

Parent Handbook
Religious Education Program 2020-21
Location: Sacred Heart Chapel, Bernards Avenue

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Bernardsville, NJ

A Catholic Community growing together in our faith in Jesus Christ through prayer and loving service.

Religious Education Program:

Parish Catechetical Leader: Michele Lobo
908-766-5638 ext. 20
908-507-5793 cell

Administrative Assist: Kitty Ferrante
908-766-5638 ext. 19
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Youth Minister: Victor Gonzalez
908-766-5638 ext. 26

Administrative Assist: Teresa Mastrobuoni
908-766-5638 ext. 26

Mailing Address: 30 Seney Drive, Bernardsville, NJ 07924

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 11am-3pm at School of St. Elizabeth
Monday-Thursday 3pm-6:30pm at Sacred Heart Chapel

Class Cancellations: Class cancellations will be emailed to parents.
Posted on OLPH Religious Education Facebook Page

Parish Information:

Pastor: Rev. Jay Sicheloff

Pastoral Associate: Rev. Tom Lanza

Weekend Assist: Rev. Michael Tidd, OSB

Deacons: Benigno Ruiz-Diaz

Rectory: 111 Claremont Rd, Bernardsville, NJ

Secretary: Alana Davis - Office Hours 8:30am-4:30pm
908-766-0079 ext. 0

Website: www.olphbernardsville.org

Facebook Page: Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish

Mass Schedule:

Saturday: 5:30pm, 7:30pm (Spanish)

Sunday: 7:30am, 9:00am, 10:45am, 5:30pm
9:30am (Sacred Heart Chapel)

Weekday: 8:00am

Reconciliation: Saturdays at 4:30pm in Church

Key Assumptions of Our Religious Education Program

1. ***That parents have a sincere desire to form their children to be practicing Catholic Christians.*** We assume that you would like your children to be formed as practicing Catholic Christians - this means that at least they will be knowledgeable about their faith, will pray daily and attend mass weekly, will receive the other sacraments as appropriate, will understand that they are loved by God and will endeavor to share that love with others, and will become active members of their parish community. If Catholic parents are not themselves fulfilling these faith commitments, a child beginning our formal religious education program may be an invitation and opportunity for the parents to redouble their own efforts - know that we are most ready to help you in any way that we can. A renewed sincere striving to live out your faith commitment can serve as a wonderful example for your child of the importance, beauty and effort involved in a life of faith.
2. ***Regular (weekly) participation at Sunday and Holiday Mass.*** The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that the Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to “participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, and the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.” (2181) The Catechism goes on to explain that participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God’s holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (2182)
3. ***Come to the sacrament of Reconciliation as a family at least once a year.*** Christian witness and religious practice are not simply cute rituals of childhood but rather serious responsibilities and opportunities for all Christians. We all fail in living up to our responsibilities as followers of the Lord to varying degrees, and thus we are all in need of God’s forgiveness. Bringing young people to this sacrament stresses the importance of saying we’re sorry and being raised up by God’s redeeming love. Letting our young people see that we too are in need of the Lord’s forgiveness powerfully testifies to the necessity and centrality of this sacrament in the life of every Christian.
4. ***Regular Prayer and Religious Observance at Home.*** While there is a very important component of knowledge required to inform and sustain the life of a Catholic Christian, it is the entirety of this Catholic Christian life that we are offering to assist you with providing for your child. To that end, it is essential that you pray with your child at home (for example, before meals, before bedtime, etc.) and celebrate your faith (for example, discuss and celebrate the religious dimension of holidays, talk about what Jesus would do in various situations, let your children know of your own faith journey and dilemmas).

The essential point is to make the Catholic Christian faith a constant, real dimension of your child's entire life - a dimension that must be engaged and considered in church and in the classroom, as well as in the home, on the ball field, etc... An especially important witness is for your child to see you participating in some religious or charitable outreach.

5. ***Parental Support of Religious Education Class Efforts to Include:***

- ensuring that students attend all religious education classes,
- discussing material learned,
- supervising and discussing homework,
- making it apparent that your child's growth in knowledge of his or her faith is important to you, and
- making it obvious to your child that you are proud of their accomplishments in the areas of religious learning and observance.

