

Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education
379 Linden Street, Massapequa Park, NY 11762
(516) 799-5179

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PARENT HANDBOOK

Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. ~ CCC 2226

The teaching of the Catholic Church states that parents are the first and most important educators in the faith formation of their children. By enrolling your child in the Religious Education program here at Our Lady of Lourdes, you are making a **commitment** to be a companion on your child's spiritual journey in building a relationship with Jesus and His church.

As the first educators of the faith to your children, **parents should already be following church teachings at home**. We are here to support you as a Catholic parent, and to assist you in your commitment to raise your children in the traditions of the Catholic Church.

Our program is intended to supplement and enhance, **and not replace**, the religious education that you are giving your children at home. Working together, we are a partnership in fostering and developing their faith and their relationship with God. The expectation is that:

- **We will provide weekly instruction in the faith which you will reinforce in your home.**
- **We will provide liturgical opportunities for your child to experience God in prayer and you will reinforce this experience by bringing them to Saturday evening or Sunday Mass on a regular (weekly) basis.**
- **We will provide parent meetings which you will make every effort to attend. Parent prayer services, parent retreats and parent faith formation classes may also be offered throughout the year.**

Religious Education Office Hours – September through May

Mondays through Wednesdays: 9:00am to 2:00pm; Thursdays by appointment only

Wednesdays until 8:30pm on class days only

Saturdays: 9:30am to 10:45am on class days only

No Regular Office Hours in June, July, and August – For assistance, call and leave a voicemail message.

ATTENDANCE

- **A family commitment to attendance is absolutely necessary.** Students are expected to maintain consistent attendance throughout the year to have fulfilled the requirements to receive credit for that year and move up. Each lesson is complemented by experiential activities that are not found in the workbook, therefore the absent child misses out on essential experiences to build their faith and form their relationship with God
 - **Students are allowed up to 3 absences, with or without an excuse.** After the third absence, regardless of the reason, the family will be contacted to discuss ways to resolve the attendance issue.
 - **Excessive absences (more than 5 absences, which is 20% of the classes missed) will most likely result in the child having to repeat the Level the following year.**
 - **Weekly Mass attendance is expected of everyone!**
 - If your child is going to be absent, please report the absence **to our office** by calling (516) 799-5179. **We will let you know which workbook chapter will need to be completed at home so your child does not fall behind when he/she returns to the next class.**
 - In an effort for your child to not miss a class, you can **call the office** to arrange for your child to attend another session for that week. **Please note:** A child cannot attend a class other than the one to which they are assigned without prior arrangement through the religious education office.
 - If a child is unable to attend public school and is receiving home instruction from the school district, please contact our office. Upon receipt of a doctor's note, we will create a temporary catechetical plan to keep your child on track until he/she can return to class.
- Missing class for extracurricular activities is not an excuse. Please arrange your child's schedule so that they will not miss class.**

ACADEMIC POLICIES

- All materials taught in our program are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Diocese of Rockville Centre.
- Parents and students are expected to know their teacher's name.
- All students must come to class prepared with their workbook, **a folder** and at least one pen/pencil. **If a workbook is lost, there is a fee to replace it.**
- **It is the parent's responsibility to check the student's folder each week and to regularly check their email for important handouts and announcements that are sent home.** These are the two main ways that we communicate important information to you, and it is the best way for you to stay informed.
- **As partners in your children's faith journey, it is the parent's role to review the lessons with their child each week, to help them to understand the teachings, and to make sure they practice their prayers.** Please complete the Chapter Review assessment at the end of each lesson in the Levels 1 through 6 workbooks with your child. For students in the Sacramental years, it is especially important for parents to review concepts and procedures with their children to help them prepare for receiving the Sacraments.

DISCIPLINE POLICY/CONDUCT

All students are expected to exercise self-control and conduct themselves properly at all times.

