

# ***HOLY TRINITY PARISH***

## ***Religious Education***



# ***2021-2022 PARENT HANDBOOK***

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Spring 2021

Dear Holy Trinity Religious Education Parents,

At your child's baptism the priest or deacon offered this prayer for you as fathers and mothers:

*"God is the giver of all life, human and divine. May He bless the fathers of these children. With their wives they will be the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. May they also be the best teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

We welcome the opportunity to assist you in fulfilling your primary obligation to teach your children to walk in the ways of faith. This can only be done when each family places Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of its life through Sunday worship, family prayer and a daily living out of the Christian message. *Regular attendance at Sunday Mass with your children is an essential part of their faith formation.*

We look forward to a genuine cooperation with you in communicating Catholic Christian values to your children. Drawing fully from sacred Scripture and Church teachings, we can work together to lay a solid foundation for our children, who need to assimilate these values so very much in today's secularized and ever-changing world.

Please take your time to read this parent handbook. At the end is a sign-off form. Please complete and sign the form. Then submit the completed form with your child's registration paperwork.

May God guide and bless us in the work of Religious Education which we carry on in His name.

*Father Anthony Mizzi-Gili, Jr., Pastor, Church of the Holy Trinity*

*Deacon Shaun R. Boyce, Sr., Director of Parish Life, Church of the Holy Trinity*

## **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:**

### **Living a Christian Life**

Living a Catholic life is not accomplished by simply attending Mass or religious education classes. It is to be witnessed everyday by what we say and do at home, work, school and play.

### **Mass Attendance**

An integral part of our religious education program is that the children are expected to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation<sup>1</sup> and participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church by going to Confession often. Learning in class can be truly effective only when one meets the Lord sacramentally at the altar.

## **THE PARENT'S ROLE:**

The parent<sup>2</sup> has the primary and sacred responsibility to educate children in the Catholic faith. The Holy Trinity Parish Religious Education Program is established to assist parents and families in fulfilling this responsibility.

It is essential to the child's growth and development in the Catholic faith that the parents live a life of faith at home. The effectiveness of the religious education process radically depends upon this. The child learns in religious education that celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday in the local parish as a community of faith is essential to being a Catholic. ***Therefore, the child is expected to attend the weekly Sunday or Saturday evening liturgy supported by his/her parents.***

It is obvious that the values of parents become the values of the child. The child receives a "mixed message" which causes inner conflict when what is taught in Religious Education classes is not experienced by the child in his/her family.

The Director of Parish Life ("Director") should be informed by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent as these pertain to the child's participation in and/or release from the program.

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1 Mary the Mother of God (Jan. 1), Ascension (40 days after Easter), Assumption (Aug. 15), All Saints (Nov. 1), Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), Christmas (Dec. 25).

2 When the word "parent" is used in this document, it also includes anyone who may act as a child's legal guardian, whether grandparent, aunt, uncle, godparent, etc.

### **THE CHILD'S ROLE:**

Children enrolled in the religious education must attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation, regular participation in the Rite of Reconciliation (those who have been properly prepared), and living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus Christ, all contribute to one's spirituality. Children are also expected to follow the laws, norms and guidelines that instruct Catholics about how to love God and neighbor (i.e., The Ten Commandments, Corporal Works of Mercy, The Beatitudes, Spiritual Works of Mercy and the Laws of the Church).

While attending religious education classes, children are expected to arrive on time for class, be prepared for classroom instruction, respectfully participate in class discussions and activities, satisfactorily complete assignments, know their prayers, complete homework and doing their very best.

### **THE DIRECTOR OF PARISH LIFE'S ROLE:**

The Director of Parish Life at Holy Trinity Parish is delegated by the Pastor to be responsible for the development, implementation and administration of the parish catechetical program, in accordance with the *Guidelines of the Archdiocese of New York*. His/her responsibilities include being a resource person for parents, catechists and other adults of the parish; implementing the principles of civil law concerning the safety of the children in accordance with the Archdiocesan Safety Guidelines and providing catechesis (i.e., religious education) for all children of the parish, including those who have physical, emotional, mental or learning disabilities.

### **THE CATECHIST'S ROLE:**

The catechist is a person of faith who has the task of fostering an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in faith education among believers. The primary mission of catechists is to communicate God's love to those entrusted to their care, by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished through the fourfold activities of message, community, worship and service. The tasks of the catechist are: to help individuals grow in their personal faith & spirituality; to assist individuals as they are initiated into the faith community and its life, worship, symbols and practices; to attend catechist formation classes leading toward personal fulfillment and certification; and to pass on a world view, a set of shared meanings and values that are Catholic and Christian.

