

Vary style of presentation

Provide visual symbols and worship aids to enhance learning. Follow teacher's guide for your text. Vary presentation styles to meet individual learning needs. Include prayer in a class routine

Evaluate Success

Do the Classes bring about a conversion to Jesus for our learners?
Does it make sense in their lives?
Do they want to become an active part of the body of Christ?

Important: Witness, tell them your faith stories. Listen to theirs.

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Saints and role models	Lesson Theme
Memorization of prayer	Seasonal themes
Review	Witness stories

What are our Obstacles?

Competition for learner’s time and attention
Christianity is different than United States popular culture

Insufficient parental involvement
Misinformation about what the Church teaches
Extremism

How do we overcome obstacles?

Love- Witness-Teach- Give them Hope

Love them

Pray for them and your ministry. Show genuine concern for the earners as individual. Observe learners and listen to them .

Pray with them

Pray for the Church; the country; community concerns; personal needs. Offer prayers of thanks and reflection as well as petition.

Teach them

Analyze what you hope to accomplish for the year. Prepare early and you will enjoy your work.

Plan ahead for lessons

Include an annual overview, unit correlation ,and individual lessons. Include prayer in a class routine.

Maximize the use of your time

Balance use of time to include love, witnessing, prayer, teaching and listening. Include review to make up for missed classes.

Key Concepts

What are our goals?

ASK, LISTEN

Show Christ's love and concern for each learner

WITNESS, COMMUNITY

Develop a sense of membership in the Body of Christ

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Encourage Christian values and life

FOLLOW CURRICULUM

Present Grade level

INVITE, COMMUNICATE

Build a partnership with parents

Pray and learn

Work on your own prayer life. Take advantage of diocesan workshops and certification course.

Follow Curriculum

Each year builds on the previous year. Curriculum topics are chosen by the NCCB for all textbook companies, as appropriate to the age of the learner. (See Scope and Sequence)

Catechist Preparation

Advance Preparation will help achieve our goals and objectives.

Annual theme	Scripture passage in lesson
Review of Key Concepts	Unit Theme

Dear Catechists & Aides;

Welcome to the Ministry of Catechesis.

Catechesis (the transmission of the "Good News" to the next generation of believers) is the Church's effort to nurture disciples and train apprentices in the way of Jesus Christ. We lead the young in the belief that Jesus is the Son of God and that they may have life in His name. We educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ.

To catechize is to reveal through the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the whole of God's eternal design. Catechesis is a life-long process, putting believers in community with one another and in intimacy with Christ. It is an education in our Faith through forming, informing and transforming a person as a whole. It is the art of leading people from their life's experiences to search and discover, to grow and mature, to pursue love and compassion, and hence to build a better world.

As you agree to participate in this Ministry of Catechesis, you are following Christ's command to go and teach others, and to observe all that He has commanded. Your dedication, generosity, hard work, time and effort are crucial to building our community and are greatly appreciated by our members. As the year progresses, always remember that, along with Jesus' command comes the promise that He is with us always – a comfort that you are never alone in your classroom.

St. Francis instructed people to preach the gospel all the time and to use words only when absolutely necessary. As catechists it is important to keep in mind that, more than the words we speak it will be our choices, gestures, attitudes and openness that will show our children how to live.

We are ONE in our creation of unity in the classroom. We are HOLY in our prayers. We are CATHOLIC in our enthusiasm, joys, hopes and sense of inclusiveness. We are APOSTOLIC in our commitments to both service and the teachings of the Church. These examples will help the children connect what is taught with what is lived – bringing our faith to life and our life to faith.

We promise our loving and prayerful support to you throughout the year. Please do not hesitate to contact the Religious Education Office with any needs or questions you may have regarding our shared mission in the Ministry of Catechesis.

Sincerely

Mariyam Francis
Mariyam Francis
Director of Religious Education

Therefore, catechists, assistants or staff members of the program will report any suspected abuse to the Director of Religious Education, who will then make a report of the suspected abuse to the proper authorities. The pastor will be notified of suspected abuse and the subsequent report made.

Student Pregnancy

The pregnancy is NOT grounds for dismissal, suspension or request for voluntary withdrawal from the program. Should the student's health or choice require that she does not attend classes, she will be provided with religious instruction through a program of home study.

