

HANDBOOK FOR PARISHIONERS

**IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PARISH
WILLISTON , VERMONT
www.ihm-williston.org**

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

INCLUDES:

SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS
SACRAMENT PREPARATION
RCIA
ADULT ENRICHMENT / BIBLE STUDY

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Religious Education Program is to support the faith community members in their lifelong quest to learn about, understand, and share their faith in God. This support includes but is not limited to:

- Assisting parents/guardians in preparation for their child's Baptism.
- Assisting parents/guardians in sharing their faith with their children through Religious Education classes for students beginning in first grade.
- Assisting parents/guardians in preparing their children for the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- Assisting couples in their preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- Providing materials and space for group Bible Study.
- Assisting people interested in learning more about the Catholic Church through the RCIA Program.

SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

CLASSES OFFERED

First Year Sacrament Class: Children entering 1st Grade and those entering 2nd Grade who have not completed a year of Religious Education. Note: The Diocese of Burlington requires a two year preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation (Confession) and Eucharist (Communion).

Second Year Sacrament Class: Children who have completed the First Year Sacrament Class or one year of Religious Education.

Grades Three through Eight: Continuing classes in the basics of our faith presented on a developmental continuum.

First Year Confirmation Class: Students entering Ninth Grade or above. Note: The Diocese of Burlington requires a two year preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Second Year Confirmation Class: Students who have completed the First Year Confirmation Class.

CHILDREN IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Children who are enrolled in one of the Catholic Schools and have been receiving religious education classes through their school program may join the IHM Religious Education Program at grade level.

Mater Christi Students who wish to celebrate First Reconciliation and First Eucharist at IHM must attend the Second Year Sacrament Class.

Rice Memorial High School Students wishing to be Confirmed must complete the First and Second Year Confirmation Classes.

SCHEDULES

A total of 20 classes are held each year for grades 1 through 8 and 15 classes for the Confirmation Program. Classes run from September to March/April with breaks during December and school vacations.

The classes meet as follows:

- Sunday Morning: 8:45-10:15 a.m.: 1st & 2nd Year Sacrament Class, Grades 3 - 4
- Sunday Evening: 6:00-7:30 p.m.: Grades 5 - 8, 1st & 2nd Year Confirmation Classes

HOME SCHOOL PROGRAM (Available for Grades 3 through 8 only)

Students who are unable to attend the regularly scheduled classes for all or part of a year have the option of a Home School Program. As the community component is greatly reduced with this program, this option is not encouraged. The registration process and the tuition fee are the same as for the classroom program. The key points of the Home School Program are:

- Families receive a copy of the text book and contact information for the grade level teacher at the first class.

- The student completes the activities in the book with parental supervision and support at all grade levels. Parents must check their child's work on a regular basis to ensure that the child is understanding the material.
- The teacher emails the parent directly or gives copies of all information letters, in-class worksheets or other appropriate supplemental materials to the DRE who delivers the information to the family, at least monthly.
- The DRE calls the family once or twice during the semester to provide support.
- The Home School student is invited to attend special functions such as the Class Mass, community service opportunities, field trips, etc.
- The parent contacts the teacher with questions.
- Documentation of completed work is provided by turning in the completed book by the weekend after Confirmation in May.
- Upon successful completion of the work, credit for the year is given.

STAFF INFORMATION

The teachers, aides, and support personnel in the program are all volunteers. All staff members complete an application and Personal Inventory, go through a background check and sign a "Code of Conduct" agreement, as required by the Diocese of Burlington. Teachers take part in a two year Diocesan run Certification Program which involves 16 hours of training. In addition, all staff members who have direct contact with children receive on-going training through the Virtus Program. This program designed to heighten awareness of student safety consists of a three hour "live training" session followed by a monthly on-line component. Through this process participants learn to recognize signs of abusive situations and to take appropriate steps if abuse is suspected.