- Respect and courtesy must always be shown to the catechists, parish priests and staff members of our program.
- Students are expected to treat their fellow classmates with compassion and respect as they journey in faith alongside each other.
- Bullying is never acceptable, especially in a Christian environment. Accusations of bullying will be taken seriously, and parents should contact the Director of Religious Education immediately if they feel that their child is in a situation where he/she has or may become a victim of bullying.
- Students are expected to display a Christian attitude in the way they dress, speak, and behave. This attitude extends to their interactions with others, and all aspect of their everyday lives.
- Students must avoid any behavior that is disruptive to the learning environment, such as socializing with their friends during the lesson, not listening to the teacher, not following the teacher's instruction, excessive trips to the bathroom, playing with toys, etc.
- Gum chewing, candy, eating and snacking are not permitted in the classroom, in church, at prayer services, at retreats, at Mass, etc.
- Cell phones must be off and away while the children are in the building. There is to be no texting or surfing the internet.
- **All hand-held electronic devices, AirPods, and TOYS must be left at home.**
- Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance (such as Vaping Pens) on parish property or at parish sponsored events will be immediately suspended from the program.

The Director of Religious Education shall use reasonable judgment in responding to student misconduct and accusations. The first instance of student misconduct usually warrants a verbal warning. If there is a second incident, the child will be removed from class and the parent will be called to pick up the child. If these actions do not resolve the situation and there is a subsequent incident, a parent will have to attend class with the child.

PHONES / ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Phones MUST be turned off and stowed away (in a pocket, purse, bookbag) when the student is in our building. Students found using their phone or texting during class, prayer time, or in church will have their phone confiscated, and the parent will be required to retrieve it from our office. Other electronic devices, and anything else that may cause your child to be distracted during class, must be left at home. **In the case of an emergency, parents should call our office and not the child.**

Students cannot wear AirPods while in our building. Please leave AirPods at home.

ARRIVAL POLICY

- For safety concerns, students in elementary school grades must be escorted into and out from the building by a parent or designated adult.
- Students in middle and high school grades may be dropped off and picked up from outside the doors of the building.
- Please enter and leave the school building from the doors in the front and sides of the chapel. For safety and security, the doors in the back of the school building facing the convent are always locked. Do not use the doors in the back of the school building.
- Children who arrive after the prayers have begun will wait in the back of the auditorium until the prayers are finished before joining their class at the tables.
- **For the safety and protection of all students, parents/adults are not permitted beyond the lobby doors and into the auditorium. If a parent needs to visit our office during class time, speak to the safety monitor at the auditorium doorway to be admitted.**
- **Students must leave toys, electronics and air pods at home, and phones must be turned off and stowed away.**
- **Students should use the bathroom before class begins.**

DISMISSAL POLICY

- Please be on time to pick up your child.
- Parents or designated adults **will wait outside the building.**
- Teachers will escort your child out of the building at dismissal time.
- Children will not be permitted to leave the building unescorted.
- If someone other than the parent or guardian is picking up your child, please notify our office.
- If no one is there to pick up a child at dismissal time, the child will wait in our office with Religious Education staff until you arrive. The child will not be released unless the parent comes into the office to pick up the child.

LATE ARRIVALS / EARLY DISMISSALS

- **Since a family commitment to our program is necessary, late arrivals and early dismissals must be reserved for emergencies only.**
- **Sporting events or doctor's appointments do not constitute a valid reason for late arrival or early dismissal. Please schedule accordingly.**
- Once classes have begun, all late arrivals and early dismissals must be conducted through our office. There are sign-in and sign-out procedures in place for the security of all children.
- All late arriving students must be signed in by a parent/authorized adult before they can proceed to their classroom.
- If a child is being picked up early, the parent/authorized adult must come into the office to sign the child out. Then, a staff member will go to the classroom to get the child.
- Under no circumstances are teachers permitted to dismiss a student directly from the classroom. Likewise, parents are not permitted to add or remove a child directly to/from a classroom during class time.
- If a student is consistently late or has excessive early dismissals, the family will be contacted to discuss ways to resolve the problem. Promotion to the next level may be jeopardized.
- **If your child arrives late and/or leaves early three (3) times, it will constitute one absence.**