## **OVERVIEW, ADMISSIONS & REGISTRATION:**

### **The Parish Based Religious Education Program: An Eight-Year Sequential Program**

The Holy Trinity Religious Education Program offers instruction to children who attend public or private (non-parochial) school whose families are enrolled parishioners at Holy Trinity Parish. **An eight-year sequence of formation is offered; all Catholic children of the parish are expected to participate.** The religious education program is not simply a convenience for the reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation, Reconciliation and Eucharist. It is an ongoing, continuing development of the Christian personality that offers an opportunity for catechists and children to meet regularly in order to learn about the Catholic Christian faith. Sacraments are not isolated events, but an integral part of the Christian life. Each level/grade in religious education adds to the development of the Christian life. Our aim is to provide a loving and caring Christian atmosphere in which our parish youth can grow in sound Christ-like attitudes and values.

### **The Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines**

The *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis for Grades 1 through 6 and Grades 7 and 8* ensure a uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level and outline the content of the catechesis each child is taught at every grade level. These Guidelines are to be found posted on the parish website.

### **Special Religious Education**

Special religious education is a ministry that responds to the religious and spiritual needs of persons with a physical, mental, or emotional disability that impairs their functioning in a regular classroom. Because of that disability, the child may require individualized instruction in a small group, or in a one-on-one setting. If assistance is available, they may be mainstreamed into the regular catechetical program. In consultation with the parent, the Director will appropriately place each child in a program that will address his/her special needs and encourage further spiritual growth.

### **Registration for Religious Education**

Families register place each spring and summer for classes that begin in September; **registration does not carry over from one year to the next, so families must re-register their children each year.** All children regardless of race, sex, or national origin will be admitted to the parish program. Information pertaining to dates and time of registration will be sent published in the parish bulletin.

### **Registration Procedures for Children Presently Attending Classes**

- Completion of a Religious Education registration form listing each child you desire to enroll in the program, annually;
- Completion of a student emergency card for each child enrolled in the program (due with registration form);
- Payment of the registration/tuition fee; speak with the Director if you have questions concerning the fee or payment of it.

### **Registration Procedures for children who are New to the Program**

- Complete steps 1-4 outlined above.
- Speak with the Director about any special needs the child has which could affect the child's learning and well-being in the Religious Education sessions;
- Submit (upon entrance) original Baptismal certificate (to be copied by the office);
- Submit any previous records if the child attended a Religious Education Program in a different parish or diocese.

### **Tuition & Other Costs**

For the 2021-2022 catechetical year, the basic tuition for one child (1- 8) is \$175; for two children the basic tuition is \$250 and for three or more children the basic tuition is \$300.

***Registration forms submitted before June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 receive a \$25 deduction off the basic tuition rate.***

- A child's textbook is included in the registration fee. If lost or misplaced, a fee of \$25.00 will be charged for a new book.

### **Class Placement**

Children are expected to attend Religious Education classes *continuously* from grade 1 through 8. ***In almost all cases, children must have completed two years of the Religious Education program and received the sacrament of Reconciliation in order to receive the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.***

A parent/guardian who would like to enroll an older child in the program who has had no previous Religious Education classes should plan to meet with the Director so that placement can be determined. This is especially important if the parent/guardian would like the child to eventually prepare to receive one or more of the Sacraments.

Any child who leaves the program after receiving First Communion will (upon reentering the program) be required to complete the grade level(s) of curriculum missed. The placement of the child is determined by the Director after consultation with the pastor and the parent.

### **Transfer/Early Withdrawal**

If a child leaves the program before the completion of the catechetical year or at the end of the catechetical year, please advise the Director.

### **ATTENDANCE, LATENESS, ABSENCES:**

#### **Arrival Procedures**

Classes are held on Sunday mornings at 8:15 am and end at 9:45am, and Wednesdays at 4:30 PM and end at 6:00 pm. Children should be dropped off at the school building by way of the doors near the Religious Education and exit from the same. Parents are not to enter the building. **Children are expected to be on time, yet should arrive at the building for classes no earlier than ten (10) minutes before class is scheduled to begin – as we cannot provide supervision prior to that time.** Upon entering the building for class, children should wait outside their classroom in the school hallway until the teacher arrives, as no children are allowed inside a classroom without a teacher.