Suicide

Should a student be suspected of considering suicide, catechists, assistants and staff have been instructed to notify the Director of Religious Education immediately. The Director will immediately notify parents and the pastor.

Policies Regarding Extra-ordinary Circumstances Of Children

AIDS

The following reflects the policy of this program in regard to students with AIDS.

Students with AIDS enrolled or seeking enrollment in grades K to 8 shall be permitted to attend parish religious education classes in an unrestricted setting.

Students with AIDS shall not be excluded from attending religious education classes for reason of infection unless the following exceptional conditions are evident as determined by the student's physician, the student's parents or legal guardians, the appropriate religious education program administrator and the pastor:

- The student is not toilet-trained, or is incontinent or is unable to control drooling.
- The student is unusually physically aggressive, with a documented history of biting or harming others.

A student with AIDS who for some reason is excluded from classroom participation will be provided with an alternate means of catechetical instruction. (Home Study)

The identity of a student with AIDS and all health records and other pertinent files shall be kept confidential in accordance with the law.

Child Abuse

Every state has laws mandating that persons who work with children report suspected abuse and or neglect. Persons who fail to report can incur both civil and criminal penalties.

Religious Formation Program for Children and their Families

Catechetical programs operate from a clear set of goals that help everyone involved know what the program is striving to accomplish in a more specific way. The goals flow from our Mission Statement. They make it more concrete and demonstrate how the mission statement is being implemented.

Mission Statement

We, the Catholic parish of Our Lady of Sorrows - Saint Anthony, seek to engage all people in a vibrant community of faith, as we strive to attain spiritual fulfillment by living the Gospel of Christ.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Catechetical Ministry of OLS-SA is to support families in cultivating and sustaining a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and living the values of His Gospel.

We will achieve this through the following objectives:

- Providing formal classroom and in home catechesis according to children's grade levels.
- Providing information sessions for learning and teaching during special gatherings, liturgical celebrations and retreat experiences.
- Providing parents with opportunities for adult enrichment, focusing on faith development, parenting, values formation and family spirituality.
- Providing parish celebrations of worship as a community of believers who support candidates preparing for the Sacraments of First Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation.

Catechetical Ministry

The *mission* of the catechist is to reveal the person of Jesus, his life and mission, and connect it to the student's world. A catechist echoes our Faith by sharing information; using stories, symbols, and songs to help children experience God's presence; and encouraging ongoing personal transformation.

A catechist is a special person who leads our children on a journey in faith; who gives credible witness to the Gospel; who shares the Catholic Faith and proclaims the Gospel through word and example; who gives service to God through teaching, witness, prayer and community building; and who connects with the children, their families, fellow catechists and the parish community. *A catechist is a person like you.*

The *purpose* of all catechesis is to call people to a personal encounter with Jesus, to form them into disciples, and help them make a permanent commitment to live as Jesus taught us to live. As a catechist, you are called to be an evangelist who introduces children to the Risen Lord and guides them through an apprenticeship of Christian life.

Catechist Responsibilities

Class Preparation: A catechist is expected to be prepared before entering the classroom. Use of supplies, lesson plans, prepared materials, activity ideas and specific assignments should be decided prior to class time. Calendars should be consulted for specifics each week. Assistance from the Religious Education Office is available if necessary.

Supervising Students: A catechist is responsible for the welfare of the children entrusted to his/her care. No catechist shall leave a class unattended except in the case of an emergency. During such emergency, the catechist will notify the nearest catechist, aide or hall monitor, to act as supervisor, and will contact the Religious Education Office.

"Protecting God's Children": This policy, set forth by the Diocese of Trenton, requires that adults who will be present during classes have criminal background checks following Diocesan guidelines. Therefore, though many of our catechists, aides and program helpers are parents themselves, all will be required to submit to criminal background checks in compliance with this policy. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is defined as any conduct of a sexual nature that is unwelcome, unwanted or offensive to a reasonable person. Also, threatening to impose adverse employment, academic, disciplinary or other sanctions on a person unless sexual favors are given is sexual harassment.

Reporting: In an effort to be vigilant regarding sexual harassment, the parish leadership has established the following procedure for reporting such acts, or the suspicion of such acts. Whether involving any combination of catechists, parish leaders, students or others, individuals who become aware of incidents of sexual harassment must report them to the Pastor and/or the Director of Religious Education.

