

# Our Mother of Good Counsel PREP Handbook - 2016-2017



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### Forms Included:

- Photo Release Form
- Adult Permission for Pick Up
- Registration
- Acceptance Form

## GOAL

Our goal, as catechists, is to work *with* the parents, in their role as the primary educators of the faith.

## ROLE OF PARENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

*(Excerpt from the Rite of Baptism of an Infant):*

**Priest/Deacon:** “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

**Parents:** “We do.”

- Our Catechetical Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their child in the faith. It never replaces the parents’ obligation to carry out this responsibility.
- It is essential to the child’s growth and development in the Catholic Faith, that the parents live a life of faith in the home.
- The effectiveness of the catechetical process radically depends on this.
- For example, the children learn in their religious education classes that celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday with the community of faith, that is the local parish, is essential to being a Catholic.
- When parents attend Mass with their children they affirm what their children are being taught in Religious Education. When they do not, their example contradicts what they are being taught.
- Statistics demonstrate that it is the parents’ example that their children will absorb and model. Parents have the responsibility to be active members of the parish. This includes regularly supporting the parish and participating in the spiritual life of the parish.

Please sign the “acceptance page” at the conclusion of this handbook and promptly return it to the Parish Office - Religious Education office.

The signed acceptance page will be kept on file in the parish religious education office. If this office does not receive your signed acceptance page of the handbook, and if your child(ren) continues to attend religious education classes, this office will accept your child's enrollment in classes as your formal acceptance of the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

### **Your Child's Teacher:**

Teachers in our Parish Religious Education Program are called CATECHISTS. A catechist is "one who echoes the Word of God." All of our catechists and classroom assistants are volunteers who share their time and talents for the benefit of our parish children. All of our catechists and aides have completed the proper background checks required by Archdiocesan Policy. Please support them in this work with your prayers and cooperation.

Our Catechists supplement in a more formal way the faith education that occurs informally in your home. Parents of youth in our religious education program need to be supportive of our catechists' efforts and our program in the following ways:

- Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, receive the sacraments.
  - Teach your child to pray in their own words as well as to learn the traditional prayers of our faith.
  - Be sure that the child is prepared for class.
  - Show interest in what your child is doing in Religious Education class each week. Check Religious Education bag for communication from the catechist or program director.
  - Help your child to be conscientious about completing any homework assignments that are given to him/her.
  - Join your child by participating in any service projects or workshops offered in his/her grade.
  - Make sure your child arrives on time; make this one of your commitments to our Lord.
  - Read the Bible as a family.

***The example you set is invaluable to our efforts in the classroom.***

## Admission Policy

- Our Mother of Good Counsel does not discriminate on the basis of sex, national origin, physical or mental challenge.
- All families, who are registered parishioners at Our Mother of Good Counsel, are eligible to register their children in the parish Religious Education Program.
- Families of neighboring parishes may also register their children in our parish program. A letter of permission is required from the pastor of the home parish and sent to Father Liam O'Doherty for his permission.
- A Baptismal Certificate is required of all children who have not been baptized in this parish.
- Transfer students must bring a letter from their former parish stating years attended and grade completed.
- It is expected that Religious Education Students will attend classes each year.
- Parents/guardians whose children have left the program are required to meet with the D/CRE before a child can be re-admitted to the program.
- Children who have not received the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church or whose child has never been baptized should call the program director to discuss next steps for acceptance into the program.
- New families to the program can call the Religious Education Office for information on registration and tuition.
- If phone numbers or addresses change at any time during the Religious Education year, please contact the office immediately. This is absolutely necessary in the event of an emergency. This also holds true for emergency contact numbers.

## Tuition Fee:

If you are registering for the 4 and 5 year old program ONLY, the tuition is a flat fee of \$60

If you will have children in BOTH the 4 and 5 year old program, as well as in grades 1 through 6, OR if you have a child or children in grade 1 through 6 ONLY, please use the schedule below.

1 child.....	\$110
2 children.....	\$130
3 or more children.....	\$150

## Activity Fee:

This fee is an additional fee for those who are preparing for the sacraments.

First Eucharist Fee.....\$45  
(only for those receiving their First Eucharist and First Reconciliation this year)

Confirmation Fee.....\$90  
(only for those receiving Confirmation this year. Separate mailing indicates that.)

## Class Schedule

All classes meet on Sundays, for an hour and twenty minutes, from 9:40 to 11:00

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Under new directives from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Office of Catholic Education, a recommendation of forty (40) hours of religious instruction is required to receive full credit for the current PREP school year. It is recommended by the Archdiocese that a child repeat a grade level if frequent absences occur.