REGISTRATION

Members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish register their children for the fall program in August. Generally, families must be registered as members of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or Our Lady of the Holy Rosary parishes to enroll their children in the program. Students registered in other parishes may be accepted if there is space available. Class sizes are capped at 15 for 1st and 2nd Year Sacrament Classes, 20 for Grades 3 & 4, and 25 for Grades 5 through 8 and Confirmation. Though these caps may be exceeded to accommodate parishioners, no students from outside the Parish will be accepted after the cap has been reached.

Diocesan regulations require us to have a copy of the Baptismal Certificate before anyone receives a Sacrament. If your child was not Baptized at Immaculate Heart of Mary, this certificate must be presented when registering for the first time. Photocopies are acceptable. Originals will be copied and returned to you.

Tuition is \$25 per child with a maximum of \$75 per family. For those who are not members of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or Our Lady of the Holy Rosary parishes, the tuition is \$30 per child. Registration and emergency information cards are e-mailed in late July or early August and must be returned through the collection basket or the mail by the due date in August. No child will be turned away due to an inability to pay. See the Pastor/Administrator or Director of Religious Education (DRE) regarding this.

Full time teachers and aides in the program are exempt from the registration fee(s) for the year they are serving on the staff.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Parental Involvement is required in this program. Parents/guardians are their child's first and best teacher, especially in learning about faith. This involvement includes, but is not limited to:

- bringing the child to Mass each week to put into practice the faith being shared.
- reading the information sent home by the teacher.
- showing an interest in the child's learning by reinforcing or reviewing the concepts presented in class.
- assisting with, overseeing, or checking any homework that is assigned.
- helping in the classroom as teacher, aide, or assistant; or outside of the classroom as a support person.
- meeting any requirements specific to a particular grade; such as sacrament preparation, Class Masses, Celebration Mass, field trips, meetings, etc.
- contacting the child's teacher in a timely and appropriate fashion with any questions or concerns.

Attendance at each of the scheduled classes is required. At times however, family emergencies or illnesses may prevent a child from attending a class. If this occurs, notify the child's teacher as soon as possible and arrange for the missed work to be made up. Make up work is required for all missed classes.

Students with special needs or families with special circumstances can be accommodated on a case by case basis. No one is turned away. Speak with the Pastor/Administrator or DRE regarding any needs you have. (See Appendix II)

Records kept by Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish are confidential. We retain the information on the registration form, dates Sacraments are received, copies of the child's Baptism Certificate, and attendance information.

FORMATION IN CHRISTIAN CHASTITY PROGRAM

The Office of Safe Environment Programs has provided all parishes in the Diocese of Burlington with the Formation in Christian Chastity Program, a parent centered program. Currently, this program has been implemented in Grades 1 through 8, and 2nd year Confirmation. Some parts of this program are taught in the classroom, however, most of the instruction (and all intimate or very personal information) is intended to be given by the parent(s). All students will bring home a letter explaining the details of the program for their grade level. Information to assist parents in discussions with their children will be included. A handout with general safety information from the Safe Environment Office can be found at the end of this handbook. (Appendix I)

In addition to working with their parents at home, students in the first four years of our program will learn about staying safe as part of their regular classes. The goals include learning some rules for keeping people safe, understanding the difference between good touch and bad touch (any touch that makes a person uncomfortable,) and remembering that God loves and respects us, so we love and respect ourselves and others.

Students in Grades 5 through 8, and 2nd Year Confirmation will also be provided with one or two classes with lesson plans specific to moral and spiritual development.

The goals in these classes include learning to recognize and avoid dangerous or harmful activities, understanding the importance of implementing a “buddy” system, developing a safety plan, and practicing assertive body language.

More information for implementing these discussions is available through the DREs. Support specific to the challenges in single parent households is also available. Feel free to contact a DRE (see Appendix II) with questions and concerns, for more information, or to see the curriculum materials.

COMMUNICATION

Teachers send letters and program information home with the child on a regular basis.