COMMUNICATION

- The faith formation of children is a cooperative effort of parents, catechists, office staff, and the parish community. We make a strong effort to keep you informed through multiple communication channels.
- Our primary method of communicating with parents is through memos sent home with the students. It is imperative that you check your child's folder every week for correspondence that is sent home.
- We also communicate via emails sent to the email address you provided on your registration form, so remember to regularly check your email.
- Parent Meetings are also an essential means of communicating important information. We urge parents to attend these meetings to stay informed.
- Calendar updates are posted on our official Facebook page, in our column in the weekly Parish Bulletin, which is accessible on the Parish website, and on the bulletin board outside our office. **Please join our official Facebook page: Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education – Massapequa Park**
- Parents are encouraged to be in frequent communication with the child's catechist.
- Please note that we no longer utilize the Calling Post robo-call system of notification.

ASSESSMENTS

Students in all levels are assessed both informally and formally throughout the instructional year. Assessments may include verbal and written reviews. Testing accommodations and assistance will be provided per the student's IEP, or as needed.

PRAYERS TO KNOW:

All students: Sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Our Father and Glory Be. **Levels 2 and up**: Act of Contrition. **Levels 3 and up**: Apostle's Creed.

Students in Levels 3 through 6: Three Mass reflection worksheets will be distributed on the first day of class. These must be completed and handed in by the end of February. **If these are not done, student will be placed on incomplete status and cannot be moved up the following year.**

Students in Levels 7 and 8: Confirmation Preparation Workbooks will be distributed on the first day of class. These workbooks are based on the Diocesan model and contain the required assignments and projects (including Six Mass Reflections, 10 hours of Community Service, Saint Reports, etc) that are due at the end of February. **If these are not completed, Level 7 students cannot move up, and Level 8 students will not be eligible to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.**

Students in Level 8, per diocesan policy, must participate in a Confirmation Interview with the Director of Religious Education or designee. A preparation guide can be found in the Confirmation Preparation Workbook. The interview will take place in December or January.

FOOD/SNACKS

- The diocese has a strict **NO FOOD IN THE CLASSROOM** policy due to the prevalence of food allergies, particularly airborne allergens that remain active long after the food is consumed. As well, some students have medical conditions which require special restricted diets, such as no “junk food” or no sweets.
- Goodie bags containing food/candy/lollipops **ARE NOT PERMITTED** to be distributed to any of the students.
- Students who come to class directly from school should snack on the way to Religious Education or in their car before entering the building.

For the safety of all children, absolutely no food, candy or drinks are permitted in any classroom at any time

ADMISSION

Admission into our program does not discriminate based on race, gender, nationality, financial situation, or disability. To register your child, a new registration form must be filled out every year.

- **Per diocesan policy, all families with children in our program must be registered members of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish with an updated Parish Census Form on file. This provides a more accurate account of those who participate in our Parish Community.**
- The first time that a student is registered, a copy of their baptismal certificate must be attached to the registration form, **even if the student was baptized in our parish.**
- If a student is transferring into our program from another parish or Catholic school, a Letter of Transfer from the previous program containing the dates the child attended and his/her Sacrament dates must be submitted.
- Students in Grades 1 through 8 who have not attended a previous parish program and have not received the Sacraments will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine the appropriate level in our program in which they should be placed. Usually, these students attend an intensive OCIC (Order of Christian Initiation of Children) class for one to two years to catch up with their peers. These OCIC classes usually include the involvement of parents.
- Each grade level is a pre-requisite for the next grade level. **Religious education is an 8-year program, and for continuity, students must attend each level in sequence. If a student rejoins the program after being away for some time, the missing years must be made up.** Therefore, students will be placed in the level that follows the last level that they completed and not the level that matches their grade level in public school.
- The Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion are a two-year preparation program. To receive these sacraments, the student must attend and successfully complete both Level 1 and Level 2.
- Students in Levels 3 through Levels 6 continue to learn and mature in their faith understanding. To enter the Confirmation program, students are required to complete the first 6 years of religious education.
- The Sacrament of Confirmation is a two-year preparation program. To receive the Sacrament, the student must attend and successfully complete both the Level 7 and Level 8 instructional years, as well as all the requirements for each of those levels as outlined in the Confirmation Preparation Workbooks issued to them.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

- We will make every effort to provide the best possible experience in our program.
- If your child has an IEP or needs any special accommodations in a mainstream class, please let us know.
- If your child needs to be accommodated outside of a mainstream class, contact our office and together we will decide on an individualized catechetical plan for your child.