Like anything else that is worthwhile, learning the details of our Roman Catholic faith takes a bit of effort, study, memorization, and practice. It is essential for your own child's education, as well as for the rest of his or her class, that each child attends class on a regular basis, studies and learns the material, and completes homework assignments with diligence. We must expect that parents will encourage and supervise their child's learning with at least the same level of interest and emphasis as they would any other major subject in school. Children must see that learning about their faith is important to their parents, or it will not be important to them.

Thank you! We are truly grateful for the opportunity to assist your sincere efforts to form your children to be practicing Catholic Christians!

OLPH Religious Education Program Mission Statement

The parish Religious Education Program strives to make visible the gospel of Jesus Christ by offering to the children of our parish formational activities designed to provide formal instruction in the Catholic faith, service opportunities, spiritual enrichment activities and social encounters.

Goals of the Program

- To provide a solid instruction in Catholic doctrine and morality
- To initiate children into the life of the church by instruction and experience in its sacramental activity
- To help them develop habits of prayer
- To challenge young people to a life of love for and service to their neighbor

Formation Programs

Liturgy

Since the Eucharistic liturgy (Mass) is the central focus of the Catholic faith, active, conscious participation in weekly Mass is essential for all students (especially from second grade on). Remember that they cannot bring themselves, so you, who are their greatest influence, must show them the way.

A Children's Liturgy is offered twice a month. (First and third Sunday of the month). Please, always check the bulletin in case of change. Families are encouraged to attend this Mass.

Basic Curriculum

Grade 1-6: Christ Our Life, Loyola Press ,©2009, ©2016 Excerpts from Roman Missal, Third Ed., ©2010

Grade 2: Blessed, Dynamic Catholic

Grade 7: Chosen; Ascension Press

All Grades: Family Life, RCL Benziger, ©2011

Student Responsibilities

- An eagerness to learn and contribute to class discussions using respectful, cooperative behavior is necessary. Respect for the catechist, other adult volunteers and fellow students is required of every student. The Religious Education Office has established a process to address unacceptable behavior. If misconduct occurs or the rules are not followed, our policy is: 1) first occurrence – warning by teacher; 2) second occurrence the student will be sent to the office to discuss their behavior and the parent will be called; 3) if disruptive behavior continues, the parent will be called again and will be expected to accompany their child to class.
- Students are to dress appropriately and **not bring food or drink in class.**
- Completion of home assignments. Reinforcement during the week is necessary for each student in order to derive the most from the lesson. Failure to complete home assignments is reflected on the bi-annual report cards.
- Punctual and consistent attendance at class, Grades 1-8. Lateness, leaving early, and absenteeism interfere with the learning process and disrupt the class. Please refer to the Attendance Policy, for specifics.
- Respect for parish/school property.

Parent Involvement/Responsibilities

- Parents can actively participate in parent meetings and gatherings.
- Parent meetings are held during the sacramental preparation years. Attendance is mandatory in order to give parents and/or guardians the necessary information concerning schedules and program content that pertain to the individual sacraments. Please check the Religious Ed calendar for specific dates.
- Parents are required to participate on at least one of the following areas:
 - Catechist/Catechist Aide --Substitute Catechist --Door Security --Hall Monitor
 - Hospitality --Office Help --Drop-off & dismissal assistants

- Encouragement of your children to take seriously the class work and assignments. Students are to attend regularly beginning in Grade 1.
- Example of lived faith within the family context
- Helping child complete make-up work due to excessive absences
- Arranging for punctual arrival and pick-up of students
- Parents are asked to read the OLPH Family Handbook for Religious Education and to abide by all policies.
- Parents are asked to inform the office when a child will be absent.
- Parents are asked to provide an emergency phone number on the Registration Form.

Catechist Formation

The Religious Education Program offers on-going training for its volunteer catechists. Theological up-dating, methods courses and spirituality opportunities are provided. Catechists are encouraged to attend diocesan and local professional development courses/workshops.