- Sexual harassment can include, but is not limited to:
- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs, imitations, or unwanted sexual advances.
- Visual contact such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented images or gestures.
- Physical contact such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movements, or interfering with work study or play because of sex.

Anti-retaliation Retaliation by anyone upon anyone for having reported or having threatened to report sexual harassment will not be tolerated. *Appropriate action, up to and including dismissal, will be taken.*

Confidentiality: It is the practice of the Pastor and/or the Director of Religious Education not to discuss any report of sexual harassment, except as required by authorities during the investigation of such complaints. Once a situation has been fully investigated, all affected parties will be notified of the outcome.

Administrative Duties: Each class will have a folder containing notices for the catechist & aide, for the students & families, as well as an attendance sheet. This folder should be picked up from the Religious Education Office prior to entering the classroom and returned upon leaving. All notices should be removed on a weekly basis; only the attendance record & notices for absent students should remain in the folder.

Meeting/Training Attendance: A series of meetings and training sessions have been scheduled, designed to enhance catechist and aide skills. A formal agenda will be presented for each meeting, which will be kept to a reasonable length. All training sessions will have specific objectives, and shall begin and end on time.

All catechists and aides are expected to participate in these events. If a catechist or aide is not able to attend, he/she must notify the Director of Religious Education in advance.

Who is the Catechist?

Rooted in Jesus: Catechists are those who are called to serve through teaching, witness, prayer, service and building community. Catechists minister to adults, youth and children in a variety of locations and programs:

Parish faith formation
Religious education programs
Youth ministry programs
Sacramental preparation
RCIA, family programs
Scripture study, and more

Through word and example, catechists teach the Catholic faith and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Catechists have a vocation...a calling from the Lord rooted in Baptism to carry out His mandate to teach the Gospel. The General Directory for Catechesis tells us that "The Church awakens and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission to catechize. The Lord Jesus invites men and women, in a special way, to follow him, teacher and Format or of disciples." (GDC 231)

The call and response to become a catechist is recognized in the local Church by the pastor. The response to this call includes:

Willingness to give one's time, talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one's own growth and understanding of the faith. The call to this Ministry often comes through the pastor, catechetical leader, youth minister, pastoral associate, or another catechist.

Catechists must possess and exhibit qualities or characteristics necessary to give credible **witness to the Gospel**.

A catechist must be a model of Catholic Christian faith and lifestyle; participate in the spiritual, theological, and methodological training and formation provided by the diocese and parish; follow diocesan guidelines and policies promoting effective catechesis; and give sufficient preparation time for the catechetical task.

Injury: Catechists are asked to report any injury to the Director of Religious Education immediately. If an injury occurs, first aid will be administered using the first aid kit and the parents will be contacted. If the injury requires immediate medical attention, the Director of Religious Education will contact emergency services through "911" to arrange transport to the nearest and most appropriate hospital.

Fire Safety

The Fire Marshall has inspected the school and escape procedures have been established. The escape route for each classroom is posted in the room itself. The Religious Education program will follow emergency and disaster procedures established for OLS-SA School.

Fire Drills

All catechists, catechist assistants, staff, volunteers and students are expected to become familiar with designated fire routes for emergency exit from the building. Children will leave all personal effects in the classroom, walk quietly, single file out of the building, stop and silently stand in their designated area. There the catechist will take attendance to determine the safety of all children on the class list. Upon signal, all students and catechists may return to the classrooms. Fire drills may occur throughout the course of the year.

missed to the parking lot to meet their parents.

When a parent, guardian or caretaker arrives early to pick the child up he or she should report to the Religious Education Office on the upper level of the school building through the gym. A staff member will call the classroom to notify the teacher to send your child to the office. A Sign-Out Book is in the Religious Education Gym Office. Before a parent, guardian or caretaker may take the child, they must sign the child out in the book provided.

IDENTIFICATION may be required!!!! **No child will be released to anyone who has not been identified as parent, guardian or caretaker!** If emergency circumstances require that someone else pick-up a child, the parent or guardian must contact the Religious Ed office directly. We may require phone call confirmation before we will release a child to someone else.