Visit the IHM web site at www.ihm-williston.org and read the weekly Parish Bulletin for current Religious Education Program news, information, and events.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the teacher as necessary. The teacher will indicate the best way to contact him/her. In general, if you wish to speak to a teacher before class, arrive early enough to avoid trying to talk while students are in the classroom and to avoid delaying the start of class. Likewise, be patient and wait until most students have been picked up when trying to speak to the teacher after class. This will help ensure you have the teacher’s full attention.

See Appendix II for contact information.

Parents/guardians must inform the child’s teacher if the child:

- will miss a class. (Make up work is required for all missed classes.)
- will be picked up by someone other than the parent/guardian or if the child will be walking or driving him or herself. This must be in writing, signed by a parent. One completed form or note for the year is fine.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Children are expected to be respectful of their classmates, the religious education program staff, and the area they are using.

Children are expected to come to each class on time with any books or materials needed and be ready to learn.

If a child’s behavior is disruptive to the point that it is interfering with learning, then parents/guardians will be notified by phone. A plan to resolve the situation will be developed on a case by case basis and may require a parent or guardian to attend class with the child.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Children are expected to arrive and be picked up on time. If someone other than a parent/guardian will be picking up the child, please provide written notification to the child’s teacher. If the arrangements are ongoing, submit one note for the year. Car pools may submit one form for the group for the year. Students who transport themselves by walking, biking, or driving, must also have a signed permission slip.

Use the parking spaces when bringing your child to class. Stopping in the driveway backs traffic up the hill and onto Route 2, especially during the peak arrival times.

Please use the Parish Hall door to enter the building.

Students in all grades must be met by an adult at the classroom door and supervised at departure for safety. The parking area is very busy and drivers backing out cannot easily see young, unaccompanied children or older students running in play.

Please drive slowly and watch out for children in the parking lot.

FIELD TRIPS

Signed permissions slips are required for all off site events, field trips, retreats, etc. There will be at least one adult chaperone for every five students. Groups of less than ten students will have at least two adults. When students are transported in private vehicles, each occupant of the vehicle will wear a seat belt. Seatbelts will not be shared. The operator of the vehicle will be a licensed driver over the age of 25.

SNOW DAYS

If a class is cancelled due to inclement weather, parents/guardians will be called. Please be sure the teacher has a current phone number.

MEDICATIONS

Medications cannot be given to students by the Religious Education Staff at any time. This includes cough drops and any other over the counter products.

PEANUTS AND PEANUT BUTTER

For the safety of the students with a peanut allergy, the entire program area is a "peanut-free zone." If snacks or other treats are requested for a class, do not provide any peanut or peanut butter containing item. Also, if your child eats a peanut containing snack before class, they must wash their hands and face before entering the classroom. Even a small residue of peanut oil left on a table can trigger a fatal reaction in a sensitive person.

SAFETY

Staff areas are off limits to students. Students who use the kitchen area are supervised at all times.

All classes are monitored at least once yearly by the Pastor and/or a Director of Religious Education. Documentation of the visit is retained in the Religious Education office files.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to sit in on their child's class at any time without prior notification needed.

Parents/guardians are required to call the teacher if their child will be absent. Follow up calls will be made during class time for any unexplained absences to verify that the parent/guardian is aware that the student did not arrive.

Students are released only to a parent/guardian (or designated adult with written permission from a parent/guardian). A parent/guardian or designated adult must pick up the child at the classroom door.

All concerns regarding the safety a student or of the program area are addressed and documented.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

FIRST RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION) & FIRST EUCHARIST (EUCHARIST)

The Diocese of Burlington requires a two year preparation for the first celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, beginning in first grade. These Sacraments are then celebrated in November (Reconciliation) and May (Eucharist) of second grade.