#### **Dismissal Procedures**

Parents should arrive on time for dismissal as we are not able to provide supervision for more than a few minutes after the dismissal time specified on the calendar. Before a child will be allowed to leave the building, he/she must be received by an adult who has been given permission to pick them up. At the end of the Religious Education session every child is released to the care of their parent or parent substitute. *The parent substitute must be the person designated in writing at the beginning of our sessions.* If someone other than the parent or parent substitute is to pick up the child on a given day, this change should be given in writing.

The following rules apply:

- A child will not be released to anyone under age 18.
- A child will not be released to someone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- The staff of the religious education program are not allowed to drive or walk children home.

Unsupervised children are not permitted on the grounds at any time. Children should report to the religious education office in the unforeseen event of not being picked up.

**PLEASE NOTE: If a child must be dismissed from class early, the office must be notified beforehand at drop off and the catechist should receive a note regarding the early pick up for that particular class session.**

### **Absenteeism**

- Your child's regular attendance at religious education classes is very important. ***These 30 classes should take top priority over all other programs and activities.***
- Several absences (3 or more) will necessitate a conference between the Director and the parent.
- Excessive absences may result in the repetition of the grade level.
- In the case of a long-term illness *confirmed by a doctor's report*, the Director and parent should make arrangements for religious education at home
- When a child has to be absent from a program session, the parent is to give the Religious Education Office notification before the Religious Education classes begin.

### **Lateness**

Punctuality is essential. Children who arrive late not only miss important information but also disrupt the entire religious education session. The child should arrive 10-15 minutes before the program begins.

If the child arrives late, he/she reports to the religious education office and from there will be brought to the session.

If the child arrives late for the religious education session more than 3 times during the year, this will result in required attendance at additional sessions to make-up material missed. If the child has excessive lateness's, it can result in repeating the year. These make-up sessions will be determined by the Director.

If a child enters the school building for religious education classes *after* the scheduled time, he/she must see the attendance clerk in the religious education office and sign in before proceeding to the classroom.

### **Early Dismissal of an Individual**

Early dismissals must be kept to a minimum. If your child needs to be dismissed early, the request for this early dismissal should be given to the Director in writing by the parent prior to the scheduled session. This request should include the following:

- name of the person picking up the child;
- designated date and time;
- a reason for the early dismissal;
- the parent's signature

The parent must come to the Religious Education office to pick up the child. An appropriate adult will go to the session and walk the child out to meet the parent. For security reasons, the parent may not go directly to the session area.

**REPETITION OF A GRADE LEVEL:**

Repetition of Grade Level means that the child must repeat the grade level or the year's curriculum. Great care should be taken in the home as well as in the program to help the child realize that repetition of the year's curriculum is not a punishment but rather a means to help the child be as successful as possible.

The reasons for repetition of grade level are as follows:

1. Excessive absence: after 3 absences the parent will receive an official notification of the child's absences and a request for a parent conference. If the absences continue beyond 5, this is grounds for retention. (See also section on "Absenteeism.")
2. Poor performance: if the child does poorly when assessed on the content of the textbook and the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis*, remedial work will be required and organized by the Director. If the remedial work is not sufficient to enable the child to grasp the content, repetition of the grade level may be the best solution.
3. Excessive lateness: after 3 occurrences of late arrival, the parent will receive an official notification and a request for a parent conference. If the late arrivals continue beyond 6 occurrences, this is grounds for repetition of grade level.

**PLEASE GO TO NEXT PAGE→**

### **CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE:**

Every child who participates in the religious education program is expected to cooperate in the maintenance of the building where classes are held, as well as its grounds. Disruptions, disrespect, defacing or damaging property will not be tolerated. The behavior expected from each child is a combination of common courtesy and safety considerations.

### **Dress Code**

The following forms of dress are **prohibited** while attending religious education classes:

- revealing clothing;
- torn clothing;
- obscene or inappropriate messages on clothing;
- pajama tops or bottoms;
- shoes with cleats or rollers;
- “flip flops”;
- hats.

### **Electronic Devices**

Electronic devices are not allowed to be used in the classrooms unless authorized by the catechist. If found to be in use during instruction time, they will be confiscated and held in the Religious Education office until claimed by the child’s parent. (*Cell phones must be silenced and put away out of view when class is in session.*)

### **The Following Forms of Behavior are prohibited:**

- Disrespect or defiance of catechists or staff;
- Inappropriate interaction with other students;
- Harassment and intimidation of other children;
- Bullying/cyberbullying;
- Physical fighting;
- Use of profane words or gestures;
- Willful Refusal to complete assignments;
- Refusal to participate in classroom activities;
- Cheating on assignments/tests;
- Stealing other’s property (including school/program items);
- Possession of dangerous objects;
- Possession or use of tobacco or a controlled substance;
- Damage to property;
- Leaving the school building/church grounds premises during the class without permission;
- Habitual lateness and absenteeism;
- Intimidating fellow students;
- Eating while classes are in session (except for approved snacks)

### **Vandalism**

Willfully damage or destruction of property will not be tolerated. Vandalism must be paid for by the parent of the child involved. Accidental damage should be immediately reported to the Director.