Health and Injury

Food: Due to food allergies and potential medical issues, children, parents and catechists are asked not to bring or provide food during class without consent of the Director of Religious Education. If permission is given, parents will receive written communication. Parents will also be notified of any food that is used as part of a lesson (such as flat bread and grape juice for the Last Supper, etc.).

Illness: Parents have been asked to complete and return medical forms for each of their children. Should a student become ill while in class, please notify the Religious Education Office so his/her parents can be contacted. If the parent is unavailable, attempts will be made to reach the emergency contact. Every effort will be made to keep the child comfortable until he/she is picked up. Medications can not be administered to the child, and children are not to bring any medications with them to class.

What is Catechesis?

Catechesis has as its center and its goal "... a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth." (*On Catechesis in Our Time* no. 5) Catechesis is, therefore, for all ages. It is for all eras of history, and for all time to come. It is for adults, for youth, for children; it is, as the Gospel itself, for people of every race and cultural heritage, for people of all strata of society, for those with special needs of every kind. Catechesis is the development of one's initial conversion to the mystery of Jesus Christ. It is the lifelong deepening of a personal relationship with Christ.

We, who are privileged to serve the catechetical ministry are responsible for understanding the breadth and depth of the mission we share. In faithfulness to God's design we add to the masterpiece.

The whole of the catechetical ministry engages us in a vision that extends back in history. As any artist, we immerse ourselves in the story of which we are a part. Reflective and prayerful reading of the Church's catechetical documents steep us in the roots and visions that the Church offers to sustain its catechetical ministry. Engaging in dialogue with the contemporary community of faith enables us to translate the work and words of the past into a catechetical masterpiece that will speak to the hungers and longings of people today.

The Church has traditionally named the first movement of faith, *evangelization*, that initial proclamation of the Good News which stirs a person toward conversion. In recent years, the Church has broadened its understanding of *evangelization* to be inclusive of the whole of one's lifelong conversion process.

Catechesis is called "a moment in the process of evangelization," "a remarkable one." The task of the catechetical leader is to ensure that opportunities for deepening one's faith are available to all people.

In the *Acts of the Apostles* we read that the members of the early Christian community "devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to prayers" (*Acts* 2:42). Since then, the Church has reiterated the importance of these same dimensions: Word, Worship, Community, and Service, in its catechetical documents. Catechesis, which if faithful and effective, will attend to these four dimensions in all its catechetical processes. It will integrate these in catechesis for adults, youth and children in the life of the parish community.

Catechesis happens in specific cultural contexts. Therefore, it respects the cultural, racial and ethnic expressions of faith and encompasses the customs, traditions, symbols and language of God's people.

"Catechesis is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways." (*General Directory for Catechesis #105*)

Jesus empowered the Church to continue His mission when He said Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of time. (Mt. 28:18-20)

Safety

Security

Adult Entry to the School: For the safety of the children attending classes, state law mandates that the doors of the school building must be locked to prevent unauthorized entry. If you need to meet with the Religious Education Staff during class time, please enter through the school office.

Classroom Visits: To remain in compliance with the "Protecting God's Children" policies set forth by the Diocese of Trenton, anyone who has not had a criminal background check may not remain in the school building during classes. Parents who wish to visit classrooms must contact the Director of Religious Education in advance, so arrangements may be made.

Early Dismissal

When the need for an early dismissal is known ahead of time, the parent/guardian should hand a note to the Catechist with the following information:

- Name of child
- Grade and session of child
- Date and time to be released
- Reason for early release
- Name of person picking up child

If an emergency pick-up is required, if possible, parents should the Office of Religious Education at 587-4140 x2, to notify the staff.

No parent is to go directly to the classroom to pick up a child. Teachers may never release a child to anyone who comes to their classroom door asking for a particular child. This includes upper grade students **who may not be dis-**

Holy Childhood Association

The Holy Childhood Association is the mission association supported by the children of our parish program. This is accomplished by their participation in the Advent boxes and Lent folders. Children are expected to 'sacrifice' from their own allowances to participate in these programs.

While as parents we find it easier to simply hand our children several dollars to put in these boxes, this 'easy out' fails to teach the children the importance of sharing from their own resources. Please encourage your students as they participate in this program of "Children helping Children". These opportunities reinforce the mission outreach of our faith.

