



St. Mary of the Isle Parish

Office of Faith Formation

315 E. Walnut Street * Long Beach, NY 11561

(516) 432-1320 Ext. 15

Msgr. Robert Brennan, Pastor

Mrs. Maryann Specht MPS, Director of Faith Formation

Dear Catechist,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for volunteering your time to teach Religious Education, also known as Faith Formation here at St. Mary of the Isle Parish. Whether you are a returning catechist or one who has just joined us, we look forward to great year ahead.

Enclosed is a handbook for you to refer to which covers the curriculum as well as the expectations and responsibilities of both students and parents together with administration.

I am, of course, available to discuss any aspect of Faith Formation with you as it concerns your class. If you feel the need to meet with me, please do not hesitate to contact my office to make an appointment.

I wish you a blessed year ahead and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Maryann Specht, MPS (Mrs.)
Director of Faith Formation

MS:jc
Enclosure

File: Administration/Handbook/Catechists



Table of Contents

MISSION STATEMENT
PHILOSOPHY OF THE FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM
THE CATECHIST
COMMUNICATION
CONFIDENTIALITY
ACADEMIC CONTENT / POLICIES
ISSUES OF CUSTODY
DISCIPLINE
EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
USE OF PARISH GROUNDS/FACILITIES
RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF ALL
SACRAMENTAL RECEPTION REQUIREMENTS
FIRST COMMUNION
FIRST RECONCILIATION
CONFIRMATION
CATECHIST PRAYER
CATECHIST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to help parents and guardians to bring their children into a deeper relationship with Jesus and give them a basic knowledge and understanding of the Church and its teachings and providing a solid foundation in the sacraments.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

St. Mary's philosophy is that it is essential that ALL Faith Formation Families be involved in the faith life of the parish which at a minimum means weekend mass attendance. In addition, the practice of the faith as a family unit is extremely important (i.e. Grace before meals, praying with your children, prayer at bedtime, etc.) All that is taught in Faith Formation Classes must be reviewed, practiced and emphasized in the home.



THE CATECHIST

It is through the Catechist that we are able to accomplish the mission of the Faith Formation Program. The Catechist has the immediate responsibility of leading the children in the way of the Lord and of preparing them for the Sacraments.

“The call to the ministry of Catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit. Catechists need to be practicing Catholic who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church and who have been prepared for their apostolate by appropriate catechetical training.” (National Directory for Catechesis, p. 228)

The primary mission of Catechists is to communicate God’s love to those entrusted to their care by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. The National Directory for Catechesis calls for the initial and ongoing formation of Catechists. It goes on to say, ***“Programs of formation should be designed to help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as disciples in Christ.” (p.235)***

In turn, the Catechist, too, should be prepared for their task. In compliance with Church policy on teaching and working with children, all catechists must complete the following and comply with “Safe Environment” requirements:

- Sign a “Code of Conduct Form”
- Complete a Volunteer Form
- Submit a letter of recommendation
- Authorize a criminal background check
- Complete a VIRTUS training program

Catechists are responsible for moderating their class’ behavior at all times, including when the group comes together for prayer or any activity.

Every Catechist is expected to arrive 5 to 10 minutes ahead of class time to gather the class together, hear the children’s prayers at the Prayer Wall, etc.

Catechists should also be prepared to remain after class until all their students have been picked up.

If circumstances arise and a Catechist must miss a class for any reason, it is important to notify the Director of Faith Formation as far in advance as possible so that a substitute teacher can be found.

Supervision and Evaluation

The Director of Faith Formation will make the rounds of the classes periodically to observe the class in action. An evaluation will be submitted to each Catechist throughout the year.



Continuing Education

Some of the ways our Parish and The Office of Faith Formation provides for ongoing formation for new and experienced Catechists are:

- Echoing the Word (Parish Workshops)
- Echoes of Faith Plus by NCCL Benziger (Online Course)
- Religious Studies Certificate Program (Basic or Advanced)
- Dayton Online –The Virtual Community for Faith Formation
- Fordham University Into the Field Online catechist Formation
- Pastoral Formation Institute Catechetical Ministry Track

Faculty Meetings

It is important that Catechists give their input on various matters pertaining to the children's education. We are a team in the spiritual growing of the students. The Catechist is expected to attend staff meeting either in the morning or evening. If a Catechist cannot make a meeting, s/he is responsible for arranging to meet the Director of Faith Formation to cover the information given.

