

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 Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation and beyond.

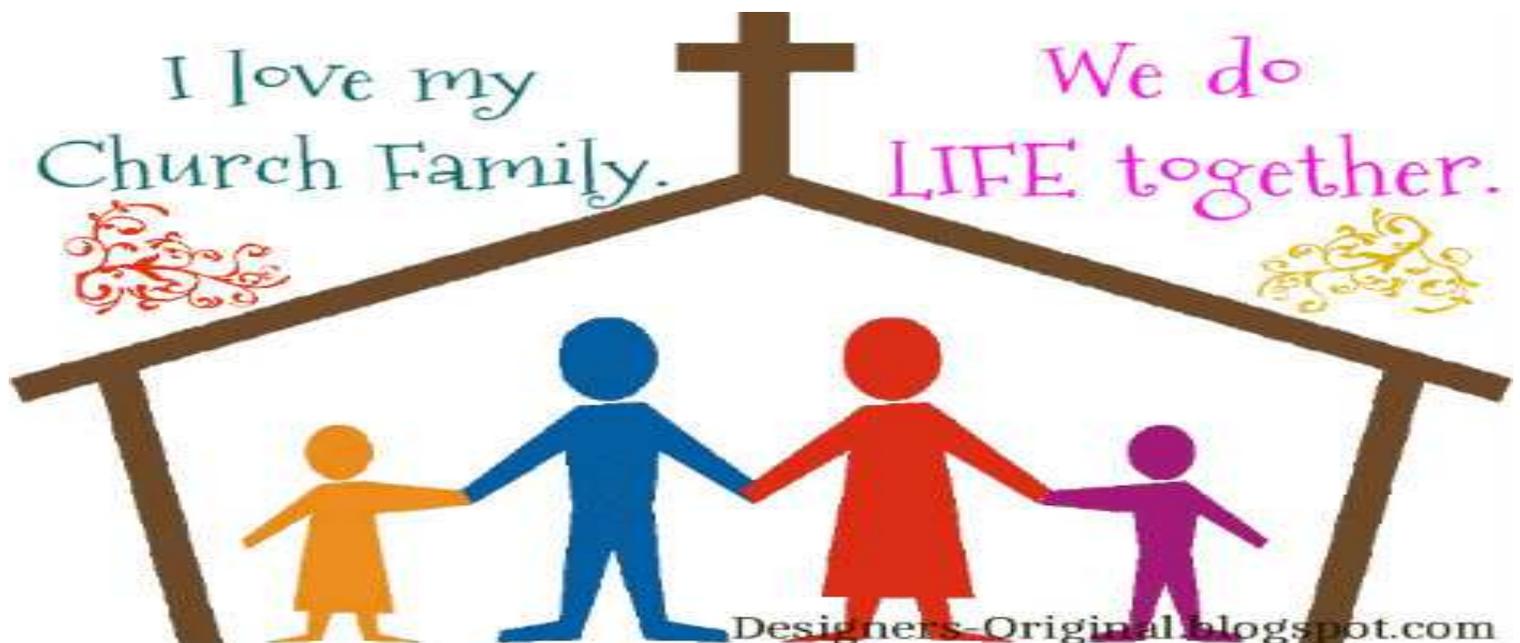
As partners in your child's faith we ask that you continue to be a living example of our faith to your child/children, because without you and your example the Christian message falls on deaf ears. We urge you to bring your child/children to Sunday/Saturday night Eucharist each week, pray with and over 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,

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 ADDEMUM TO HANDBOOK DUE TO COVID19 - JULY 2020

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 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 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 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.

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 are expected to bring all material, books and folders weekly. We supply a small backpack for students to put all work 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 are going to be absent.

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 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 dates and time will be set up with you 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 promising to follow 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 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.

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 (CCD) page of the parish website.

CELL PHONES

Students **are not permitted** 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 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

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 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 parking lot or on the street outside of the building roaming around looking for their ride home.**

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. 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 meet 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 to 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 not 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. Parents **must** provide our office with a written list of "safe foods" for special classroom celebrations .

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. We understand that some students come from outside of the Milltown School District and it is difficult to arrive at the specified start of class therefore; **We ask that parents/guardians make every effort to arrive no later that TEN minutes after the posted start of class. Students who arrive more than TEN minutes late more that two times will incur one absence each time they are late!**

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 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 150 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.**

Please note: 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.