Each year the Diocesan office offers a Mission Reach-out Program in the fall of the year. Children in grade 4 to 7 from our program will be invited to attend this Mission Reach-out. Parental permission forms will be sent home to interested students

This great commission has been handed to women and men, whom God has called, to proclaim the Good News. This ministry of teaching and forming has traditionally been referred to as *catechesis*.

The name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God...and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. (Catechesi Tradendae #1)

The word *catechesis* comes from the Greek meaning "to echo the teaching" meaning that catechesis or the teaching of the faith is an interactive process in which the Word of God resounds between and among the proclaimed, the one receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit!

Catechesis is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and on-going conversion. Through Word, worship, service and community, it seeks to lead all God's people to an ever-deepening relationship with God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Catechesis takes many forms and includes the initiation of adults, youth and children as well as the intentional and systematic effort to enable all to grow in faith and discipleship.

Many people recall the term C.C.D. which stood for the "Confraternity of Christian Doctrine" which served parishes in their efforts to provide religious education to children who attended public schools. Today, we have retrieved the notion of *catechesis* to capture the broader mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel to adults, youth and children in order to "put people in communion with Jesus Christ" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #426*).

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.' (#5, *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994.*)

"Adult catechesis concerns persons who have a right and a duty to bring to maturity the seed of faith sown in them by God. It is addressed to individuals who are charged to fulfill social responsibilities of various types and to those who are also prey to all kinds of changes and crises, sometimes profound. The faith of adults, therefore, must be continually enlightened, developed and protected, so that it may acquire that Christian wisdom which gives sense, unity, and hope to the many experiences of personal, social, and spiritual life." (#173, *General Directory for Catechesis, 1998.*)

"...adults 'have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form.' Their formation in faith is essential for the Church to carry out its mandate to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to the world.

...adult faith formation is 'essential to who we are what we do as Church' and must be 'situated not at the periphery of the Church's educational mission but at its center.'" (#'s 38, 42, Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States, Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999.)

nities for candidates to live the Christian life, and serve as models for continued service.

Catechist Responsibilities

It is the expectation that catechists and aides for grades taking part in Sacramental preparation will make themselves available for special meetings, retreats, and other planned events as required. Any catechist or aide who is not able to attend must inform the Director of Religious Education immediately. All events will appear on the calendar at the beginning of the academic year.

Conferences

Parents or guardians who wish to confer with the Director of Religious Education are requested to call the Office at 609-587-4140 to schedule an appointment to do so.

Parents or guardians of children who are consistently late, repeatedly absent, continually disruptive or who receive three violation slips may be called in for a conference. Catechists, catechist assistants, and or the pastor may also be included in the conference as necessary.

Communications

Communication between families and the Office of Religious Education is of great importance. At the conclusion of each class, parents should check with their children for messages, fliers, or announcements (and homework!). Parents should also consult the weekly Sunday Bulletin for general information regarding the Religious Education Program. Although written communication reflecting changes in the program calendar or special up-coming events will be sent home with the students, the Sunday Bulletin does provide an additional means of communicating information about the program.

Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist following their initial celebrations. Scheduled times for both (reconciliation and Catholic mass) are listed in the parish's weekly bulletin.

Confirmation

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation aims at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit in order to be more capable of assuming the responsibilities of Christian life. Catechesis for Confirmation strives to awaken a sense of belonging to the Catholic Church, the universal Church and the parish community.

Confirmation candidates in the Community of OLS-SA must attend 6th, 7th and 8th grade religious education in the school, or parish religious education program before receiving the sacrament. They must attend class and retreats; take part in activities of Christian outreach, and interview with one of the Pastoral staff members. Any candidate who demonstrates a lack of cooperation, lack of seriousness or a lack of desire to receive the sacrament may be delayed in receiving Confirmation until such time as he/she can display the required level of readiness.

Candidates for Confirmation, as with Baptism, seek the spiritual help of a **sponsor**. To emphasize the unity of these two sacraments, it is appropriate, but not required, that the sponsor be one of the baptismal godparents (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1309-11).