### **Behavior Management**

Catechists use behavior management (or “discipline”) appropriate to an educational environment as a necessary means for the religious education program to accomplish its goals. The purpose of behavior management is to help the children develop self-control, self-respect, respect for others, and reverence for the Word of God which is being explained to them in these sessions.

Several infractions of the rules of conduct will result in a call by the Director to the child’s parent in which the Director will describe the situation and work out a solution with the parent. If the infractions continue, the Director will organize a conference with the parent, the Catechist, the Director and the Pastor.

The Religious Education Program reserves to the Director, under the authority of the Pastor, the right to remove a child from the group session, either temporarily or permanently if a child’s behavior is seriously inhibiting:

- children in the child’s group from learning;
- the safety or well-being of others in the group.

### **Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

Bullying includes but is not limited to: threatening physical harm, verbal abuse, intimidation, cyber-bullying. The Archdiocesan policy against bullying is followed. This policy states:

*A safe and civil environment is necessary for children to learn and achieve Christian value. Harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying (using technology to bully such as but not limited to: posting an inappropriate picture of a child on the Internet) and other violent behaviors will not be tolerated in a Religious Education Program environment. Any child who engages in this behavior may be asked to leave the religious education environment if this is seen to be in the best interest of the rest of the religious education community.*

## **MEDICATION AND MEDICAL EMERGENCY:**

### **Medication**

No medication of any kind (whether prescription or over-the-counter) will be administered to any child during a religious education program session. In the event that a child has a condition for which emergency medication may be necessary, the parent must provide a written request and directives to the Religious Education Director.

Any emergency medication/medical device to be administered during the program according to the above directives must be brought by the parent to the Religious Education Office and should be administered there.

### **Medical Condition of Child**

The parent should inform the Director about any child who has special medication needs, a medical condition which could flare up in the session, or a medical condition which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g., allergies, asthma, auditory or visual impairment, possibility of seizures, learning disability, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, need for the epi-pen). This information is strictly confidential and will be used with the utmost discretion. The Director will ensure that the Catechist is informed.

A course of action in case of a flare-up is determined by the parent at the time of registration and put in writing.

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION:**

Christian Initiation is celebrated in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Through these visible actions a young person is incorporated into the Church and shares its mission in the world. Full initiation into the Church occurs in stages.

Sacramental catechesis has traditionally been of two kinds: preparation for the initial celebration of the sacraments and continued enrichment following their first reception. Requirements for the reception of First Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation are determined by Canon Law according to the following:

- Age of reason (to be able to distinguish right from wrong);
- Proper knowledge of the sacraments;
- Emotional and spiritual preparation;
- Approval by parent, catechist, Director and Pastor.

The policy of Holy Trinity Parish is that a young (baptized) person who plans to receive the sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion must have completed one full year of the catechetical program (not counting kindergarten) and be currently enrolled in his/her second year before preparation begins. Confirmation is received *after* the completion of the eighth-year curriculum, when the child has fulfilled all grade level requirements.

### **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation reminds us that Jesus began His work on earth by calling people to repentance and faith: “Reform your lives and believe in the gospel.” (*Mark 1:15*). The sacrament of God’s love and forgiveness continues His work of forgiving and reconciling. Catechesis of children for Reconciliation must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances of individuals and seeks to:

- make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child’s life;
- help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrong doing, and turn to Jesus and the Church for forgiveness;
- encourage the child to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving;
- encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.

The first reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is usually celebrated in the early spring. All children preparing to receive their First Eucharist must first be instructed and prepared to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Preparation of children for Reconciliation starts in the second-grade level and is a joint effort between parent and catechist. Instruction includes the second-grade curriculum covered weekly in class. There is also a focus on the sacrament of Reconciliation that helps children learn what it means to share Jesus’ gift of Himself, to know they are forgiven, and to understand that they belong to the community of Jesus’ friends – the Church.

### ***Responsibilities of Parents as their Child prepares for Reconciliation:***

The example set by parents is of the utmost importance. Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life of the church. Parents are expected to:

- serve as models for their children by being moral Christians;
- receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with their families;
- help children in forming a good conscience and a Christian code of morality;
- attend parent sessions and participate in activities and prayer services that are planned to help their child prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- take time with their child to talk about Reconciliation, to read Bible stories and to pray together;
- determine their child’s readiness for Reconciliation.

