



**Our Lady of the Valley Parish School of Religion
(PSR) Handbook**

Grades 4K-12th

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Message from Mark Woodard

Dear Parents,

As we begin another year in our Religious Education program, let us remember that above all things the formation of our children in the ways of the Catholic Faith is the primary purpose of our existence, both as a faith community and as parents. As we begin this faith journey, we pray that all will be guided by the Holy Spirit, and strengthened by the graces provided by Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I sincerely hope we can work together in a common cause to help your students become “Disciples of Jesus Christ”. We are all ministers of the Word, and teachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us never cease to thank God for the volunteer teachers and their helpers for the time and talents they share with your children throughout the year. I am sure that with your prayers and cooperation, and with the help of Our Blessed Mother Mary, our children will continue to grow ever stronger in their Faith. May God always bless you,

Mark

The Goal of the Catechesis: Faith

Catechesis is an esteemed term in Christian tradition. Its purpose is to make a person's faith become living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction. Faith grows and matures. Such faith is a grace, a gift of God. Growth in faith is intimately related to one's response to this gift. (National Catechetical Directory, 32, 33)

"We believe because we know"

Faith has several meanings. It is important to consider that faith is not primarily a set of basic truths, teachings or doctrines of the Church. Rather, faith is a personal giftedness that grows as a person trusts and depends upon God. Faith is a reality that grows out of and is experienced within the fabric of daily living. This kind of faith is what prompted "our father in faith", Abraham, to leave all that was familiar and enter into the unknown. He completely trusted in God's promise, for he, himself, was a part of that promise. Mary responded in faith and trust when she gave her "fiat", her "yes" to God's invitation to be the mother of the Messiah. At Gethsemani, as He contemplated what was ahead, Jesus placed Himself into the loving hands of His Father with whom and in whom He is one. Millions of Christians have continued to believe in

themselves because of God, and have continued to believe in God because of themselves.

Faith, as a profound experience, includes three aspects

Faith as experience- a deep trust in God who is intimately involved in our everyday experiences, and a commitment of God's ways

Faith as tradition- the cumulative insights of Christians before us whose experience of God in faith finds expression in doctrines, stories, rituals, prayers and example

Faith as process- relating significant segments of daily experience with related aspects of our Roman Catholic tradition: "Discipleship"

Role of Parents

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that parents are the "first teachers of the faith" to their children. It is our primary responsibility as parents to see that our children are taught the basic truths which Our Lord Jesus Christ handed on to his faithful followers, when He established his Church here on earth.

You are to be congratulated! The promises you made, on your child's behalf at Baptism are now being fulfilled, as they come each Sunday for further religious instruction here at Our Lady of the

Valley.

Please feel free to contact us at the Religious Education office with any concerns, questions, or for any needed help. We hope to assist you in recognizing the following areas of your responsibility:

- **Weekly Attendance at Mass**

Mass attendance is as important as your child(ren), attending Religious Ed. Classes. As Catholics we are called to participate in the Sunday Liturgy. If you are lax in your attendance when your children are young, it sets a bad example for them. We should strive to participate in the Sacramental life of the Church as often as possible, i.e. (Eucharist, Reconciliation).

- **Daily Prayer**

Children (and adults as well) need to understand the importance of talking to God several times a day through formal and informal modes of prayer.

Our Diocese instituted a program several years ago titled **HANDING ON THE FAITH**. You will be given a copy of this, to help your children prepare to learn the traditional beliefs of the Church. **These must be taught by you the parents.**

Do you encourage prayer at meals, at bedtime, upon rising? Do you pray together for those who are sick, who have died, who are in need? Do you help your child with his/her examination of conscience at bedtime? This is essential in helping your child with his/her loving and unloving

behavioral patterns. And will help them to form a good conscience and distinguish right from wrong.

- **A Family Faith Environment**

Children need to live in a home where faith is a “lived experience”. Do you have a family Bible in your home? Do you use it? Do you have any religious art displayed in your home? Do you have a Crucifix displayed in a prominent place in your home? Are your children familiar with the Rosary? How do you handle forgiveness in your home? Our children learn from example. Do the words “I’m sorry”, or “It’s okay, I forgive you”, flow easily from you as a parent? Does your language bespeak your Christian beliefs? Do you teach respect for others and for the property of others through your example?