In Exodus we are told that God hears the cry of the poor and oppressed; in the Gospels Jesus exhibits tremendous compassion for those who suffer. As disciples we are called to "live justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God." As Catholic Christians it is our duty, both as individuals and a community, to serve all our neighbors. Hence, **service projects** are an essential part of Catholic Faith Formation. In preparation for Confirmation they provide hands-on opportu-

Formal Catechesis

OLS-SA holds formal catechetical formation classes (also referred to as Religious Education classes) weekly during the regular academic year, for children of registered parishioners attending public and private non-Catholic schools. This instruction begins in Pre-kindergarten, and continues through grade 8. Parochial school students are not expected to attend this catechetical instruction, except as required during sacramental preparation years. The sacramental preparation years are in grade 2, for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, and grades 6, 7 & 8 in preparation for Confirmation.

Resources

We will be continuing our use of the textbook series ***Faith First***, published by RCL (Resources for Christian Living).

Texts for Catechists: The Master Textbooks used by the catechists in class are the property of the OLS-SA Church and must be returned at the end of the academic year. Due to the cost associated with additional textbooks, each classroom will have only one Master Textbook, which will be shared between the catechist and aide.

Texts for Students: Each student will be provided with a textbook/workbook and required to bring it to class each week. A limited number of replacement texts are available should a child's book be lost. The catechist should advise the parents to contact the Religious Education Office if an extensive search for the lost item has produced no results.

Support Materials: ***Faith First*** offers outstanding technological support for catechists. These sources, which include video tapes and computer websites, help to enhance the printed text and activities found in the book. Video Tapes may be obtained through the Religious Education Office. The website, www.faithfirst.com offers creative and up to date resources for children, parents and catechists.

Supplies: Each classroom will be provided with basic clerical supplies (i.e. pencils, crayons, chalk, paper, construction paper, glue, etc.). If additional supplies are required (for a project, etc.) please contact the Religious Education Office in advance.

Schedule and Attendance

Class Schedule: Religious Education classes will be held on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, during the regular academic year (September through June). Catechists will be responsible for a specific class, occurring on a consistent day and time each week, with a consistent roster of students. ***A complete calendar of classes and events will be provided as part of the Religious Education Handbook.***

Change or Cancellation of Classes: Only the Religious Education Office has the authority to change or cancel a class. If a catechist will be unavailable for a specific scheduled class and does not have an aide that's able to supervise the class in his/her absence, he/she must notify the Religious Education Office. Under no circumstances may he/she cancel the class without gaining permission from the Director of Religious Education.

Should area schools be closed for inclement weather, Religious Education classes for that day or evening will also be cancelled. School closings will be posted to the parish website. They will also be announced by local radio stations ***WHWH- 1350*** or ***WPST - 97.5*** or ***WKXW - 101.5***

If a decision is made to cancel classes, a recorded message will be left on the Religious Education office phone voice mail. The phone number is 609-587-4140 Ext 2. Such cancellations will also be reported to the above mentioned radio stations. If a cancellation is not announced, classes are being held.

Sacramental Preparation

Sacraments are sacred signs instituted by the Church by which we receive grace through the Holy Spirit. This grace is a unique gift of God's Love that helps us to live Christian lives. Celebration of the Sacraments leads to the full participation in the life of the Church community.

Sacramental preparation is a community activity, which requires the involvement of not only the children receiving the sacrament, but the parents and family as well. While First Eucharist, First Reconciliation, and Confirmation all require this cooperation, Confirmation is the most engaged. The Catholic Community of OLS-SA follows the diocesan policies regarding sacramental preparation.

First Eucharist & First Reconciliation

Readiness to receive a sacrament should be determined on an individual basis, and should not depend upon the readiness of an entire class or a specific date. Canon Laws states that, ***once the necessary catechesis is completed and a person has an adequate understanding*** of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist, no one shall be deprived of the right to receive these sacraments once he/she expresses a desire for it. The Diocese of Trenton requires that children preparing to celebrate these two sacraments for the first time must participate in a two year formal program within the framework of their home parish. Home study is not considered acceptable for this time of preparation.

Children must receive First Reconciliation prior to beginning preparation for First Eucharist. Although this sacrament will be made available to them through the catechetical program, children are encouraged to receive the sacrament again immediately before their First Eucharist.

Parents are asked to exercise their role as primary faith educators in encouraging their child's repeated reception of the

faith of their children. To promote the faith growth of the children, and to ensure a smooth running program, it is essential that the parents agree to fulfill the parish's expectations and work with the designated leaders of the parish program.