Please note we comply with the Diocese of Metuchen Protecting God's Children program to provide a safe environment for all children.

Children's Catechumenate

This is a program designed for those students who are beginning religious instruction out of cycle. It supplies the initial instruction needed for sacramental initiation. Classes for Spanish speaking children, will be arranged as need arises.

Family Life Education

As mandated by our Bishop, the parish program includes Family Life Education. Texts are published by RCL Benziger and include Safe Environment Training appropriate to the development levels of the child. Parents may "opt-out" of this safe environment training, but must complete and return the "Parental Refusal of Safe Environment Training Form" to the Religious Education Office. The form is available from the office.

Global Awareness

The Missionary Childhood Association, the children's branch of the Propagation of the Faith Mission Organization enabling "kids to help kids" worldwide is active in our program. It may include: --Weekly collection of money saved by personal sacrifices. --Special "mite" boxes for Advent and Lent --Special collections in time of emergencies

Penance Renewal

In order to help the students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in their personal and spiritual lives, special lessons are given, with an opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once each year during class time.

Prayer Sponsors

Each class is assigned a Prayer Sponsor, a parishioner of OLPH who supports the work of the catechist and students through prayer and personal sacrifice.

Service Projects

A Confirmation preparation requirement of parish/community service for 7th and 8th grades. All students are encouraged to become involved in service to the parish and local community.

Special Needs

If a child has special needs, parents/guardians are asked to share the information with the Parish Catechetical Leader and/or the catechist. This information will not marginalize the child in any way, but help the catechist to meet the particular needs. This information will be kept confidential. Individual instruction is provided for children upon the request of the parent and coordinated with the Religious Ed Office.

Additional Parish Programs

As the need arises children have the opportunity to participate in other social and spiritual programs offered by the Parish.

- Thanksgiving Baskets
- Children's Christmas Liturgy and Children's Liturgy twice monthly
- Stations of the Cross and Lenten Soup Supper
- Sandwiches for Sixty, monthly throughout School and Summer year
- Summer Son & Song Bible Camp

Program Policies

Arrival/Dismissal

Children should arrive at least five (5) minutes before the start of class. Students will enter through the Main Chapel Entrance or the Rear Basement Entrance. Adults may walk students to the entrance, but they may not enter the Chapel beyond the Main Entrance Foyer. Parents are expected to pick-up their children immediately after the session.

Arrival/Drop off: Parents should pull up in front of the Chapel. Drop your children at the entrance to the Chapel. Children enter the Chapel through the Main Chapel Entrance or the Rear Basement Entrance.

Dismissal/Pick-up: Parents line up along Bernards Avenue in front of the Chapel. Please display your family name card and wait for your child to be called to your car. We will not send a student home with a driver who is visibly impaired. We reserve the right to call the emergency number for a ride for the child. Students that walk home, even once, must have a signed permission form on file in the Religious Education Office.

Early Dismissal: For any reason that you need to pick up your child before class ends you must come to the Main Foyer of the Chapel to sign out your child. No Adult is allowed to go directly to their child's classroom.

FOR DROP OFF OR PICK UP OF CHILDREN – FOLLOWING CARLINE PROCEDURES PROVIDES THE SAFEST AND QUICKEST PROCESS.

Attendance

Note: Two years of regular class attendance and weekly participation at Mass is mandatory for sacramental preparation. However, this does not mean that children are excused from attending class during the time after First Eucharist until preparation for Confirmation. Students are to attend regularly beginning in Grade 1.

When a student is absent, arrives significantly late (15 or more minutes), or leaves early a total of 4 times, the parents will be asked to set up a conference with the student's teacher or the Director; this conference will discuss strategies for better attendance and appropriate remedial work.

Students preparing for First Eucharist or Confirmation are required to successfully complete two years of preparation in our program before they are eligible to participate in those sacramental events in our parish. When a student enrolled in one of these sacramental years (Grades 1, 2, 7 and 8) is absent, arrives significantly late (15 minutes or more), or leaves early a total of 6 times, they will no longer be eligible to include that year as one of the two required years. This will likely result in the student's reception of the sacrament being delayed.