Assignments and Expectations

If a child is not progressing or is behaving unsatisfactorily, the first offense will be taken up by the catechist and student. The second time, the director, the catechist and the student will have a meeting. On the third offense the parent will be asked to attend a meeting. If unacceptable behavior continues, the child may be put into home study. A written report must be made by the Director of Faith Formation.

Safety Awareness

The Catechist needs to ensure a safe environment at all times. The classroom lights should be on at all times. A catechist should not remain alone in a class with a single child. Catechists need to be aware of the fire drill procedures located in class folder and be aware of the exits. The class folder also includes the attendance records and needs to be taken with the catechist in the event of an evacuation.

Attendance Folders

The Catechist Folder is an important tool for the catechist. It contains many procedures that a catechist needs to adhere to in case of an emergency. In addition, the folder contains attendance records of the children. It is a legal document and needs to remain within the confines of the parish. Catechists need to pick up the folder at beginning of class and return it promptly at the end of class to the Director of Faith Formation. Communication between the Director of Faith Formation and the Catechist and Children will be put into the folder each week. There is a blank sheet within the folder for the Catechist to communicate ideas, questions, etc. to the Director of Faith Formation.



COMMUNICATION

Director to Catechist

The Director of Faith Formation holds several meetings/training sessions throughout the year for the Catechists. Catechist will be notified by both mail and email (if proper email address is given) for all such meetings. In addition, any news, updates, policy changes, etc. will be communicated by either email or mail.

Director to Parent/Guardian

The Director will send important written communication to the parents/guardians via the students from Pre-K through 6th grade. Material concerning 7th and 8th grades will be mailed to the home. In addition, emails are sent to all families who provide correct email addresses.

Parent/Guardian to Director of Faith Formation

Parents/Guardians can communicate to the Office of Faith Formation in the following forms:

Telephone: 516-432-1320 Ext 15

Email: smireled@optonline.net

Letter: 315 E. Walnut St., Long Beach, NY 11561

In Person: During class time in the Parish Hall (Monroe Blvd entrance)

Catechist to Parent/Guardian

If it is necessary, catechists (teachers) can communicate with parents/guardians via letter, or telephone or discussion after class. There will be no meeting during class time.

Parent/Guardian to Catechist

The parents/guardians can phone or write the catechist, or meet with him/her after class but not during class time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

At all time, confidentiality is of the utmost importance and will be maintained except when the safety of the child is involved. If a catechist suspects something (e.g. if the child exhibits different behavior due to death in the family or serious illness), the Director of Faith Formation must be notified immediately. The Director will then report to the pastor.

ACADEMIC CONTENT/POLICIES

"Fidelity to the magisterium of the Church." That means emphasis will be on the strict teaching of the Church. We will teach what is required by the Holy Father, the bishop of our Diocese, and the Pastor.



Children are required to know our basic beliefs and prayers. They must learn the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and the Sign of the Cross.

All children are required to learn the weekly book and material assignments and to have a pen or pencil to write with.

Parents/guardians are required to make sure the child has the necessary book for class. Parents/guardians should review homework assignments, help the children to understand them, and make sure they are completed. If a textbook is lost, there will be a fee for replacing it.

Students must report to class on time. No more than **two (2)** absences per semester are permitted. Please be sure to notify the Office of Faith Formation if your child will be absent because of illness either by telephone 516-432-1320 Ext 15 or Email smireled@optonline.net

If at all possible, parents should try to know the child's teacher.

ISSUES OF CUSTODY

The Office of Faith Formation will attempt to abide by any valid court-ordered direction which is provided to us. The Director of Faith Formation will notify the Catechist.

DISCIPLINE

Rules to be abided during class:

- Student must come prepared for class with textbook and pencil
- Student must be courteous and respectful of the catechist at all times
- Walking out of class, speaking out, disturbing the class will not be tolerated

Action:

- The 1st offense will be handled by the student and the catechist
- The 2nd offense will be taken up by the student, catechist and the Director
- The 3rd offense will be handled by the student, catechist, Director and the Parent

Appeals:

If there are extenuating circumstances, they can be discussed with the Director of Faith Formation. Should the matter still be unresolved, the Pastor will have the final say.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extra-curricular activities are a privilege, not a right.