Celebrations

Catechists, staff and children will participate in special celebrations during the course of the program year. These celebrations provide the children with an opportunity to share faith, build community and worship with one another. Parents may be called upon to assist in some way in the facilitation of these celebrations. We ask for cooperation and support in these endeavors.

In some cases, families may be asked to allow their children to remain 45 minutes longer in order to participate in Stations of the Cross during Lent, or Confessions during Advent or Lent, or other specially prepared liturgical celebrations. Advance notice will be given to families when these events are scheduled to take place.

If, as a catechist, you are having difficulty finding parental support, please look for guidance from the Religious Education Office or your fellow catechists.

Class Location: Religious Education classes will be held in the OLS School building. Under no circumstances are the classes to be held in any other location without the express written permission of the Director of Religious Education. Catechists or their aides should arrive early in order to greet their students and their parents.

Traffic / Parking Lot:

Our program works hard to offer the children assurance of safety when arriving or dismissing. We have the following in place in order to secure the traffic and parking lot:

Designated parking areas

Drop-off areas in the parking lot, secured by restraining gate
Sunday morning and Monday afternoon - Hamilton police officer is on duty for East State Street

Class Arrival: Because arrival time is crucial, the Director, Catechists, Assistants and Secretaries will be unavailable for fifteen minutes prior to the start of classes each week.

Sunday, Monday and Wednesday Grades 1st to 6th

Parents and children will enter the building together, using the double glass doors of the school by the white trailer, on the rectory side of the building. This door is marked with a # "3". Maps will be provided in the summer mailing.

All children will go directly to their classrooms. Children who arrive after classes have begun will be accompanied to their classroom by the hall monitor. Please do not leave the child in the GYM alone. The Catechists will inform the office of those children who were late. If a child is frequently late, parents will be contacted.

Wednesday Grades 7 & 8

All upper grade students will report to the school where they will enter through the double glass doors on the rectory side of the building marked with the number “2”. Students will not be admitted into the building until **5:50pm**. Catechists must be in the classrooms before students will be permitted to enter. Students are to report immediately to their assigned rooms.

Dismissal

Sunday, Monday and Wednesday Grades 1st to 6th

Parents should wait for their children outside by door “3” on the rectory side of the school. Students will be dismissed in an orderly manner escorted by their catechists.

Wednesday Grades 7 & 8

Upper grade students will be dismissed through the door “2” on the rectory side of the school. Catechists will escort all students out of the building.

Note: Young children become anxious when families are late in picking them up. If families do not come to pick children up on time, the children will be escorted to the Religious Education office upstairs through the GYM. **No student will be left outside alone to wait for their pick-up.** An office assistant will help the child to contact their family or emergency contact person

Classrooms: Classrooms must be left in the same as, or better condition than, what they were found. The desks and chairs should be returned to their original order, chalkboards – if used – should be erased, all garbage should be placed in the garbage cans, and the floors should be free of debris. It is expected that the property of both the parish and the students of OLS School will be respected.

Liturgical Celebrations

“The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church, it must be preceded by evangelization, faith and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church and service to her unity.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1072)

Liturgy

The Sunday Liturgy is the central activity of our faith community. During the Liturgy we hear the Word of God through the readings and are nourished by Christ in the Eucharist. We are then sent to carry out the Mission of Christ in the community and the world. Weekly participation in the Liturgy is essential for the faith development and Catholic identity of our children and families. Our parish provides a Liturgy of the Word for Children with age appropriate readings and reflections to help them understand and actively participate in the weekly Mass. Please understand that participation in Sunday morning Religious Education classes does not replace a child’s need to participate in the Liturgy with his/her family.

As a catechist, please emphasize this fact to your students and their parents.

Role of Parents

The parish recognizes that the primary educators of a child’s faith are their parents. It is through the faith commitment of their parents that children become aware of the obligations of being a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. Parents who enroll their children in the parish catechetical program have acknowledged a responsibility as parents in the faith development of their children.

