

HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK 2007-2008

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PHILOSOPHY & MISSION STATEMENT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Following Jesus Christ’s command and the Church’s mission to “teach all nations,” Holy Family Parish offers a comprehensive religious education program for the integral exposition of Catholic doctrine, enabling the faithful to know what the Church professes, celebrates, lives and prays in her daily life. A variety of programs for children, teens and adults enables them to learn the truth of the Catholic faith, to prepare for and to celebrate the beauty of the sacraments, to know and to live the goodness of God’s commandments of love, and to foster friendship with God in prayer. Guided to the Father by the Holy Spirit, following the example of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, our parish home aims to be a school of love for all of God’s people.

“Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.’” Mt. 28:18-20

“All day long, both at the temple and in their homes, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming Jesus, the Christ.” Acts 5:42

“Education is, in a very special way, the concern of the Church . . . especially because she has the duty of proclaiming the way of salvation to all men, of revealing the life of Christ to those who believe, and of assisting them with unremitting care so that they may be able to attain to the fullness of that life. The Church as a mother is under the obligation, therefore, to provide for its children an education by virtue of which their whole lives may be inspired by the spirit of Christ... Catechetical instruction illumines and strengthens the faith, develops a life in harmony with the spirit of Christ, stimulates a conscious and fervent participation in the liturgical mystery and encourages men to take an active part in the apostolate.” *The Declaration on Christian Education*, 3-4, of the Second Vatican Council.

“Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.” Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time*, 1, as quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 5.



THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND OF THE FAMILY IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

“As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society. It is therefore above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, in accordance with the faith which they have received in earliest infancy in the sacrament of Baptism. In it, also, they will have their first experience of a well-balanced human society and of the Church. Finally it is through the family that they are gradually initiated into association with their fellow-men in civil life and as members of the people of God. Parents should, therefore, appreciate how important a role the truly Christian family plays in the life and progress of the whole people of God.”
The Declaration on Christian Education, 3, of the Second Vatican Council.

“The family’s catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable. This special character has been rightly stressed by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council. Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children’s most tender age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. This catechesis is more incisive when, in the course of family events (such as the reception of the sacraments, the celebration of great liturgical feasts, the birth of a child, bereavement) care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these events. But that is not enough: Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.

“Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis. Furthermore, in places . . . where widespread unbelief or invasive secularism makes real religious growth practically impossible, ‘the church of the home’ remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis. Thus there cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this ministry of being their own children’s catechists and to carry it out with tireless zeal. Encouragement must also be given to the individuals or institutions that, through person-to-person contacts, through meetings, and through all kinds of pedagogical means, help parents to perform their task: The service they are doing to catechesis is beyond price.” Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time*, 68.



RIGHTS OF PARENTS AND OF STUDENTS

1. RESPECT FOR PARENTS AS FIRST TEACHERS OF THE FAITH

Parents, in their roles as first teachers of their children in the faith, have the right to receive respect from all adults working in Parish Religious Education.

2. AUTHENTIC FAITH

Parents and students have the right to expect that all adults working in the Religious Education Program of Holy Family Parish be practicing Catholics who teach the authentic doctrine of the Catholic Church.

3. TRUST IN PRIESTS, CATECHISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

Parents and students have the right to expect that all adults who work with children and adolescents in Holy Family Parish follow the Diocese of Arlington's "Policy on the Protection of Children/Young People and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and/or Child Abuse."

4. ENVIRONMENT

Parents and students have the right to expect that Religious Education will take place in a Christian—that is, in a loving—and safe environment.

5. CALENDAR, CLASSES AND CURRICULUM

Parents have the right to receive a Religious Education Calendar listing scheduled classes and special events. Students have the right to receive at least 30 hours of religious instruction, in accordance with the *Policies and Guidelines for Parish Catechesis* of the Office of Catechetics of the Diocese of Arlington. Parents have the right to receive from their children's catechist a Curriculum of Studies, corresponding to the *Curriculum Guidelines* of the Office of Catechetics of the Diocese of Arlington and to the students' textbooks, outlining the subject matter to be covered in the academic year.



SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS AND OF STUDENTS

1. MASS ATTENDANCE

“The Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life... The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2177, 2181) “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.” (*Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1247) Parents and students have the responsibility to observe the Lord’s Third Commandment by attending Mass on Sundays. Religious Education will stress the importance of Sunday Mass attendance and of receiving the sacraments which are God’s greatest gifts; this teaching must be confirmed by family practice.

2. FREQUENT CONFESSION

“Confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is . . . strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit.” (*CCC*, 1458) Parents and students have the responsibility to take advantage of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation as needed. Religious Education will stress the importance of frequent confession since the sacraments are God’s greatest gifts; this teaching must be confirmed by family practice.

3. FAMILY PRAYER

“Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.” (*CCC*, 2226) Parents and students have the responsibility to pray in their homes, including learning the fundamental Catholic prayers. Religious Education will stress the importance of communion with God in prayer; this teaching must be confirmed by family practice.

4. PARENTAL FORMATION

Formation in the faith continues throughout the life of every Christian. Parents, like all Catholic Christians, have the responsibility to study, to understand and to know the Catholic faith in order to both live it better themselves, and to be able to teach and answer the questions of their children. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* is an indispensable reference in this regard. In addition, the Religious Education program includes several adult education opportunities.

5. ATTENDANCE

Effective religious education requires regular attendance. Parents and students have the responsibility to see that students attend Religious Education classes faithfully.

6. HOMEWORK

Religious studies are serious—indeed, the most serious—and will require some homework. Parents and students have the responsibility to make sure homework is done diligently and in a timely fashion.

7. STUDENT SUPPLIES

Parents have the responsibility to provide the basic supplies necessary for religious studies. Students have the responsibility to bring the basic supplies to class weekly. Catechists will provide parents and students with lists of the necessary supplies.



EDUCATIONAL QUESTIONS

1. PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS TO RECEIVE SACRAMENTS

Students will be prepared to receive the Sacraments of Penance, First Communion and Confirmation according to their level of education. Such preparation will involve not only regular Religious Education classes but also special projects and events in order to help children and adolescents properly dispose themselves to receive God's greatest gifts. In order to facilitate information and preparation, each sacrament will have its own *Handbook*.

a.

b. **The Rite of Christian Initiation of Children {in grades two through high school,} (RCIC):**

A sponsor who meets the requirements of the *Code of Canon Law* is to be chosen.

Children who have not been baptized but who have reached the age of reason (7 years) will be prepared in an RCIC class to receive the sacrament of Baptism at the Easter Vigil, followed by First Penance and First Communion in the same Spring, having met the following requirements:

- i. Children must have a basic understanding of the sacraments that they are to receive and desire to receive those sacraments; doubts about any child's readiness to receive a sacrament are to be resolved by the pastoral discretion of the Pastor or, in his place, by the Director of Religious Education.
- ii. Children must be registered, consistently attend, and complete the work prescribed by Religious Education or a Catholic school.
- iii. Participation in rehearsals, parent meetings and other special events as announced is required.
- iv. The "Specific Responsibilities of Parents and Students" listed above are to be met.

c. First Penance and First Communion:

- i. These sacraments are for baptized children who have reached the age of reason (7 years), usually in Second Grade; proof of baptism is required.
- ii. Children must have a basic understanding of the sacraments that they are to receive and desire to receive the sacraments; doubts about any child's readiness to receive a sacrament are to be resolved by the pastoral discretion of the Pastor or, in his place, by the Director of Religious Education.
- iii. Children must be registered, consistently attend, and complete the work prescribed by Religious Education or a Catholic school.
- iv. Participation in rehearsals, parent meetings and other special events as announced is required.
- v. The "Specific Responsibilities of Parents and Students" listed above are to be met.
- vi. **Children or adolescents who have not received the Sacraments of First Penance and First Communion at the usual age will be prepared in RCIC classes according to their level of studies and must meet the same requirements listed above.**

d. Confirmation:

- i. This sacrament is for baptized youth who have reached the Eighth Grade; proof of baptism is required.
- ii. Youth must have a basic understanding of the sacrament that they are to receive and desire to receive the sacrament; doubts about any youth's readiness to receive the sacrament are to be resolved by the pastoral discretion of the Pastor or, in his place, by the Director of Religious Education.
- iii. Youth must be registered, consistently attend, and complete the work prescribed by Religious Education or a Catholic school.
- iv. Participation in rehearsals, parent meetings and other special events as announced (such as Confirmation Retreat, service activities, etc.) is required.
- v. The "Specific Responsibilities of Parents and Students" listed above are to be met.
- vi. A sponsor who meets the requirements of the *Code of Canon Law* is to be chosen.
- vii. **Adolescents who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the usual age will be prepared in an RCIC class and must meet the same requirements listed immediately above.**

2. TEXTBOOKS

Students will be provided with textbooks according to their level of studies. Parents are asked to familiarize themselves with their children's textbooks and to help the children read them.

3. EVALUATIONS

- a. **Following the *Policies and Guidelines for Parish Catechesis* of the Office of Catechetics of the Diocese of Arlington, parents will receive a standard written evaluation of their children's participation in Religious Education three times a year.**
- b. **National Catholic Education Association tests will be given to students in Grades 5, 8 and 11, Following the *Policies and Guidelines for Parish Catechesis* of the Office of Catechetics of the Diocese of Arlington.**

4. LEARNING, BEHAVIOR OR HEALTH DISABILITIES

Parents are asked please to notify the Director of Religious Education and their child's catechist if their child has a learning, behavior or health disability which may affect the child's performance. This information will remain confidential.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

1. ATTENDANCE

Effective religious education requires faithful attendance. Therefore:

- a. **Catechists will record attendance weekly and return attendance sheets in their respective class binders for review.**
- b. Excused absences require parental notification; parents are asked to notify the Religious Education Office Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM when a child will be or was absent for a legitimate reason.
- c. In the event of a pattern of unexcused absences, the Director of Religious Education will contact the parents of the child in question. More than **three unexcused** absences may seriously jeopardize a student's ability to continue in religious education and, in the case of sacramental preparation, to receive the sacraments at the foreseen time.

2. CANCELLATIONS

Event cancellation in extraordinary circumstances (inclement weather, other emergencies) will be tied to the decisions of Prince William County Public Schools:

- If Prince William County Schools close for the day, have early dismissal, or cancel after-school activities, there will be no Religious Education classes or special events.
- If Prince William County Schools delay opening, Religious Education classes and other special events will be held as usual.
- The cancellation of weekend events will be recorded on the Religious Education Office answering machine (Tel. 703-670-8161 x 223 or 703-670-8161 x 230 in Spanish) and announced on radio station WTOP (FM 103.5 and AM 1500).
- In the event of an emergency during an activity in progress, parents will be notified of a time and place to pick up their children with a message recorded on the Religious Education Office answering machine (Tel. 703-670-8161 x 223 and 703-670-8161 x 230 in Spanish) and announced on radio station WTOP (FM 103.5 and AM 1500).
- Parents, of course, are ultimately responsible for the safety of their children and make decisions regarding the safety of attending Religious Education activities as they see fit.

3. TRANSPORTATION, DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

To ensure the safety of children and to account responsibly for their whereabouts:

- Students are expected to be taken to and from religious education by their parents or by another authorized adult. If any person other than a student's parents are to drop off and, especially, to pick up a student, whether on a regular basis or one time only, a signed note to that effect is to be sent by the parent to the Director of Religious Education and the catechist; children will not be released to any persons who are not their parents without explanatory notes.
- Parents are to escort their children to the proper classroom and to leave them with the catechist, volunteer or hall monitor; no children are to be left unsupervised by an adult at any time. Parents must pick their children up at their classroom.
- Since children receive little formal religious education and thus time is precious, please consider that "early is on time, on time is late". Parents are asked please to bring children early so that classes may begin at the proper time.