Requirements of the Sacrament Program:

- Full attendance at each class. Exceptions are made for family emergencies and illness. Missed work must be made up.
- Demonstration of an understanding of the concepts presented.
- Weekly participation in the Mass. If you attend Mass in a different parish, our Pastor requests you turn in a bulletin from that church upon your return.
- Memorization of five basic prayers (Sign of the Cross, Glory Be, Hail Mary, Our Father, and an Act of Contrition.)
- Attendance at two Parent Information Meetings (2nd year - parents/guardians only) held in September (Reconciliation) and January (Eucharist.)
- Completion of two Family Books (2nd year) and any other homework assigned.
- Participation in Community Service Projects (one in 1st; three in the 2nd year.)
- View two videos on the Sacraments (2nd year) with the family.
- Family Meeting with the Pastor (15-20 minutes) in the spring of the 2nd year.
- Attendance at rehearsals for First Eucharist.
- Payment of the Sacrament Fee in February of 2nd year. No one will be denied a Sacrament due to an inability to pay. See the Pastor or DRE regarding this.

Multiple missed classes or Masses, frequent late arrival/early dismissal, or a failure to complete the program requirements may result in a postponement of the Sacrament.

Children in Second Grade who have not begun a Religious Education Program will be placed in the First Year Sacrament Class and will celebrate the Sacraments when they are in Third Grade. After completing the Second Year Sacrament Class, they will then join their peers in Fourth Grade in following fall.

Children in Third Grade or above who have not begun a Religious Education Program will be placed in their grade level class and will celebrate the Sacraments in November (Reconciliation) and May (Eucharist) during their second year in the program.

In addition to these regular classes they will:

- Complete the requirements of the Sacrament Class (see above.)
- Join their parent/guardian in meetings with a teacher from the Second Year Sacrament Class or a DRE during their second year to monitor progress and have questions answered.
- Join the Second Year Sacrament Class for certain classes as appropriate for preparation and practice.

CONFIRMATION

The Diocese of Burlington requires a two year preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, beginning in ninth grade. The Sacrament is then celebrated in May of tenth grade.

Please note: All students in the Parish wishing to be Confirmed must complete this two year program, including students at Champlain Valley Union High School, at Rice Memorial High School, who are home schooled, or attending other area schools.

Requirements of the Sacrament Program:

- Parent/Guardian attends the Confirmation Meeting the week before the first class each year.
- Full attendance at each class. Exceptions are made for family emergencies and illness. Missed work must be made up.
- Arrive at each class on time with any books or materials needed, an open mind and a willingness to participate.
- Weekly participation in the Mass.
- A minimum of six hours of Community Service each year.
- A minimum of six hours of Liturgical Service each year.
- Completion of any homework assignments.
- Letter to the Bishop introducing the candidate and requesting the Sacrament.
- Obtain a sponsor. This sponsor must be a practicing Catholic other than the candidate's parent. Parents cannot be sponsors of their own child. If the sponsor is not a member of the Parish or otherwise known by the Pastor/Administrator, a Certificate of Sponsorship must be obtained from the sponsor's Parish.
- Choose a Saint name. Become familiar with the life of the chosen Saint and then present the information with reasons for the choice to the class.
- Attend Enrollment Mass in November of the Second Year.
- Attend the Holy Thursday Mass during Holy Week of the Second Year.
- Meet with the Pastor/Administrator for a 15 - 20 minute interview in the spring before receiving the Sacrament.
- Participate in a Confirmation Retreat.
- First Year students plan and host the Confirmation Meal on the weekend before Confirmation.
- Second Year students attend the Confirmation Meal and rehearsal after Mass on the weekend before Confirmation.

Multiple missed classes or Masses, frequent late arrival/early dismissal, or a failure to complete the program requirements may result in a postponement of the Sacrament.

BAPTISM

For infants and children, contact the Pastor/Administrator (Appendix II) to set up an appointment. Instruction and information is given on an individual basis.

For adults, see the RCIA program.