- Only children who have had fewer than two (2) absences may participate, unless approved by the Director of Faith Formation. Any child who has had a parent/guardian called in because of discipline problems may not take part in the activity.
- Any retreat(s) that are held off the premises are a privilege, not a right. Any child with behavior problems will not be permitted to go on a field trip unless a parent or guardian accompanies the child.
- Permission slips are required for every trip and will be distributed 2 to 3 weeks before the date of the trip.
- The Parish is not liable for any unforeseen accidents
- Parent/guardian volunteers are required on every filed trip.

USE OF PARISH GROUNDS/FACILITIES

Children from Pre-K through 5th grade must be dropped off inside the school hall. Children are to be dropped off and picked up promptly. No child is to leave the grounds/facility with adult accompaniment unless a permission slip form is on file with the Office of Faith Formation.

RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF ALL

Everyone – parents/guardians, persons designated to deliver and pick up a student, students, catechists, the Director of Faith Formation – is required to treat anyone he/she meets at St. Mary of the Isle Parish with respect and dignity. There will be no tolerance of any type of harassment; sexual, racial, religious, ethnic, or any other.

SACRAMENTAL RECEPTION REQUIREMENTS

The Sacraments are important milestones on our faith journey. However, the reception of them is a privilege we earn, not a right. We have certain requirements that must be met before a Sacrament may be received at St. Mary of the Isle.

A minimum of two (2) consecutive years of Faith Formation must be completed before a Sacrament may be received. There will be testing, required reports, and compositions, depending on the grade level of the student.

Excessive absence may delay the reception of a sacrament.

Tuition must be paid in full before the Sacrament is received, unless other arrangements are made.



FIRST COMMUNION

The child must know the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be to the Father, and Apostles' Creed; as well as understand who Jesus is. Attendance at weekly Mass is expected.

There will be a retreat for those preparing to receive First Eucharist. At this same time, a prayer service will be held for the parents/guardian. Attendance is mandatory.

Proof of baptism must be provided before the Sacrament may be received. If the child was baptized at St. Mary's, a request from the rectory can be submitted, if the child was baptized at another church, a copy of the baptismal certificate from that church must be provided to the Office of Faith Formation.

FIRST RECONCILIATION

This Sacrament is received in the 4th Grade at St. Mary of the Isle. In addition to the prayers needed for First Eucharist, the child should know the Act of Contrition, Grace before and after meals, and the Rosary. Four hours of community service are required.

CONFIRMATION

The preparation for Confirmation takes two (2) years.

In the first year (7th grade), students are required to know all the previous prayers and should also know morning and evening prayers, and the Memorare. A 7-hour service project, which must be cleared with the Director of Faith Formation, must be performed. All class work must be completed as well as any homework given. The students must be familiar with the material covered.

In the second year (8th grade), the student should be familiar with all the above prayers as well as the Beatitudes, and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The child should be aware of their relevance to daily life.

A 15-hour service project, which must be approved by the Director of Faith Formation, must be completed during the school year. A Christian autobiography must be completed by December 12. At the same time, the student's Confirmation Information Sheet should be completed and returned.

By January 30th, the child must have completed a report on the saint whose name he/she will take for Confirmation, and must also inform us of whom the sponsor is.

In addition, every Confirmation candidate must attend a retreat.

The Office of Faith Formation retains the right to alter any of these policies. Any such changes will be available through the Director.



The staff of St. Mary of the Isle is here to help you and your family on your spiritual journey. We will do all we can to work with you in fulfilling our mission.

Catechist Prayer

O Jesus, Great and Beloved Teacher, thank You for inviting us to share your teaching mission as a catechist.

Thank You for calling us to proclaim God's presence and to announce the Good News of the Gospel to those we teach.

Guided by Your Holy Spirit and the teachings of Your Holy Church, may we always be faith-filled and courageous catechists.

May love and concern for those we teach always be our guiding motivation.

May our hearts be on fire within us as we prepare our lessons and our class activities.

May we view every lesson we teach as an opportunity to share God's incredible love.

Thank You for calling.

Thank You for Your love. Amen



CATECHIST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

By signing below I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Religious Education Catechist Handbook of St. Mary of the Isle Parish. I agree to abide by the policies set forth in the handbook.

Catechist Signature

Date