4. RESPECT FOR PARISH AND SCHOOL PROPERTY

As guests of Holy Family Parish and School, all persons involved in Religious Education activities are asked to respect the communal (Parish and School) and private (catechist, volunteer, school

teacher, school student, etc.) property of others: misplacing, vandalizing or stealing the property of others is a violation of the 7th and 10th Commandments and will not be tolerated.

5. BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

- Christian learning can only take place in an atmosphere of Christian behavior. For this reason, the following behavior, and other non-Christian acts, will not be tolerated by anyone involved in Religious Education activities:
 - Blasphemies and other foul language (2nd Commandant)
 - Disrespect and disobedience (4th Commandant)
 - Verbal threats and physical violence (5th Commandant)
 - Abuse of any age-inappropriate or illegal substance (5th Commandant)
 - Impure language or acts (6th and 9th Commandants)
 - Littering, misplacing, vandalizing or stealing the property of others (7th and 10th Commandants)
- Parents are primarily responsible for the discipline of their children. Thus, in the event of child misbehavior described above, the Director of Religious Education, staff, catechists and volunteers who are responsible for discipline in the absence of parents will take these steps:
 - Misbehaving children will be given a first warning to cease misbehaving, with an explanation of what the child had done.
 - If a child continues to misbehave after one warning, a second warning to cease misbehaving will an explanation of what the child had done wrong and that further misbehavior will result in the child's parents being called.
 - If a child continues to misbehave after the second warning, the child will be given an explanation of what the child had done wrong and will be accompanied to the Religious Education Office. The child's parents will be called and asked to immediately come to pick up the child so they may administer discipline as they see fit.
 - If the child's parents cannot immediately be reached, at least two adults, including the Director of Religious Education, Director of Youth Ministry, staff members, catechists or volunteers, will supervise the child in the R.E. Office until the parents arrive at the end of class.
 - When necessary, the Director of Religious Education, Director of Youth Ministry, staff, catechists, or volunteers will initiate disciplinary action, following the *Policies and Guidelines for Parish Catechesis* of the Diocese of Arlington, 1993:
 1. Disciplinary action is corrective rather than punitive and is tailored to the offense.
 2. Discipline never consists of repetitive busy work or corporal, humiliating, unsupervised or indiscriminate punishment.
 3. Any disciplinary action taken will be communicated to the parents by the Director of Religious Education or Director of Youth Ministry.
 - If a child's parent is called to pick up their child due to disciplinary problems for a 2nd time, the family must meet with the Pastor, Director of Religious Education or Director of Youth Ministry within one week of the second offense.
 - Should a third incident occur where parents must be called, the parents will be required to attend the child's Religious Education class with the child until the class year is over.

CONFORMITY WITH DIOCESAN GUIDELINES

This Handbook is written to conform with, and defers to, the *Policies and Guidelines for Parish Catechesis* of the Diocese of Arlington, 1993. Any policy not defined here but defined in the *Policies and Guidelines for Parish Catechesis* of the Diocese of Arlington, 1993, is normative for Holy Family Religious Education Programs. A copy of the *Policies and Guidelines for Parish Catechesis* of the Diocese of Arlington, 1993, is on file at the Religious Education Office for anyone’s consultation, or online at www.arlingtondiocese.org/offices/livingfaith/

RESOURCES

The following Catholic businesses are good sources of a variety of books, videos and religious goods:

Pauline Books and Media—Alexandria (Daughters of St. Paul) 1025 King Street Tel. 703-549-3806 www.Pauline.org	The Paschal Lamb—Fairfax 11214 Lee Highway Tel. 703-273-5956	Ignatius Press www.ignatius.com Tel. 1-800-651-1531
The New Catholic Shop—Chantilly 13939 Metrotech Drive (Sully Place Shopping Center) Tel. 703-222-0096 www.CatholicShopOnLine.com	A Wing & A Prayer—Woodbridge 14100 Jeff Davis Highway Tel. 703-494-0795	