MATRIMONY

The Diocese of Burlington requires couples to take part in the Pre-Cana Program before celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony. Contact the Pastor/Administrator (Appendix II) at least six months before setting the date for the marriage.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (R.C.I.A.)

The R.C.I.A. program is available for adults who are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith. These may be non-Catholics who are making an inquiry or considering joining the church. They may also be Catholics who have been away from the faith and wish to renew their relationship or celebrate Sacraments they did not already receive. Practicing Catholics who wish to “brush up on” or deepen their knowledge of the faith are also welcome to attend.

This program starts in September and is held at St. John Vianney Church in South Burlington.

Those pursuing full communion with the Catholic Church are welcomed into the Church during the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday when the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are celebrated.

Contact the Pastor/Administrator (Appendix II) for more information about this program.

ADULT ENRICHMENT / BIBLE STUDY

In the Adult Group, members prepare for the meeting by studying and reflecting on assigned readings and/or reflection guides. During the group, the topics are discussed in a lively fashion with each member encouraged to share, thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Refreshments are shared.

This group meets with a facilitator on the announced dates and times beginning in September. It loosely follows the Religious Education calendar. See the Parish Bulletin, Web Site, or Monthly Calendar for specific information.

A fee covers the cost of the materials which are kept by the participant. No one will be turned away due to an inability to pay for the materials.

All are welcome to join the Adult Group at any time during the year.

Contact the Bible Study Coordinator (Appendix II) for more information about this program.

APPENDIX I

Q & A on CHILD SAFETY

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NATIONAL
CENTER FOR
**MISSING &
EXPLOITED
CHILDREN**

OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention
Office of Justice Programs • U.S. Department of Justice

What are the most important things parents and guardians should know when talking to their children about this issue?

1. Don't forget your older children. Children 11-17 are equally at risk to victimization. At the same time you are giving your older children more freedom, make sure they understand the important safety rules as well.
2. When you speak to your children, do so in a calm, nonthreatening manner. Children do not need to be frightened to get the point across. Fear can actually work at cross-purposes to the safety message, because fear can be paralyzing to a child.
3. Speak openly about safety issues. Children will be less likely to come to you if the issue is enshrouded in secrecy. If they feel you are comfortable discussing the subject matter, they may be more forthcoming to you.
4. Do not confuse children with the concept of "strangers." Children do not have the same understanding of who a stranger is as an adult might. The "stranger-danger" message is not effective, as danger to children is much greater from someone you or they know than from a "stranger."
5. Practice what you talk about. You may think your children understand your message, but until they can incorporate it into their daily lives, it may not be clearly understood. Find opportunities to practice "what if" scenarios.
6. Teach your children it is more important to get out of a threatening situation than it is to be polite. They also need to know it is okay to tell you what happened, and they won't be a tattletale.

What are the most important things parents and guardians should tell their children about this issue?

1. Children should always **check first** with you or a trusted adult before they go anywhere, accept anything, or get into a car with anyone. This applies to older children as well.
2. Children should not go out alone and should always **take a friend** with them when they go places or play outside.
3. It's okay to say **no** if someone tries to touch them or treats them in a way that makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused and to get out of the situation as quickly as possible.
4. Children need to know they can **tell** you or a trusted adult if they feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
5. Children need to know there will always be someone to help them, and they have the right to be safe.

What is the biggest myth surrounding this issue?

The biggest myth is that the dangers to children come from strangers. In the majority of cases the perpetrator is someone the parents/guardians or child knows, and that person may be in a position of trust or responsibility to the family.

What advice would you offer parents and guardians who wanted to talk to their children about this issue?

Parents and guardians should choose opportunities or "teachable" moments to reinforce safety skills. If an incident occurs in your community, and your children ask you about it, speak frankly but with reassurance. Explain to your children that you want to discuss the safety rules with them, so they will know what to do if they are ever confronted with a difficult situation. Make sure you have "safety nets" in place, so your children know there is **always** someone who can help them.