### **The Sacrament of the Holy Communion**

The Eucharist is the heart of Christian life. Providing instruction on the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist helps children understand that the celebration of the Eucharist forms and nourishes the faithful with Jesus, the Bread of Life.

Catechesis for children seeks to strengthen their awareness of the Father’s love, of the call to participate in Christ’s sacrifice, and of the gift of the Spirit. Children are taught that the Holy Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Christ, and what appears to be bread and wine are actually Jesus’ Body and Blood. They learn that the Eucharist is both a meal and sacrifice and that it is a memorial of the Last Supper.

The sacrament of the Holy Communion is celebrated each /May. All children preparing to receive their First Eucharist must have already received the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Communion. Catechesis (instruction) aims to help parents grow in understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and participate readily in catechizing their children.

Catechesis for First Communion is conducted separately from catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, since each sacrament requires its own concentrated preparation. Beginning at the second-grade level, preparation for First Communion is a joint effort between parents and catechists as described below:

- The second-grade curriculum is covered weekly in class by the catechist and followed up at home by the parent;
- The First Communion program helps explain the Eucharist to children, familiarize them with the main events of Jesus' life, help them to participate more meaningfully in the action of Mass, and receive Christ's body and blood in communion in an informed and reverent manner;
- The children learn that they may receive Holy Communion in the hand, or on the tongue and under both species. Catechesis includes making the children aware of the Church's requirements for fasting (no food or drink except water or medicine for one hour before receiving Communion).

***Responsibilities of Parents as their Child prepares for First Eucharist:***

Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life of the church. Parents are also expected to:

- regularly attend mass with their children;
- serve as models for their children by being moral Christians;
- participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Sunday Mass with their families;

***Responsibilities of Parents (Continued):***

- nurture their child in faith;
- attend scheduled parent sessions and participate in any activities and prayer services that are planned to help their child prepare for this important sacrament of Holy Eucharist;
- take time to talk with their first communicant about the Eucharist, to read Bible stories and to pray together;
- determine their child's readiness for the Eucharist.

***The Sacrament of Confirmation***

Holy Confirmation is intimately related to the other sacraments of initiation, Baptism and the Eucharist. Christians are reborn in Baptism, strengthened by Confirmation, and sustained by the food of the Eucharist. In Confirmation young people are signed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. They become more perfect images of the Lord Jesus as Confirmation confers grace upon them and renews and strengthens their baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and work eagerly for the building up of His Body, the Church.

As the primary educators of their children, parents along with sponsors are to be intimately involved in catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, enabling them to set a better example for their children or godchildren.

**Components of the Confirmation Program:**

- Regular attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation
- Fulfilling the Faith Formation class requirements
- Proper preparation for class instruction and completed assignments
- Consider a Confirmation Name
- Christian Community Service
- Sponsor certificates
- Candidate demonstrates an adequate grasp of the content of the Catholic faith
- Reception of the sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation (we suggest three times a year)
- Living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus
- Participation in a Confirmation retreat

***Responsibilities of Parents as their Child prepares for Confirmation:***

Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life of the Church. Parents are also expected to:

- Regularly attend mass on Sundays and Holy days;
- Serve as models for their children by being committed Christians;
- Worship regularly with their families and utilize the sacrament of Reconciliation;
- share their faith with their children both in word and action;
- encourage their child to reflect on and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation;
- attend all scheduled parent sessions and participate in any activities and prayer services that may be planned to assist their son/daughter in preparing for and freely requesting the sacrament of Confirmation;
- assist their child with the immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, through prayer, study, and Christian service;
- stress the initiation aspect of the sacrament by encouraging their son/daughter to continue help their son/daughter come to an understanding that the Confirmation Service Project is the beginning of a life committed to Christian service

**Preparation for Sacraments for Children Who Have Disabilities:**

The parish also offers sacramental preparation for children with disabilities. The parent should call the Religious Education office for more information.

**INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDELINES AND CURRICULUM:****Archdiocesan Guidelines**

Holy Trinity's Faith Religious Education Program meets all of the requirements of the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York. The Archdiocese has published *Guidelines for Catechesis for Grades 1-6 and Grades 7 & 8* which ensure a clear and uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level

### Catechesis

The Religious Education program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their children in the faith. While it can never replace parents, our Religious Education program complements parents as they carry out their responsibilities. “Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.” (*National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States.*)

In addition to enlightening the children of the parish in the doctrines and tenets of our faith, our Religious Education program welcomes the opportunity to assist parents in teaching their children to walk along the path of faith. Opportunities for adult faith formation are offered at the parish, online, in neighboring parishes, and throughout the Archdiocese. These classes for adults provide instruction in Scripture and in Catholic doctrine that help parents place Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of their lives. In participating in these opportunities, parents make their professions of belief meaningful and they nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith.

## **THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM: “PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN”**

Our Catholic tradition has always affirmed the dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God. Every person with whom we come into contact deserves to be seen by us as through the eyes of God. We know that ministry with children and youth, in particular, is a sacred trust. We at Holy Trinity Parish are committed to preserve, at all times and in all places, this sacred trust which is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ.

In 2002, the United States Bishops approved *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in an effort to protect children and youth from sexual abuse at all levels of church life and to restore trust in a Church scarred by the scandal of clergy sexual abuse. Article 12 of the charter directs all dioceses to create programs and processes to teach children and youth about sexual abuse and its prevention. In the Archdiocese of New York, lessons on sexual abuse awareness for children in the parish Religious Education programs and schools are provided each year.

### **Safe Environment Training (and Possibility for Parent Opt-Out)**

Each year, the Religious Education Program provides to each child the curriculum entitled “Right, Safe, and Good Relationships” following the lesson plans provided by the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office. (See Safe Environment Web site: *Children’s Curriculum*.) Parents have the option to exempt their child from any session of the Safe Environment Training. If the parent chooses to do so, they must complete and sign the *Parent Opt-Out Form* which they secure from the Religious Education Office.

### **Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy**

The Archdiocese of New York and Holy Trinity parish are committed to ensuring the personal safety of all children in the Religious Education program. Therefore, the parish and its Religious Education program follow all policies, directives and requirements of the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office. These policies and programs are to be found on the Safe Environment web page which can be accessed through the Archdiocesan web **site** ([www.archny.org/safe-environment-program](http://www.archny.org/safe-environment-program)) and the Catechetical Office web site ([nyfaithformation.org](http://nyfaithformation.org)).

### **Visits to the Religious Education Program by Unauthorized Persons**

For security reasons, no unauthorized persons are allowed in the school building while the Religious Education sessions are taking place (unless they are allowed in specifically by the Religious Education Office). Parents and other family members must wait outside the building door until the program sessions are completed and the children are dismissed to their care. Please see the subsequent section “Class Visits by Parents for more information on how parents may attend a class by following proper protocol.

We thank you for your support and interest as we partner to give our children the safest possible environment to grow in faith, in our parish, school and in our homes.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE:**

### **Testing**

Since there is some formal testing at each grade level, a certain amount of knowledge will be expected to be retained by each child who enrolls in the program. Children are expected to share lessons at home each week. They can be tested with written and/or oral tests. If a child does not fulfill grade level requirements, a meeting will be arranged with the parents, the catechist, and the Director of Parish Life to discuss the situation. The Director will decide if the child needs to repeat the year.

### **Progress Reports**

The religious education of the child takes place in the home, in church, and in the class setting. Progress Reports for the religious Education program only reflect classroom performance (participation and testing) and some occasional homework. They are issued twice yearly to indicate the strengths and weaknesses that the children are demonstrating.

### **Textbooks/Materials**

The Religious Education program provides materials to all children enrolled in class sessions for grades 1 through 8. These are distributed by the catechist to the children. If a book is lost, stolen, or damaged, a new one must be purchased immediately.

## **COMMUNICATIONS:**

### **Calendar**

A calendar of all class dates, holidays, times of classes, dates and times for parent sessions and classes, retreats, and all events for sacramental programs will be given out at the beginning of the year and subsequently published on the website @:

[www.holytrinitypoughkeepsie.com](http://www.holytrinitypoughkeepsie.com) under the *Religious Education* section.

### **General Communications**

- Please be sure to read all notes sent home after class!
- **NOTE: EMAIL IS OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF COMMUNICATION**
- Consult the parish bulletin each week for relevant information.

### **EMERGENCY CANCELLATIONS:**

Inclement weather, especially that which occurs between the months of November and March, can have an impact on the religious education class schedule. Please become familiar with the following procedures which will be followed as we enter the winter months:

Whenever a decision is made to cancel, reschedule or delay classes or events pertaining to the program, the following will apply:

- **A message will be posted to the web site [WWW.CANCELLATIONS.COM](http://WWW.CANCELLATIONS.COM) at least 30 minutes prior to the start of a class session.** To access:
  1. Search for participating organizations in the 12603 zip code
  2. Click on the link for: **HOLY TRINITY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**  
(**DO NOT click on the link for Holy Trinity School!**)

### **PARENT/CATECHIST CONFERENCES:**

Parents are asked to introduce themselves to their child's catechist early in the school year and are invited to contact the catechist or the Director of Parish Life anytime during the year with questions they may have.