Cell Phone Policy

Phones and electronic devices are to be turned off and kept out of sight for the duration of any and all parish religious education activities. The use of cell phones and electronic devices for picture taking, harassment or threats is prohibited at all times. The use of cell phones and electronic devices to access the internet, email, have conversations, text, game play, gamble or make purchases of any kind is prohibited at all times. Catechists have the right to collect cell phones and electronic devices from children/adolescents if these rules are not adhered to.

Child Abuse Policy

If a catechist or PCL suspects a child has been abused, New Jersey Law requires that the State Division of Youth and Family Services be notified. The Office of Child and Youth Protection of the Diocese of Metuchen will also be notified of suspected abuse.

Communication

Necessary information will be sent home to parents via email (weekly CCD Friday Folder) or/also in the weekly church bulletin. We will also post on the OLPH Religious Education Facebook Page (please join our page.) Parents are provided with Report Cards on their child's progress twice a year. A yearly calendar listing important dates for the Religious Education Program will be included with this parent handbook. It is also available on the OLPH Parish website www.olphbernardsville.org. Calendar changes will be emailed through notices and church bulletin.

Crisis Management Plans and Drills

For the safety of our children and families, the Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Religious Ed program has in place policies for lockdown, evacuation and fire drills and our Emergency Preparedness Plan is to evacuate to the Chapel Basement and lock down there. Families may pick up students from the Rear Chapel Basement Entrance doors. If you have any questions regarding this or any part of our emergency plan, please do not hesitate to call 908-507-5793.

Custody

In cases where the custody of children has been restricted by the courts, a copy of the court document (referring to custody issues only), must be kept on file in the Religious Ed Office in order to carry out the provisions stated in the document. If the court document is amended or changed, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to give an updated copy to the Religious Ed Office.

Fee

The tuition, as determined by the Parish Finance Committee, is found on the yearly registration form. An additional fee is charged for children in a sacramental program. No child will be denied religious education due to finances. If there is financial hardship, parents/guardians should contact the Parish Catechetical Leader concerning this confidential matter.

Food Allergies

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform the Parish Catechetical Leader in writing of their child(ren)'s allergies on the registration form. Food allergies are a growing health concern for many children and adults as well. We must not endanger the life of any child and ensure that children with food allergies can safely participate in parish activities. Consequently: No food and drink of any kind are permitted during parish religious education programs.

Health

When children have health issues that require medication and/or medical treatment, parents must inform the Parish Catechetical Leader in writing. Releases, waiver of liability and agreement to hold harmless forms are to be signed by the parents and will be kept on file in the Office. In case of medical emergency, parents will be immediately contacted.

Illegal Substances/Weapons

Drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, tobacco, or weapons of any kind are not permitted on parish premises. If a student is found to be in possession, the student will be detained until the police are notified.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are issued twice a year – January and May. The areas of evaluation include attendance, behavior, content understanding, knowledge, and participation. All parents should review these reports, however, 7th & 8th grades require parent signature and return to the Religious Ed Office.

Transfer Policy

Parents should inform the Religious Ed Office before transferring their children to another program (because of moving or for any other reason). A copy of the student's Permanent Record Card will be sent to the new parish program. The original record card will be kept in the office files.

Safety Matters

Visitors during the religious education sessions must report immediately to the Director's office. No one may enter a classroom without the express permission of the Director. Anyone who wishes to visit a class during the session should make prior arrangements.

