level 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 for grades 1 through 8. We use Loyola's "Growing with God" 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.

All work is completed on a worksheet. PCL and/or Catechists will review worksheet and will inform you if there is a concern. It is our duty to inform authorities of any suspected abuse.

COURSE OF STUDY

For Grade Levels 1,3,4,5 & 6 (Usually but not limited to Grades 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6)

Ignatian Spirituality and Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts

Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts is rooted in Ignatian spirituality, a practical spirituality for daily life with a 500-year-old tradition. Named for <u>St. Ignatius of Loyola</u>, the founder of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, Ignatian spirituality is a pathway to a deep prayer life, good decision-making, and lives of service to others.

Ignatian spirituality is rooted in the conviction that God is active, personal, and—above all—present to us here and now. We can experience God as we actively engage with the world. One of the foundational characteristics of this spiritual tradition is <u>finding God in all things</u>. God can be found, or experienced, everywhere—in our relationships and in nature, in church and at school, in sorrows and joys, in crowded cities and in secluded retreat houses. We can encounter God in all of the details of life and thus recognize God's love for us and for the Church as we daily grow in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts draws from its Ignatian heritage to help develop children and the catechists who serve them as contemplatives in action who are men and women for others. That is, we do not have to live apart from the world but actively engage with it as we are infused with a spirit of prayer. A key prayer form is the <u>Examen</u>, a method of reflecting on our day to notice where God was clearly present or where we were more distant from God and to discern God's direction for us.

As people of prayer, those formed in the Ignatian tradition learn tools of good decision-making and discernment and believe in a faith that does justice. There can be no true expression of faith where concerns for justice and human dignity are missing. Ignatian spirituality also respects people's lived experiences and is a flexible, adaptable way of interacting with the world and one another.

The *Finding God* program guides children to engage in imaginative prayer, a traditional way to encounter God through the use of Scripture. It also engages the imagination through the Exploring Faith Through Art prints and recorded Scripture stories. In doing so, children begin to learn that God can speak to them through their imaginations, thoughts, and feelings, and that God desires a personal relationship with them, as he does for all of us.

Learn more about Ignatian spirituality by visiting our sister site, <u>IgnatianSpirituality.com</u>

Each child will receive an access code to do the weekly Session Assessments. This includes all students in all Grade

For Grade Level 2 (Usually but not limited to Grade 2)

Dynamic Catholic "Blessed First Reconciliation and Eucharist captures children's hearts and minds with ample active learning opportunities. Scripture and doctrine are foundational to the program, as is prayer, which is offered throughout each chapter and helps young learners develop a prayerful relationship with God.

Lessons are explored through reading, conversation, prayer, and fun-filled activities that appeal to all learning styles. Each chapter follows a four-part structure—Engage, Explore, Reflect, Respond—that fully involves both the heart and the mind. Scripture stories and links to Scripture enrich the lesson and connect children to the Bible.

Prayers—a fundamental feature of this program—are presented in multiple forms and with child-friendly text.

The sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated on an individual basis in January on a Saturday morning. There will be a sign up sheet for individual times. Parents will need to bring their child to the church. The date will be on the Important Dates which can be found on the parish website.

There will be a First Holy Eucharist Retreat during the month of March. This is not an optional event and is to be attended by both Parent/Guardian and child.

The sacrament of First Eucharist is typically celebrated on the first Saturday of May in the morning. Father has the right to change this date when appropriate.

For Grade Levels 7 & 8 (Usually Grades 7 & 8)

Our Program begins with "Chosen"- Your Journey Toward Confirmation in Grade Level 7. it is a twenty-four-lesson program that provides everything needed to prepare the candidates both intellectually and spiritually to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and to become lifelong disciples of Christ. All too often we see teens drift away from the Church after Confirmation. Chosen seeks to reverse this trend by winning over the hearts of teens at a critical time in their lives and keeping them firmly planted within the faith community of the Church.

Chosen's carefully designed methodology features highly effective and engaging material conveyed through videos, student workbooks, and classroom experience. All questions, fill in the blank and Challenges of the Week must be completed weekly. If a student fails to complete all required questions, fill in the blanks and Challenges of the week on a weekly basis student will be required to complete everything once formal classes end before moving on the Grade Level 8. This could delay the reception of Confirmation. In addition each student will receive an access code to complete the lesson at home should they miss the class due to illness. All lessons must be fully completed.

Students in Grade Level 7 will chose the name which they will take at Confirmation. At the same time student will, with the help of their parents, chose a suitable sponsor for Confirmation. The name for Confirmation and Sponsor must be chosen before the Covenant Signing. Which takes place in January of Grade Level 7.

Student and their Sponsor, in Grade Level 7, will attend the Covenant Signing beginning their Journey toward the Sacrament of Confirmation. There will be special Liturgical celebrations for Student and Sponsor to attend together to strengthen the student on their Journey toward Confirmation.