### **Class Visits by Parents**

Upon request, parents may visit their child's class. In the interest of child safety, maintaining safer spaces, and as a courtesy to the volunteer catechist, you must be aware of the steps listed below concerning class visits. Parents must:

- Speak with the office *before* the anticipated visit;
- Check in at the office *before* going to the classroom;
- Introduce themselves to the catechist and catechist assistant upon entering the classroom;
- Not read the newspaper, talk on a cell phone, or work on a computer or other electronic device during the class session;
- Submit to a background check and attend a *Safer Spaces* information/awareness session if the class visits begin to take place on a regular basis;
- The Director is solely responsible for making this determination.

### **PARENT SACRAMENTAL MEETING SESSIONS:**

The Director plans mandatory meetings with parents throughout the year for those who have children preparing for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

### **RIGHTS OF NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT:**

The Director should be informed *in writing* by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent to receive duplicate sets of progress reports, invitations to religious education events, notices, calendars, etc. as these pertain to the child's participation in the program. A copy of the appropriate section of the custody papers should be attached to the written statement.

## **SAFETY & OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION:**

### **Crisis Management Plan & Fire Drills**

A *Crisis Management Plan* will be followed in the unlikely event that, in the interest of safety, the children, catechists and other personnel must be relocated from the school building during class time. Parents will receive additional information under separate cover after classes begin in the fall.

*Fire drills* are held twice a year (Fall/Spring).

### **Emergency Information Form**

Each parent is required to complete an *Emergency form* for each child enrolled in the program. The information given is vital in case of a medical emergency. A parent's signature validates this form.

### **Field Trips**

If a field trip is planned, the *Parish-Sponsored Trip Form* must be completed by the parent of every minor who will participate. Telephone calls will not be accepted in lieu of written permission forms. Great care will be taken to ensure the safety of all children during the entire course of the trip as we provide for an adequate number of chaperones and proper insurance coverage. In the interest of the safety of the children, parents/guardians who accompany the class on a field trip may be asked to submit to a background check and attend a *Safer Spaces* information/awareness session. The Director will make this determination.

### **Transportation**

Parents will assume responsibility for the transportation of their children to and from the parish site where classes take place.

### **MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES (in case of accident or illness)**

- If a child incurs a relatively *minor injury* while attending the catechetical program, the following steps are taken:
  - The catechist reports the accident immediately to the Director;
  - If bleeding is involved, the procedure outlined under "Blood borne Pathogens" (found in the "Catechist Handbook") are followed;
  - the Director notifies the parent (if the parent cannot be reached, the Director follows the instructions on the Student Emergency form;
  - if there does appear to be injuries, a copy of the accident report should also be sent to the Archdiocesan Insurance Division;
  - the Director keeps a copy of the accident report on file in the Faith Formation office.

- In case of *serious accident or illness*:
  - The catechist immediately reports the accident to the Director and 911 is called;
  - the Director notifies the parent,
  - if the parent cannot be reached, the Director follows the instructions on the Student Emergency form;
  - the Director notifies the Archdiocesan Insurance Division so that they will be prepared in the event that an accident or illness gives rise to a claim;
  - the Director completes the accident form, keeps a copy in the file, and sends copies to: Archdiocesan Insurance Division, 1011 First Avenue, NY, NY 10022.

### **Medical Condition of a Child**

The parent *must* inform the Director about any medical condition their child has which could flare up during a session (e.g., allergies, asthma, the possibility of seizures, etc.) or if the child has a condition which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g., hyperactivity, ADD, new medication plan, other learning disability, etc.) This confidential information is communicated to the catechist by the Director.

### **Visitors**

Due to insurance issues, children not registered in the Office of Religious Education office are not permitted in the classrooms or building during class time. In case of a necessity, a visitor should report to the office and speak with the Director.

### **Valuables**

The catechetical staff cannot be responsible for valuables which children bring to class. It is recommended that all valuables be left at home.

### **Lost & Found**

Any clothing, money, jewelry or other articles of value that are turned in may be claimed at the Religious Education Office.