Covid-19 Precautions

- Parents or guardians must monitor their child(ren) 's health by taking his/her/their temperature(s) before arriving at religious formation. **The Religious Ed staff will use a laser thermometer for temperature checks when students arrive.**
- A student may not attend religious formation if he or she is: a. Has a temperature of 100.4 or higher b. Is experiencing symptoms of chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.
- A parent or guardian must inform the parish catechetical leader if their child has tested positive for COVID-19 and has attended a religious formation class within the past 14 days.
- Parents will be notified by the parish catechetical leader, in accord with the directives of the local county health department, when their child has had exposure to COVID-19.
- **Social Distancing** - Social distancing is a practice that increases the space between people to lessen exposure to COVID-19. Social distancing in the classroom, hallways, and other common areas is the rule wherever children gather. The State of New Jersey recommends a 6 feet distance wherever possible. A minimum of 3 feet rule is in place when seated in a classroom and wearing a mask.
- **Wearing of Masks or Face Shields** - According to the CDC's directives and the Diocese of Metuchen, the wearing of masks is mandatory by all staff and students, especially when: 1. Arriving and waiting to be escorted to a classroom. 2. When a student is not in his or her assigned seat, hallway, bathrooms, and classrooms. 3. During dismissal procedures until the child has completely exited the building and is more than 6 feet from other people. 4. While seated if the distance between desks is less than 6 feet.
- **Cleaning, Disinfecting and Sanitizing** - In keeping with CDC guidelines, areas and features of high use will be disinfected frequently – these include, but are not limited to, doorknobs, light switches, bathrooms, handrails, counters, tables, desks, etc. These surfaces will be wiped down between each Religious Ed session.
- **Hand sanitizer** - Hand sanitizer will be available in both Chapel Classrooms. Students may bring their own hand sanitizer. Students will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before each class begins.
- **Bathrooms** - Two single use bathrooms are available for use in the basement. Students in the upstairs Chapel will be escorted to the bathroom via the outside of the building.

Bathrooms will be wiped down after each use. Students are encouraged to use the bathroom at home before they arrive to class.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Reconciliation:

A two year preparation is required beginning in Grade 1. Immediate preparation for this sacrament is provided in the 2nd Grade curriculum. The first semester of Grade 2 focuses on the immediate preparation for celebrating this sacrament. Parents are invited to the Prayer Service. Dates will be emailed. Reinforcement and development of the child's understanding and appreciation of this sacrament are provided in each subsequent grade. Special lessons are given prior to an opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation once each year. It is expected that parents are fostering an appreciation for confession by not only their own example, but also by bringing their child to Saturday confession at least twice a year, especially in Lent and Advent.

Eucharist:

A two year preparation is required beginning in Grade 1. Immediate preparation for this sacrament is provided in the 2nd Grade curriculum. The second semester of Grade 2 is devoted to a study of the sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood and to the celebration of the Mass. First Eucharist is celebrated after Easter. First Penance and First Eucharist Sessions concerning the Sacrament of Penance and Eucharist are held for the parents of those children preparing for the sacraments. A Mini-Retreat is conducted for the children of the First Eucharist classes. Parental involvement is required.

Confirmation:

A two year preparation is required beginning in Grade 7. Immediate preparation for this sacrament is provided in the Grade 8 curriculum. The preparation program combines classroom instruction with service opportunities and spiritual experiences. Celebration of the sacrament usually takes place in the fall of the freshman year of high school.

Sessions for Confirmation preparation involve both candidates and parents. Requirements of the Program are explained to the students at the beginning of their seventh and eighth grade Religious Education sessions. Participation in all sessions is expected of the candidate.

The Confirmation Sponsor is encouraged to help the candidate in preparation for reception of the Sacrament. Sponsor must be a practicing confirmed Catholic in good standing, age 14 or older.

A Retreat is an essential component of the preparation program. Parish clergy may interview candidates prior to Confirmation. Candidates are expected to receive a passing grade of at least 80 on the final exam. Practice for Confirmation will be scheduled a few days before the

ceremony. Candidates are expected to attend. Service hours are an essential element of the Confirmation Program.

NOTE: *Parents are called to be models of living faith for their children. Programs for parents are a vital component of the sacramental preparation of children for the reception of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. Participation in sacramental preparation sessions is mandatory.*

2020-2021

STATEMENT OF COOPERATION

All parents/guardians are asked to sign a Statement of Cooperation after reading through the contents of this Handbook. This will signify that you agree with the policies as stated in this handbook and that you promise your active cooperation with the process of faith formation as offered by the OLPH Parish Religious Education Program. Please, sign, date and return to the Religious Education Office by October 30, 2020

_____ Please Print Last Name

_____ Signature

_____ Date

OLPH Religious Education 30 Seney Drive, Bernardsville, NJ 07924