In Grade Level 8 students will complete 2 separate programs by Ascension Press, they are: "Encounter" which is bible based and "Altaration" a study of the Mass. Each student will receive a bible. All questions, fill in the blanks and Challenge of the Week must be completed each week. student will be required to complete everything once formal classes end before Confirmation. This could delay the reception of Confirmation. In addition each student will receive an access code to complete the lesson at home should they miss the class due to illness. All lessons must be fully completed.

In the fall of Grade Level 8 (typically November) Candidates and their Sponsor attend a Mass and Movie together which gives them an opportunity to share their faith in a unique way.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will take place in late Spring of Grade Level 8 which may or not be celebrated at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. We may need to join another parish due to low student numbers.

Student's Grade Levels 7 & 8 will be required to complete the Loyola Press Family Life Program "Growing With God"

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. Our Home School Program uses **Loyola's "Finding God"** (for grades levels 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6) which is in use in our formal class setting. Parents will be given a link to the lessons to aid parents. All student material will be given to parents at a predetermined time. The Catechist guide is available on-line for parents to print. **Every week your child needs to go on line to take a Session Review**. After 5 weeks parents will pick up the Unit material for the next 5 weeks. (Note all students in Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education Program will take the Session Review weekly. If at any time during the program a parent fails to pick up the next 5 weeks of Unit material and/or student does not complete Session Review weekly, we will surmise you do not wish your child to continue in Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education Program. Therefore, your child will be dropped from our program and the year will be noted as incomplete.

To be enrolled in Home School Catechesis a parent must first call the Pastor (Father Edward Czarcinski) 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. All students on the Home School Catechesis will be asked to and expected to participate in special activities including the requirements regarding mass attendance as well as Stations of the Cross.

ADDENDUM TO HANDBOOK COVID19 Delta Variant - September 22 2021

To hold in-seat classes we will be complying with mandates and directives sent to us by the Diocese of Metuchen, the CDC, and Governor Murphy. Which include:

Parent and student will wait in their car until a staff member signals you to bring your child to the building. This is to comply with Social Distancing protocol.

A Contactless Thermal Temperature Scan will be conducted on each child before entering the building. If a child has a temperature of 100.4 or higher you will be asked to take your child home. **DO NOT LEAVE UNTIL YOUR CHILDS TEMPERA- TURE IS TAKEN.** Hand sanitizer will be at the entrance of the building to sanitize their hands before immediately proceeding to the classroom.

If your child is experiencing symptoms of chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, lost of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea he/she will be asked to convalesce at home and will be excused from class. You will be asked to complete the lessons at home with your child.

A parent/guardian must inform the PCL (Mrs. Young) if their child has tested positive for COVID-19 and has attended Religious Ed classes withing the past 14 days.

If a child tests positive for COVID-19 the child along with the entire class in close contact must quarantine for 10 days according to the current State and local policies.

Parents will be notified by the PCL (Mrs. Young), in accord with the directives of the local county health department, when their child has had exposure to COVID-19

Seating charts will be created with students placed in assigned seats.

Students must stay in the classroom for the duration of the lesson. The use of bathroom facilities should be kept to a minimum and only out of necessity. Please have your child go to the bathroom at home before coming to class. If your child has a medical condition which necessitates the frequent use of the bathroom you must give PCL (Mrs. Young) a doctors note stating same. PCL (Mrs. Young) will notify you of frequent bathroom visits.

The State of New Jersey recommends a 6 feet distance whenever possible. A minimum of 3 feet is in place when seated in a classroom and wearing a mask.

According to CDC's directives and Dioceses of Metuchen, the wearing of masks is mandatory by all staff and students, especially when: 1) Arriving and waiting to be escorted to a classroom. 2) When a student is not in his or her assigned seat, in the hallway, in the bathroom and in the classroom. 3) During the dismissal procedure until the child has completely exited the building and is more than 6 feet from other people. 4) While seated if the distance between desks is less than 6 feet.

Each child will need to bring to class each week: (1) Hand sanitizer. (2) Mask. (3) Folder. (4) Ink pen, (which will be provided the first day of class, (NO PENCILS we do not have sharpeners in the classrooms). (5) Book for Grade Level 2 & 8 and Grade Level 7, book and Bible. (6) Grade Levels 1, 2 & 3 crayons, scissors. A backpack will be provided the first day to transport items in. We are prohibited from sharing and keeping any material to be used by anyone else. After each class, all student populated areas will be swept. Anything left in the classroom will be discarded., this could result in you purchasing a new book, backpack, and all supplies.

Children will be dismissed by Grade Level to adhere to Social Distancing protocol.

Parents/Guardians, students and staff will be reminded not to congregate before arrival at or after dismissal unless it is deemed necessary.

If your child becomes sick you will be notified immediately and moved to an isolation room until parent/guardian arrives.

THIS MUST BE SIGNED AND DATED BEFORE YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN ATTEND IN-SEAT CLASSES AT OUR LADY OF LOURDES

I acknowledge that I have read the Parent/Student Handbook as well as the COVID-19 Delta Variant Addendum:

Signature	Date
Print Family Name	