REGISTRATION AND FEES:

- **Early Bird discounted tuition is in effect until May 31:** current fees can be found on the registration form
- **Regular tuition (June 1 through September 1):** current fees can be found on the registration form
- To provide for a smooth start to the school year, **the registration period will end on September 1st, and all returning students MUST be registered by that date.** There is a \$25 late registration fee after September 1st, and placement in classes will depend on availability, which may not match your request or your scheduling needs.
- If tuition presents a financial burden, do not delay registration. Let us know and we will work with you.
- Registration forms are mailed home in **March**. Forms are also available on our Parish Website.
- **Early registration helps assure your preferred time and class. We have a limited number of classrooms and although we try our best, we cannot accommodate everyone who desires a specific class time. Please register early to avoid disappointments and conflicts.**
- Catechists (teachers) receive a \$50 discount off total tuition.
- **Communion Fee:** \$100 due at the end of January.
- **Confirmation fee:** \$100 due mid-November
- **Lost book replacement fee:** \$25 (Level 7 and Level 8 Decision Point book: \$10)

We are unable to accept requests for specific classmates or teachers, unless there are special circumstances such as disabilities that need to be accommodated. Carpooling is not a special circumstance for placing students in the same class, as all students are dismissed from the same location at the same time.

HOME SCHOOLING / HOME STUDY

Our program does not offer an independent Home Schooling or Home Study option. If our program does not meet your family's scheduling needs, we will assist you in finding a program that suits your schedule at one of our neighboring parishes.

FAITH FORMATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE-AGED STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED SACRAMENTS

We offer an Order of Christian Initiation class for teenagers and young adults in the regular Wednesday 7:15pm session for those who did not attend a traditional 8 year Religious Education Program and are missing Sacraments of Baptism, Communion and/or Confirmation. Please contact our office if interested.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION:

Adults who are interested in becoming Catholic, or who have never received the Sacraments of Baptism, First Communion and/or Confirmation and would like to receive them, please call the rectory regarding our parish's OCIA program. Various Faith Formation opportunities for adults are conducted by our priests and deacons throughout the year. Consult the Bulletin, the rectory, or our office, for scheduling and specific offerings.

INSTRUCTION OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL BUILDING ON PARISH GROUNDS

Sometimes, students will be escorted by teachers to the Church or the Grotto for instructional lessons, confession or prayer opportunities. These are not considered "field trips" and no prior notification to the parents will be communicated. There are no "field trips" off-site.

BATHROOM

All children should use the bathroom at home before arriving for class. If it is necessary for your child to use the bathroom in our school, they must use the student's bathroom in the back of the building only. **The bathrooms in the front of our building by the chapel are open to the public and are not safe/secure for students to use.**

Once class begins, children are not permitted to make frequent trips to the bathroom as this can be disruptive to the classroom instructional setting. If your child has a medical condition that might require multiple trips to the bathroom, please put that in writing and notify our office.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS / MEDICATIONS

Medical conditions (allergies, asthma, auditory, learning disabilities, visual impairment, seizures, etc.) must be noted on the registration form every year. The Religious Education Office will communicate this information to the child's catechist. No medication of any kind may be given to a child by a Catechist, with the exception of an EpiPen according to the Food Allergy Action Plan on file.

EPI-PENS

Per Diocesan policy for children who require the use of an EpiPen in an emergency:

- We must have a **Food Allergy Action Plan** on file **EACH YEAR**. Please stop by the office to complete this form prior to the first day of class.
- All Epi-Pen administrators must be trained in accordance with the law. Our program director and many of our teachers are trained to administer EpiPens. If no trained person is on-site at the time of the emergency, the parent will be notified immediately to pick-up their child.