CURRICULUM

WORSHIP

Family worship at Mass is the most important part of our curriculum. All children will be given an envelope to place the weekly bulletin which tells us their mass attendance. The information must be completed on the inside of the bulletin. These 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 the signature from the priest who celebrated the mass they attended. Envelopes will be collected at the end of the year and mass attendance will be marked on their permanent record. As the primary and principal educators of your children, it is important that you are faithful to Church. Worship with your 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 One: Sign of the Cross ~ Our Father ~ Hail Mary ~ Glory Be ~ Angel of God ~ Grace Before Meals

Grade Two: Above plus ~ Basic 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 ~ Examine of Conscience ~ Basis 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 additional home study and discussion.

COURSE OF STUDY

For 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 [St. Ignatius of Loyola](#), 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 [finding God in all things](#). 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 [Examen](#), 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, IgnatianSpirituality.com

For 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 in December during the regularly scheduled class time. We ask that parents attend with their child. The date will be noted 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 at-

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

Our Program begins with **“Chosen”- Your Journey Toward Confirmation**; 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. The Chosen program begins in Level 7 and is completed in Level 8.

In Level 8 students will complete the Chosen Program started in Level 7, complete the Family Life Segment and two other programs which are designed to have an “Encounter” with Christ as well as an understanding of what we do during the mass. Level 8 students will receive a Bible which will be used in conjunction with the **”Encounter and Altarations”** programs.

Students in 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 sponsor for Confirmation. The name for Confirmation and Sponsor must be chosen before the Covenant Signing. Which takes place in January of Level 7 (Grade 7).

Student and their Sponsor, in Level 7, will attend the Covenant Signing beginning their Journey toward the Sacrament of Confirmation . In Level 7 and 8 there will be special Liturgical celebrations for Student and Sponsor to attend together to strengthen the student on their Journey toward Confirmation.

In the fall of 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 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.

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 catechesis your child. The Home School Catechesis uses the **Loyola Press's “Finding God”** (for grades 3, 4, 5, and 6) which is in use in our formal class setting. Parents will be given all student material the first week of formal classes at a predetermined time. The Catechist guide is available on-line for parents to print. Every 5 weeks your child needs to come at a predetermined time to take the “Check-up” and receive the next 5 weeks of material. (Note all students in Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education Program takes the “Check-up” at intervals. To be enrolled in Home School Catechesis a parent must first call the Pastor (Father Edward Czarcinski) to be placed on hone instruction. All fees apply. Home School Catechesis is available for those in Levels 3 through 6 unless specified by Pastor. All students in the Home School Catechesis will be asked to and expected to participate in special activities and all and requirements regarding mass attendance and proof of mass attendance as well as Stations of the Cross.

ADDEMUM TO HANDBOOK DUE TO COVID19 - JULY 2020

Due to COVID-19 we have had to change the times and structure of our class times. **YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED WHEN WE HAVE STRUCTURED OUR NEW CLASS SCHEDULES.**

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 you will be asked to take your child home. **DO NOT LEAVE UNTIL YOUR CHILDS TEMPERATURE IS TAKEN.**

Brief COVID health questions will be asked before you child can proceed into the building. **DO NOT LEAVE UNTIL YOUR CHILDS HEALTH QUESTIONS ARE COMPLETE.**

If your child has a runny nose, cough and/or sneezing he/she will be asked to convalesce at home and will be excused from class. Lesson will be mailed for completion at home with you and your child.

Each child will need to bring and wear a mask, before entering the building, until they leave.

Hand Sanitizer will be at the entrance of the building. Each child will need to sanitize their hands before proceeding to the classroom. Hand Sanitizer will be in the classroom as well.

All desks will be spaced six feet apart.

Children will be asked to remain seated during class.

Children will be dismissed one by one to adhere to Social Distancing protocol

Each child will need to bring to class a folder (folder will be provided on the first day of class), crayons, scissors, ink pen or mechanical pencil (no pencils we do not have a way to sharpen them). We are prohibited from sharing and keeping any material to be used by anyone else.

After each class, all student populated areas will be disinfected. Anything left in the classroom will be discarded.