- **Christian Behavior**

As Christian parents do we follow Christ’s commandment to **Love God and Love Our Neighbor?** A healthy respect for other’s feelings and needs frees young people to recognize their need to live in a community: a loving, caring and compassionate community. If a student displays a habitual discipline problem, is disruptive, or shows a continuing lack of respect, the Director of Religious Education, Mr. Mark Woodard, will take appropriate steps to correct this behavior.

- **Expectations**

In the short time that the catechist has to share his/her knowledge of the faith with your children, he/she has the right to expect attention and cooperation. Conversely, each student has the right to expect well – prepared catechists and cooperative classmates. We have approximately 27 one-hour class sessions scheduled for our students this year. This amounts to just a little over one day (27 hours) of formal Religious instruction out of 365 days a year. **As you can, see it is imperative that you as parents take an active role in helping your children grasp the basic teachings of the Church.**

So that we might spend this precious little time well,

ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED:

- **To be punctual**
- **To attend classes faithfully**
- **To be prepared with textbook, folder and Bible**
- **To have assignments completed on time**
- **To contribute to class spirit and atmosphere by attention, cooperation, participation, and courtesy.**
- **To observe school and classroom rules as set down by their Catechist.**

Policies

Classes begin promptly at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings. Your child should be in the classroom

approximately 5 minutes before time. This is for all students 4K --- 12th grade.

Absence

If your child must miss class, please call 991-5488 ext. 247 prior to the day of class. If the absence is due to a family emergency, (sickness, death etc.) the child will be given an excused absence. We also give excused absence for family events like Baptisms, Weddings, etc. Children with perfect attendance *or only one excused absence* during the year will be given an award at the end of the school year.

● **Religion Program Texts 4K-8th**

Our Lady of the Valley PSR, in compliance with our Bishop's direction, is using only approved material to instruct your children. The goals of this program are to provide young people with:

- A growing experience of and a reverence for Sacred Scripture.
- A faithful presentation of Catholic Church teachings
- Encouragement to make a lived response to the faith presented
- A meaningful participation in the communal, sacramental, and liturgical life of the Church
- A deepening experience of prayer
- A mastery of the Church's religious vocabulary

- An appreciation of the lives of the saints and of modern day Catholics.
- A stimulation of their religious imaginations resulting in more critical thinking skills and better preparation and ability to proclaim and live their faith.
- A religious literacy that will support an enthusiasm for growing up Catholic in today's world.

The grade content suggestions of the National Catechetical Directory are followed in this series in a Spiral Curriculum, stemming from five major topics. The Creed, the Sacraments, Sacred Scripture, the 10 Commandments and Prayer.

- Grades 9-12 will use the Text books selected by the Diocese along with other supplemental material chosen by the Catechist, and the DRE.

- **Sacramental Programs.**

Our sacramental programs are two year periods.

First Reconciliation, and First Communion begins in the first grade and continues throughout the second grade.

Confirmation preparation begins in the seventh grade and continues throughout the eighth grade, with special classes in the eighth grade year on the third Wednesday evenings of each month, beginning in September. All of the Confirmation

requirements will be given to the eighth graders at the beginning of the year.

All sacraments are celebrated within the parish community for children from public, parochial, and home school programs. Parents of these students are expected to attend meetings to help prepare the children for these sacraments. Please see the PSR class schedule for meeting times. Special sacramental preparation classes will be made available for those students who have not celebrated these sacraments on schedule, (First Reconciliation and First Eucharist by second grade), and Confirmation by the eighth grade.

- **Your help is appreciated!**

As you know, our program is dependent on volunteers. Teachers, helpers and Sacramental leaders, are always needed. If you feel called to participate in one of these positions, please contact me at 991-5488 ext. 247.

- **Catechists (Teachers)**

The value of our program depends on the preparation and lived faith experience of our Catechists. They are living witnesses of Faith in

action. Catechists are directed by the DRE regularly in order to discuss goals, methodology, resources and planning. We will give you all needed materials to make your ministry as easy as possible.

- **Catechists Aides (Helpers)**

An Aide is assigned to each Catechist. The responsibility of the aide is to take roll call, prepare supplies needed in classroom, help out with individual students and oversee the general behavior of the students during class time.