It is the role of the parish to assist parents in nurturing the

Parental Involvement

It is the expectation of the parish that parents will fulfill the following obligations as the primary source of their child's faith:

- Attend Mass regularly with their child/family.
- Share faith with their child/family at home.
- Teach their child the traditional prayers of the Church.
- Maintain an open line of communication with their child's catechist, supports the program in all respects.
- Bring their child to Religious Education classes on time, and follows the required dismissal procedures when picking up their child. This will help ensure a smooth running program, and allow catechists to focus on the lesson at hand with fewer distractions.
- Attend and participate in parental meetings when requested.
- Review and respond to parish communications and forms required by the program.
- Accept and agree to abide by the requirements of the program as outlined in this handbook and other parish communications, and encourage cooperation from their child as well.
- Notify the Religious Education office of any changes of address, phone number or e-mail address for the child or family, to ensure effective communication.

If you, as a catechist, are having difficulty finding support from your students' families, please look for guidance from the Religious Education Office or your fellow catechists.

Attendance: The Religious Education schedule includes only 25 lessons per year as required by the Diocese of Trenton. Children enrolled in the catechetical program are expected to attend every class. In the event that a child will be absent, the parents are asked, just as in regular school, to notify the Religious Education office as far in advance as possible.

Also, just as in regular school, each class builds on the material covered in preceding classes. Thus, children who miss class may be required by their catechist to make up missed lessons. A student with excessive absences may not receive credit for successful completion of religious education in that grade level.

Respect and Discipline

Everyone involved in this program, catechist, student, and parent, is challenged by the words and example of Jesus, to respect each person's right to be treated with dignity, respect and love. In order to provide for a safe and well ordered program, in which students and catechists can learn and follow Jesus' call to love, some rules for behavior are necessary.

The following rules apply to all students in the program:

- Respect is to be shown for all catechists, and other adults in leadership roles.
- Students are expected to display a Christian attitude in the way they dress, speak and behave.
- Students are to avoid behavior that disturbs the learning environment or is disrespectful or dangerous to others.
- Behavior that might be interpreted as sexual harassment is to be avoided by students and catechists, alike.

Our students are expected to show respect, display a Christian attitude, and avoid disruptive & inappropriate behavior, and we ask that catechists do the same. Each catechist may establish specific rules that the students in their classroom are expected to follow. These rules should be simple, easy to follow and logical.

Appropriate Behavior Each catechist will communicate classroom rules appropriate to his/her class. Students are expected to comply. Students may be assigned seats by the catechist. If seats are assigned, students are expected to comply. Students must respect the property of both the parish and the students of OLS School.

Catechists will handle most disciplinary problems in their own classrooms in a positive manner. Students whose behavior causes a continued disruption in the classroom may be sent to the Director of Religious Education's office.

Parents will be notified if their child's behavior becomes an ongoing problem. Once a parent is contacted, he/she and the student must meet with the Director of Religious Education to resolve the behavioral issues. The student will not be allowed back into their class until this meeting has been held. If a student's behavior does not improve, the parish reserves the right to request that the student withdraw from the program.

The catechist will be notified, by the Religious Education Office, whether or not the student is permitted to return to class or has been asked to withdraw.

Parental Communication

For both the welfare of each child and the effectiveness of religious formation, a close partnership between the parents and the catechists is required. Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. It is the catechist's goal to assist parents as primary religious educators.

Face-to-Face Communication: While it is not possible for parents to visit the classroom during classes, there is an opportunity before and after class for parents and catechists to speak. This time can be used to discuss written notices sent home, upcoming events that require the parent's support, positive behavior displayed by their child in class, or simply to establish a friendly rapport. Inappropriate student behavior can be mentioned at this time, but any lengthy discussions should be scheduled for another more private occasion. *Be sure to notify the Religious Education Office when you discuss a student's inappropriate behavior with his/her parents.*

Telephone Communication: The Religious Education Office can provide the telephone number of a student, at your request. These numbers should be used for Religious Education purposes only. These might include reminders to bring supplies or an assignment for class; a reminder to respond to a notice sent home; or a conversation with a parent regarding a student's inappropriate behavior. *Be sure to notify the Religious Education Office when you discuss a student's inappropriate behavior with his/her parents.*

Written Communication: Both the Parish and Religious Education Office will frequently communicate in writing. It is important that all written communication is distributed to students, and that parents are notified of its existence. If papers are distributed at the beginning of class, please remind the students to share them with their parents. Any written communication a catechist wishes to share with his/her students and families should also be shared with the Religious Education Office (i.e. a welcoming letter of introduction, a warm wish for the holidays, notification of a special project, etc.).