

Parent Handbook

THE CATECHETICAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

"The Word became man and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14) Jesus is the Word, THE TRUTH. It is impossible to love that which is unknown. It is necessary to know the Truth, Jesus Christ, in order to come to the Father through love and service.

The Church is called to proclaim the Truth through its Teaching Ministry. "If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

The Catechetical Program in Epiphany Parish attempts to reach those children who attend public or private school. It offers a positive and favorable learning situation in the classroom where love of God and Church can be fostered and nourished and where the child can develop his life of faith as a member of the Body of Christ.

We offer a formal instruction program for children from Pre-School (3-year-olds) to High School concerned with the three-fold ministry of the Church: to form community, to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, and to carry out the role of service to the Church and to the whole human community.

Our program offers a life-centered approach to catechesis leading to an encounter with Christ, conversion of the heart, and experience of the Spirit in the community of the Church.

REGISTRATION

Any family residing within the boundaries of Epiphany Parish may register. Any family residing outside the parish limits who has been registered in Epiphany parish and who has attended church here and supported the community may register for religious education classes.

The fee, noted on the registration form, helps cover the cost of books, audio-visual materials, other educational materials, and overhead. There is an additional fee for sacramental years.

ATTENDANCE

Your child is expected to attend classes every week. Excessive absence in the First Communion or Confirmation classes will result in a year's delay of reception of these sacraments.

Learners with perfect attendance will receive special recognition at the end of the year. Sporting activities or dance classes, etc. while important, should not take priority over religious education. Please don't give mixed messages to your child by placing these activities before the message of Jesus.

REGULATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE CERTIFICATE

Perfect Attendance

- Child must register prior to the beginning of the program.
- Child may only be tardy once. Two tardies are considered one absence and this would disqualify the child from perfect attendance.

Good Attendance

- Child cannot be absent more than two times.
- Two tardies equal one absence.

Tardiness

Your child should arrive at least five minutes before gathering time so prayer begins promptly and classes continue without interruption. It is very distracting to others when someone is late. A casual attitude toward attendance or promptness speaks volumes to children.

CHURCH/HOME COOPERATION

You, the parents, have been entrusted with the mission of forming your children so they may welcome the Lord into their lives. Because you are the primary educators of your child in the faith, we invite you to participate actively in our Program through

- prayer with and for your children;
- attendance at parent meetings;
- utilizing parents' notes in your child's book and on line to reinforce the lesson your child has learned in class;
- direct involvement in the Program as catechists, helpers, etc.;
- **most important**, your participation with your family in the life of the parish community, especially Sunday Mass.

DISCIPLINE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment for Children and Vulnerable Adults

“Recognizing that each individual is created by God, the Archdiocese of Miami is committed to the safety and well-being of its children and vulnerable adults and implements procedures to minimize risk and barriers and to build and foster a culture of safe environment. The Archdiocese does not tolerate abuse or neglect of anyone. It will comply with all obligations of civil and canon law; it will promote healing where it is needed, provide education, training and guidance when it is appropriate, and endeavor to prevent any abuse of minors or vulnerable adults with firm justice and mercy towards all.” (*Archdiocesan Policy*)

Philosophy of Discipline

Discipline in our Religious Education Program is considered an aspect of moral guidance and not a form of punishment. The purpose of discipline is:

- To promote an environment conducive to learning.
- To promote character training.
- To guide students in the following of Christ and Gospel values.

Code of Conduct

The following rules are to be followed by everyone:

1. Treat yourself and all other persons with respect.
2. Respect school property and the property of all other persons.
3. Work hard in class.
4. Follow all group rules.
5. Do what you are supposed to do; be where you are supposed to be.

Room rules and procedures

The catechist establishes polices and procedures for the following:

- Restroom and Drinks before class
- Supplies to bring weekly
- Seating arrangement
- Classroom Rules

On the first day of class, clear and concise rules are discussed, practiced and reinforced with the Learners. Rules will be similar to the following:

- Show respect to others.
- Raise your hand and wait to be acknowledged before speaking or leaving your seat.
- Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- No gum chewing or eating in class.

No catechist is expected to manage a class in which even a single child is disruptive.

- For the sake of the catechist, the rest of the class, and the individual child, he/she will be sent to talk things over with the Director of Religious Education.
- The parents of a disruptive child will be asked to attend class with the child.

Restroom use

Learners ordinarily should not need to leave the room for restroom or water breaks. If there is urgent need, a buddy must accompany child. Another child must always accompany any learner leaving the classroom.

Articles Prohibited

Children may not bring articles to class that are not needed for class. For example, toys, balls, I-pods, homework, etc. may not be brought to class and will be kept in the office for pick up by parents.

Food in the classroom

Food treats are not allowed in the room. We are a peanut free program!

Student and Teacher Desks

Children are taught to respect the desks as well as all contents inside the desks. They may not use items in the desks because these are the personal property of the students and teachers who use the room during the regular school day. They may not write or draw on the desks, or deface them in any way. If this should occur, they will be expected to repair the damage and/or pay for the item.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

PRE- SCHOOL – Classes are held every Sunday during the 9:30 a.m. & 11:00 Masses, starting on August 30, 2015. Last day of classes is May 22, 2016.

WEDNESDAY – Classes for grades 6 and up from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., start on September 9th, 2015.
Last day of classes is May 25th, 2016.

WEDNESDAY – Classes for grades 1 - 5 from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., start on September 9th, 2015.
Last day of classes is May 25th, 2016.

There will be **NO CLASS** on the following Wednesdays:

- November 25th, 2015
- December 23rd, 2015
- December 30th, 2015
- March 23, 2016
- March 30, 2016

Communication with your child's catechist

We encourage you to communicate frequently with your Catechist, however, please keep in mind that it is better to email or call for an appointment. **Catechists and aides must concentrate on greeting children before class begins, and supervising children at dismissal.**

Dismissal

We request your cooperation in assuring a safe dismissal by following these simple steps:

- Please be prompt in picking up your child.
- Ask your child to wait in the covered walkway. This is the designated pick-up area.
- Drive to the end of the walkway so there can be several vehicles picking up children at the same time.
- Children WILL NOT be allowed to wait at any other location.

Communication

We will communicate via electronic mail any other information regarding our Religious Education program and your child. Please ensure we have your current email.

Requirements for Reception of the Sacraments

In accordance with **Archdiocesan** regulations, we offer the following guidelines:

RECONCILIATION AND FIRST COMMUNION

1. At least two consecutive years of preparation.
2. Child's regular attendance at classes. No excess absences.
3. Parent involvement with the child's religious education at home.
4. Basic understanding of, and a desire to receive, the sacraments.
5. Parent attendance at scheduled meetings.
6. Baptismal Certificate (copy)
7. **THE BEST AND MOST IMPORTANT PREPARATION IS THE PARENT'S EXAMPLE BY ATTENDING CHURCH WITH THE FAMILY ON SUNDAYS.**
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Celebrations of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (First Penance) and Eucharist (First Communion)

CONFIRMATION

1. Confirmation is conferred to candidates in 7th Grade and up.
2. Two and a half **consecutive** years of religious formation are required before the reception of the sacrament.
3. Regular attendance at class and participation in the Rites is also required.
4. Basic knowledge and understanding of Catholic doctrine and a willingness to accept the responsibilities of a confirmed Christian.
5. Attendance of parents and candidates at scheduled meetings.
6. Participation in a family service project and a Day of Reflection (retreat).
7. The best preparation is regular attendance at and participation in Sunday Masses.

Helpful WEBSITES

www.usccb.org/nab (Sunday Readings)

www.findinggod.com

www.loyolapress.com