As directed by the Archdiocese, attendance records are kept for each child. If you move to another parish, and wish to enroll your child in their religious education program, we will be asked to verify your child's participation in our program.

The faith formation received in the program is ongoing in that each session builds on the previous session; therefore, it is imperative that a child be present for all classes unless illness or other serious reason prevents this.

Since Religious Education is a continuous program. Grades 1 through 6 are required. Since material is presented in developmental sequence, children may not arbitrarily skip grade levels. If a child, who is baptized, enters the program with little, if any, formal religious training, or returns to the program after skipping several grade levels, they might not be placed in the same grade they are in at school. This matter needs to be discussed with the program director before the child can be placed into a class.

**Religious education classes must be given first priority. Athletic and social activities are not an excuse for continuous absence or early dismissal.**

**When a child is absent due to illness a written note must be given to the child's teacher explaining the reason for the absence.**

If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, a parent must contact us to report the absence. Please call (610) 525-0147 ext 258 or email [kcarey@omgcp parish.net](mailto:kcarey@omgcp parish.net). Please be sure to leave your child's name and grade level if leaving a message.

- **Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to class.** In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child's formation up-to-date when possible.
- **If a child misses more than 4 classes (grades 1, 3, 4, 5 ) they may not be moved up to the next grade level until the situation is discussed with the program director, and all class work and exams are made up. If your child is in a Sacrament grade (2, 6) an excessive number of absences (more than 3) is justifiable reason to delay a child's reception of the sacrament.**
- A letter will be sent home requesting that the parent acknowledge that the missed work has been made up when the absences exceed the allowable numbers noted above. If the number of absences exceeds four (4), the parent will need to meet with the program director (unless other arrangements have been made in advance).
- The Coordinator will initiate follow up with parents of children who have accumulated three unreported absences.
- **FIRST SUNDAY CELEBRATIONS ARE MANDATORY AND COUNT TOWARDS ATTENDANCE.** (See First Sunday Celebrations)

## SNOW DAYS AND CANCELLATIONS

Parents who supplied an email address on the registration form will be notified via email if class is cancelled due to inclement weather. If you do not have an email, a phone call will be made.

**PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE RECTORY FOR RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION INFO**

## DROP OFF / PICK UP POLICY

When dropping off students, please pull into the parking lot and follow the loop immediately to your right. You may drop off the students at the gym doors where a volunteer will be there to greet the students and usher them into the gym where we begin.

When picking up students, please follow directions below:

- If you are simply picking up your child, please follow the same loop as drop off. Give your name to the volunteer. The volunteer will then radio the name inside and your child will be ushered out to the car.
- If you are attending mass at 11:15, please park your car and come to the doors of the gym. Give your name to the volunteer and your child will be ushered to you.

FOR THE SAFETY AND EASE OF ALL INVOLVED IN THE DISMISSAL  
PROCESS.....PLEASE DO NOT:

- Do not come into the gym and call your own child to you.
- Do not get out of your car and come to the door if you are in the car line. Please simply wait until the line moves.
- Do not come in to speak with your child's teacher. See communication for details.

## EARLY DISMISSAL AND PUNCTUALITY

- A child will not be released to anyone other than a parent/guardian unless we have explicit written permission from the parent/guardian. A form listing adults that may pick up a child is included in this registration packet. Complete the form and have your child return it to their teacher during the first PREP class. It is imperative we have this form on hand for each student. If an adult is not listed on the form, that adult will not be permitted to pick up the child.
- Students are expected to be on time for their classes. Habitual tardiness will not be tolerated. Any child who continually arrives late for classes may be asked to repeat the Religious Education year. Please do not ask that a child be dismissed from classes early. If an emergency arises and the child needs to be released early, the parent/guardian must phone or write a note regarding the reason for such and come to the main doors of the school building to sign your child out.

## ILLNESS OR INJURY

- If a child becomes ill or injured during religious education, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified. Parents/guardians are to come directly to the main doors of the school building and ring the bell. You will be let in to sign the child out. The child (ren) will be released only from the Religious Education office.
- FOOD ALLERGIES Food allergies are a growing health concern for children across the country. Please be sure to document any/all food allergies your child may have at the time of registration. If an allergy should develop in the course of the PREP year, please advise the Parish Religious Education Office immediately upon your child's return to class. There is no food allowed in the classrooms.

## CHILD ABUSE POLICY

- If a Catechist/Director suspects a child has been abused, Pennsylvania State Statutes require the Division of Youth and Family Services to be notified.