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This project was supported by Grant No. 1998-MC-CX-K002 by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® and 1-800-THE-LOST® are registered service marks of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

KNOW THE RULES...

GENERAL TIPS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS TO HELP KEEP THEIR CHILDREN SAFER

While many parents and guardians feel they are faced with new and unprecedented challenges when trying to keep their children safer in today's fast-paced and increasingly global society, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children offers these common-sense, general safety tips to help parents and guardians put these challenges into perspective.

- 1. Make sure you know where each of your children is at all times.** Know your children's friends and be clear with your children about the places and homes they may visit. Make it a rule for your children to check in with you when they arrive at or depart from a particular location and when there is a change in plans. You should also let them know when you're running late or if your plans have changed so they can see the rule is for safety purposes and not being used to "check up" on them.
- 2. Never leave children unattended in an automobile, whether it is running or not.** Children should never be left unsupervised or allowed to spend time alone or with others in automobiles, as the potential dangers to their safety outweigh any perceived convenience or "fun." Remind children to never hitchhike, approach a car or engage in a conversation with anyone within a car they do not know and trust, or go anywhere with anyone without getting your permission first.
- 3. Be involved in your children's activities.** As an active participant, you'll have a better opportunity to observe how the adults in charge interact with your children. If you are concerned about anyone's behavior, take it up with the sponsoring organization.
- 4. Listen to your children.** Pay attention if they tell you they don't want to be with someone or go somewhere. This may be an indication of more than a personality conflict or lack of interest in the activity or event.
- 5. Notice when anyone shows one or all of your children a great deal of attention or begins giving them gifts. Take the time to talk to your children** about the person and find out why the person is acting in this way.
- 6. Teach your children they have the right to say NO** to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or actions by others and to get out of those situations as quickly as possible. If avoidance is not an option, children should be taught to kick, scream, and resist. When in such a situation, teach them to loudly yell that the person is not their father/mother/guardian and then immediately tell you if this happens. Reassure them you're there to help and it is okay to tell you anything.
- 7. Be sensitive to any changes in your children's behavior or attitude.** Encourage open communication and learn how to be an active listener. Look and listen for small cues and clues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings. This may be because they are concerned about your reaction to their problems. If your children do confide problems to you, strive to remain calm, noncritical, and nonjudgmental. Listen compassionately to their concern, and work with them to get the help they need to resolve the problem.
- 8. Be sure to screen babysitters and caregivers.** Many states now have a public registry that allows parents and guardians to check out individuals for prior criminal records and sex offenses. Check out references with other families who have used the caregiver or babysitter. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the caregiver was, and listen carefully to the responses.
- 9. Practice basic safety skills with your children.** Make an outing to a mall or park a "teachable" experience in which your children can practice checking with you, using pay telephones, going to the restroom with a friend, and locating the adults who can help if they need assistance. Remember, allowing your children to wear clothing or carry items in public on which their name is displayed can bring about unwelcome attention from inappropriate people who may be looking for a way to start a conversation with your children.



- 10. Remember there is no substitute for your attention and supervision.** Being available and taking time to really know and listen to your children helps build feelings of safety and security.

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APPENDIX II

CONTACT INFORMATION

PASTOR: Father Lance Harlow
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish
P.O. Box 1047
Williston, VT 05495
1-802-878-4513
ihmchurch@comcast.net

CO-DIRECTORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (CO-DREs):

LuAnn Koch	Joann Frymire
62 Hillside Drive	331 Harte Circle
Williston, VT 05459	Williston, VT 05495
1-802-879-1577	1-802-879-3199
kochfromIHM@comcast.net	ihmchurch@comcast.net

PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE:

Laurie Gunn
601 Southridge Road
Williston, VT 05495
1-802-872-0150
laurie.gunn@vtmednet.org

BIBLE STUDY COORDINATOR:

Pam Argy
19 Chelsea Place
Williston, VT 05495
1-802- 881-1833
pjargy@comcast.net