CANCELLATION OF CLASS

If classes are canceled due to weather or emergency, **you will receive an email sent to the email address you provided on your registration form.** If possible, a message will also be posted on the Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education Massapequa Park Official Facebook Page and on News 12. If possible, we will leave a message on our office answering machine. We will also try to post notices on our entry doors. We generally follow the lead of the Farmingdale and/or Massapequa school districts for closures.

VANDALISM

In the past, we've had multiple incidents of vandalism that were discovered after classes were dismissed for the day. The boy's bathroom was trashed, cushioned chairs were cut, and obscene words were written on classroom fixtures. Any child found vandalizing or damaging school property will be required to repair the damages.

CUSTODY ISSUES / ORDERS OF PROTECTION / RESTRAINING ORDERS

Please make us aware of any complicated family dynamics which could negatively impact your child's celebration of a Sacrament, or which may require precautionary measures or accommodations throughout the school year.

Unless there are legal restraints in place, we cannot prevent anyone from attending the celebration of the Sacraments. We cannot be put in the middle of family disputes, and the families need to work it out amongst themselves. Phone calls from extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, etc) will be referred back to the parent or guardian, as we cannot disclose religious education or Sacrament information with anyone outside the core family.

Where there is an Order of Protection or restraining order in effect, a copy should be submitted to the Office along with a photo of the party identified in the Order. If the person referred to by the Order of Protection is seen in our building, the police will be called immediately.

The parent or guardian must provide on their registration form a list of names of those persons allowed to pick up the child. Any authorized adult picking up the child must identify themselves to the Catechist before the child will be released to them.

PARENT MEETINGS

Because parents are our partners in the Religious Education of their children, parents are expected to attend the scheduled Parent Meetings. We will present important information regarding our program and Sacrament Preparation, and instructional material about our faith, the life of the church in the world, and its teachings.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Throughout the year, photos are being taken at various Religious Education activities and events. Students and their work may appear, with or without their names, in the Parish Bulletin, on the Parish Website, and on our official social media page. A photo release statement is included on our registration form which states that **any parent who wishes to deny consent for the use of a child's image must notify our office in writing by October 1st. Failure to do so will imply consent on the part of the parent.**

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocese of Rockville Centre mandates that every child enrolled in a Religious Education program in the USA will receive an age-appropriate Thoughtful and Safe lesson each year. The lessons address issues that include, but are not limited to, stranger danger, staying safe when online, the consequences of gossiping and spreading rumors, bullying, etc.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/FIRE DRILLS

Children are directed to follow the instructions of Police, Fire personnel, The Religious Education staff, Teachers and Aides. Parents will be notified of the Emergency situation via email.

- **Lockout:** When a Lockout is announced, students who are outside the building will be called inside. Building staff will check each of the doors to the outside to make sure that they are properly locked. No one will be permitted to enter or leave until the all-clear is given.
- **Lock-Down:** When a Lock-Down drill is announced, all classroom doors will be locked. Students will not be permitted to come and go from the classroom. Shades will be drawn. Students will be moved away from the windows. The perimeter of the building will also be secured. No one will be permitted to enter or leave until the all-clear is given.
- **Shelter Drill:** In a Shelter Drill, all students will be moved by their teacher to a pre-determined area of the building with fewer windows. Attendance will be taken and all students will be accounted for. When the all-clear is given, students can return to their classrooms.
- **Fire Drills:** Children are directed to follow the instructions of the Religious Education staff and their teacher on quick evacuation from the building through designated exit doors.

Detailed procedures are posted in each classroom, and all catechists are aware of what to do in case of an emergency.

DRESS CODE

Appropriate clothing must be worn at all times. Non-compliant students will be reminded of the guidelines one time. If they continue to disobey the rule, the Religious Education office staff will set up a meeting with the parents.

- **Hats and hoods are not permitted to be worn inside the church or school building.**
- No clothing may be worn with suggestive or questionable language or drawings.
- No bare midriffs, tops that expose cleavage, tube-tops, spaghetti straps, short shorts or short skirts
- No sagging pants that expose undergarments.
- No pajamas, bedroom slippers or shower shoes.
- Heelies (sneakers with wheels on them) are NOT permitted.
- No chains or any attire that could be used as a weapon.