## CELL PHONE POLICY

- We realize that cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communications open with children. However, it is the policy of this program that such devices may not be brought to catechetical sessions. If it is necessary for a student to bring a cell phone to the program, the student must keep the device turned off during the session and put it away in a backpack, purse or pocket. If the student is found to be using the phone during class, the catechist has the right to hold the phone at his/her desk until the end of the session.

## CURRICULUM AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Our curriculum is designed to follow the guidelines for Religious Education drawn up by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. To cover the material designated by the Archdiocese, the catechists use various texts and resources.
- Students are issued a consumable textbook. The catechists determine whether the students need other materials in addition to that. Some classes use copybooks or folders. These are provided by the Religious Education Program.
- If a book is lost, a fee for the cost of the book will be assessed.
- We also provide each student with a pencil case with pencils, crayons, and scissors. These are kept in the classroom for their use each week.
- Each student is also issued a “Religious Education Book Bag” when they enter the program. We ask them to use these from year to year. If a student loses or misplaces his/her bag, a fee to cover the cost of the new bag will be assessed.

## HOME ASSIGNMENTS

Students in grade 1-6 will receive weekly home assignments, corresponding with the lessons covering class. These brief assignments provide parents with the opportunity to follow up on material covered in class, foster discussion, and review previously taught material or assists their child in preparing for a new lesson.

## OBJECTIVE TESTING

- Students in grade 1-6 will be assessed either orally or in writing each week. Students are expected to study at home, what they have learned each week. Please help your child prepare.
- As part of their home assignments, students are expected to learn by memory the common prayers and formulas which the Archdiocese has assigned for that grade level. These prayers and formulas of our faith will be presented to the students together with proper catechesis to ensure that they have a proper understanding of the subject.

## REPORT CARDS

- The grading system used was established by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. It is required that it be utilized as stated, no changes, additions, or deletions may be added. Only the grading system required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia: A, B, C, U. may be used. A plus (+), or minus ( - ) may not be added to the grade.
- If unable to grade due to lack of attendance, the grade is U for unsatisfactory (U = Progress not presently demonstrated).
- As in all formal educational processes, the students will be tested on the material taught and studied.
- Report cards will be issued on a semester schedule in January and May. The report card grades will be based on the following: test/quiz, home assignments, knowledge of religion, classroom participation, attendance, and display of Christian behavior.
- The reason for a report card is not to discourage students or parents, but to help them determine what areas, in their religious education, might need extra assistance or to give a deserved pat on the back for a job well done.
- Report Cards are copied for student's permanent file and need not be returned.

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

- Good conduct is expected from every child who attends our Religious Education Program. Disruptions are unfair to both the catechists and the other students who are present.
- Serious breaches of discipline such as constant interruption of the class, destruction of property, fighting, continued ignoring of reminders, etc., are cause for a child to be dismissed from class and sent home.
- Students are expected to respect parish property, inside and outside, as well as the property of other students.
- If it becomes necessary, and only after consultation with the catechist, a meeting with the parents of the student may be requested by the Director BEFORE the child may return to class.
- Complete failure of the discipline policy can cause suspension and/or expulsion.
- ANY fighting, obscene language, possession of drugs/alcohol, weapons, matches, blatant disrespect and gross insubordination will be met with immediate expulsion from the program.

## COMMUNICATION

- If your address, telephone number or email address changes during the year, please notify the office immediately.
- PARENTS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO CHECK THEIR CHILD'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BAG FOR NOTICES OF IMPORTANCE.
- We encourage you to regularly read the church bulletin, this is a major method of our communication with you.
- Also please maintain email correspondence with our office.
- Occasionally, a catechist may feel the need to contact a parent with regard to a child's progress in class (ex. homework, behavior, class participation, etc.) In these cases, the Coordinator of Religious Education will be consulted prior to the contact and either the Coordinator or Catechist will speak with the parents.
- Parent communication is encouraged to resolve troublesome issues and catechists have been encouraged to involve parents at the earliest sign of concern.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE) whenever questions or problems arise.

## FIRST SUNDAY CELEBRATIONS

- Students will attend the 11:15 mass on the first Sunday of the month, October through June. This will count toward their attendance.
- Students are to arrive at 10:30 in the gym. The Coordinator will review the reading for mass for that day.
- Catechists will then take the children over to mass, where parents may meet their child and sit with them.
- Following the Mass, we will have a potluck lunch which you can sign up to bring something. The lunch is optional but you are encouraged to attend to help build community throughout our parish.