### **SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ... Parent Facts<sup>3</sup>:**

Children are gifts from God to loving, caring families. In order to assist you as the primary educators of your children, we have listed below some suggestions to ensure their safety. Always keep **communication** open between you and your children. Encourage them to speak about their day in school and after school activities. Always listen respectfully and try not to react with emotion if you hear something that shocks or surprises you. Be ready to discuss, advise, even admonish, in a calm and loving way. Praise your child whenever possible and, if it is necessary, to be disapproving, choose your words carefully and be as kind as possible when speaking. Young children want to please their parents and can be emotionally hurt by critical comments. Always let the child know you love him or her; it is the behavior you may not like. The more open a parent can be and the more interested in the child's behavior, the easier it will be for the child to speak to the parent if serious problems occur. Be a good listener.

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3 Courtesy of the Department of Education, Archdiocese of New York.

All of us are children of God and, as such, must be treated with **dignity and respect**. Teach your child about this dignity and that no one should touch him or her in a disrespectful way. Children should know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touches. We teach primary grade children that the parts of our bodies which are covered by a bathing suit are private. It is advisable to use proper names for the parts of the body when you have this discussion with your child. Tell the child that no one is ever to touch those private parts of their bodies unless they're at the doctor's office for a check-up (and you are there with them) or when they might ask you for some assistance. Teach your children that they are very precious to God and if anyone tries to touch them in a private place, they're to say "NO" in a very loud voice and tell you immediately. Assure your children that if someone touches them, they are NOT at fault -- the adult who touched them is.

Sometimes adults who want to abuse children use **lures to entice them**. Here are some lures you can warn your children about:

- *Bad News Trick* ... The predator tells a child that something bad has happened (sickness or death of a parent, fire, etc.) and that the predator was asked to pick up the child and bring him/her home.
- *Bribe Trick* ... The predator offers something special that the child may want and then asks for sexual favors in return.
- *"Can I Help You?" Trick* ... The predator may give assistance to a child when needed or may offer to help the family of the child by offering rides or babysitting. This puts the predator in a position of trust for future abuse.
- *Drug and Alcohol Trick* ... Drugs and/or alcohol can be given to a child to make them easier to take.
- *Game Trick* ... Wrestling, tickling, accidental or deliberate contact with genitalia as part of the rules to a game played with a child.
- *"Help Me" Tricks* ... The predator may ask for help from a child such as asking for directions, finding a lost pet or carrying heavy packages.
- *Internet Trick* ... A predator will try to get personal information from the child. The predator may act as though he or she is the same age as the child in order to establish a friendship. He/she will often send the child sexual material and will try to set up a meeting with the child.
- *Position of Power or Authority Trick* ... A predator may be in a position of authority such as a coach, police officer, priest or teacher and uses this position to get children to be obedient to his/her request.
- *"You are Special" Trick* ... The predator gives special attention or favor to a child in order to gain trust for future sexual abuse.

Parent must take full responsibility for their **children's online computer use**. Sexual predators often use the internet to sexually exploit children and teens. School age children should be strictly monitored whenever they use the computer. Here are some commonsense rules to set for your children:

- Never give personal, identifying information to anyone online.
- Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, or make him/her feel uncomfortable.
- Not everything one reads online may be true. An offer that is "too good to be true" probably is.
- Make the use of the computer a family activity. The computer should not be in a child's bedroom but in the family room, living room or kitchen.
- Use a filter to deny access to certain types of material.
- Be suspicious if your child spends late night time on the computer or if he/she changes the screen quickly when you come near.

If a child is experiencing emotional difficulties, **his or her behavior often changes**. The garrulous child may become moody and reclusive; the quiet child may react with anger in fits of temper or voiced resentment. The vigilant parent must be sensitive to these changes in ordinary behavior. This is the time when communication is very important and a kind and caring approach is necessary. Make sure your children know your love for them and your interest in their concerns. Sometimes children will speak to a grandparent, aunt or uncle if they are reluctant to speak to parents. Remember, if you suspect that something is wrong, it probably is. Bring in your family support system to help in this situation.

**Always know where your children are and who is supervising them.** Be aware if an adult chaperone is paying attention to your child to the exclusion of others. Be concerned about the adults with whom your child communicates via e-mail or phone and if the adult seems to monopolize his/her time. Be prudent about excursions and outings which you allow your child to attend; try to serve as a chaperone yourself as often as possible. Let your children know that their friends are welcome in your home.

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**Parent Handbook 2021-2022**  
***Acknowledgement of Receipt of Parent Handbook***

I have read the above Parent Handbook and hereby agree to its policies.

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*RETURN THIS PAGE WITH YOUR REGISTRATION FORM**