



OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA
Parish Youth Catechesis and
Sacramental Preparation Program



P A R E N T | S T U D E N T H A N D B O O K

50 ALEXANDER LANE
SOLOMONS MD, 20688



Dear OLSS Parish Families and Guardians,

Thank you for enrolling your children in our program of Parish Youth Catechesis and Sacramental Preparation. Catechesis, also called religious education, is an essential element of the mission of the Church and one of the most important works of the parish. This handbook is intended to give you a general understanding of the Parish's Youth Catechesis program and expectations. It is no way an attempt to be a detailed summary of the vast scope of our program.

The information found in this handbook will serve as a good reference for you throughout the year. If you have specific questions concerning the program, textbooks, sacramental preparation, or any other matter involving our Catholic faith, please contact the Director of Youth Catechesis and Sacramental Preparation at 410.326.3535x15.

The constant challenge facing parents is to make our Catholic faith relevant. Where Christ used to be the center of many families, He now must be "scheduled" in and usually ends up getting rescheduled when it comes to sports, camps, work, sleep overs and other activities.

Please consider taking advantage of our expanding adult education programs to help you in your primary task of educating your children in our Catholic Faith. Our program exists to help you as the primary catechist for your child(ren); you can only give what you already have, but we can always learn more. Part of the sacred duty of being a parent is teaching daughters and sons to know, love and serve God, and through our example, set them on the right path to live eternal life with our Father and Communion of saints.

This important program is dependent upon the selflessness of volunteer catechists who not only help shape the lives of young Catholics, but discover their own faith lives being shaped by our children. If you are looking for a way to give of your time, talent, or treasure, please call the Parish Office of Youth Catechesis and find out about the many ways you can help support this important ministry.

May God bless us in the work of Catholic Education which we carry on together in His name.

REGISTRATION POLICY AND AGREEMENT

Lady Star of the Sea wants everyone to participate in religious education. No child will be denied due to financial hardship. In the event that assistance is needed, please notify our Director of Youth Catechesis and Sacramental Preparation at youthministry@olss.org or call 410.326.3535x15

PARISH MEMBER REGISTRATION:

- Your Family **must** be **registered, active members** (regularly attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days) of Our Lady Star of the Sea.
- **School Students** desiring to receive the sacraments at Our Lady Star of the Sea, If not a member of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, family **must provide** a letter from Parish Priest and DRE, giving permission for your child to receive catechesis and/or the Sacraments.
- If you are registering a child for the first time you must provide a copy of a Baptismal Certificate from the Church where the Baptism was celebrated (including if your child was Baptized at OLSS).

NEW OR TRANSFERRING REGISTRATION

Students transferring from another parish's religious education program or from a Catholic school must supply the following when registering:

- Copy of baptismal certificate
- Dates of all sacraments received
- Documentation of prior religious education or Catholic school participation/completion (report card or letter of verification, including attendance and grades)

STUDENT RECORDS

RECORDS

The Office of Religious Education maintains a record for each student in the program. The record includes the dates of the sacraments received, Progress reports, attendance, and other important facts. For those students moving to another parish, parents may request a copy of their child's records.

PROGRAM COMMUNICATION

OLSS's Office of Religious Education and Sacramental Preparation uses Flocknote for homework, calendar changes and events throughout the year. Once registered, your child(-ren) will be added to distribution by grade and/or sacrament. If you are registered and not receiving weekly Flocknotes from our office, please contact us so we can make sure we have the correct email(s) information for your family. To ensure that you continue receiving messages, **pleases add mail@flocknote.com to your email contacts.**

While Flocknote is a transparent means of communication, there are functions that are not supported.

- User cannot attach documents.
- Staff and or catechists are not always notified on replies. Please email any medical, questions or comments to Joanne Pensenstadler at youthministry@olss.org.

WEATHER OR CLASS CANCELLATIONS

For weather purposes only, Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish Youth Catechesis program follows Calvert County.

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The Parish Youth Catechesis curriculum is comprised of Holy Mass, religious education classes, and Family/Whole Community Formation. Our Program recognizes that parents and guardians are the "first witnesses of the faith." Our catechists complement our parents and guardians and together, we will share and grow in our Catholic faith as a learned and lived experience.

MASS ATTENDANCE|REQUIREMENT: Nothing can or will ever replace the importance of attending The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The II Vatican Council proclaimed the Eucharist to be the "source and summit of the Christian life" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). Families attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Days of Obligation is the primary component of our Youth Catechesis | Religious Education Program. If, as the primary religious educator of your children, you choose not to attend Mass with your children, we must stress that there is a disconnect between your participation in our Religious Education Program and an essential element of our Catholic identity.

Regular attendance at Holy Mass is expected for all families enrolled in our parish Youth Catechesis and Sacramental Preparation programs. Classes have been conveniently scheduled between the 8:00am and 10:45am Mass on Sundays. Parish Youth Catechesis

Program (PCYP a.k.a Religious Education) classes are a reinforcement of weekly Mass attendance, not a substitution for Mass.

For First Holy Communion Year II, Confirmation I and II and RCIA Mass attendance/reflections submission is expected on a weekly basis.

FLIPPED-BASE METHODOLOGY | HOMEWORK:

Our Lady Star of the Sea PYCP and Sacramental Preparation programs have adapted a catechetical pedagogy of flipped classroom. This allows additional time for the catechist to reinforce, engage and discuss condensed material in class rather than spending the hour reading class material. Most families are familiar with flipped classroom using iPads, computers or smartphones. We apply this to sacramental classes that use books as well. The fundamentals of a flipped classroom include the following:

- Catechists will assign homework to the student on a regular basis. This gives our catechists better insight into what the students are comprehending and retaining.
- Students are responsible for completion of these assignments by the next scheduled class. Parents/guardians should review the assignments with their child. Turning in incomplete homework is not an automatic “pass”.
- Catechists review and discuss assignments while implementing material to reinforce lessons.

Our volunteer catechists are full time working parents as are many of our parents. Respecting their time and class material management, students are to turn in homework on time and complete with effort. This allows the catechist and the class to stay on a compressed schedule.

ACADEMICS:

A progress report will be issued in the month of January, further information will be given throughout the year. Students that are not completing assignments or participating in class risk grade advancement or delayed reception of the sacraments.

SACRAMENTAL POLICIES/REQUIREMENTS

Preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist (to include RCI-C) consists of two years of formal class instruction. Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation entails five years of formal instruction starting with fourth grade and ending with Confirmation II (*typically* ninth grade). The option for home study is not available for Confirmation I and II preparation.

In addition to the religious education curriculum, sacramental preparation includes parent meetings, retreats, and rehearsals. Attendance by one or more parents or sponsor (in the case of Confirmation) is mandatory and if missed, may result in delayed reception of the sacrament.

- CONFIRMATION DETAILS can be found on child's class page and [HERE](#), on Confirmation Requirements page
- The Bishop Office sets the date for the celebration of Confirmation and will be provided as soon as it is scheduled

PARENT SACRAMENTAL MEETINGS

Your attendance at the Parent Meetings will be mandatory. Sponsors/Godparents are highly encouraged to attend, BUT NOT REQUIRED.

Parents will be notified of the dates and times of these meetings.

The purpose of these Parent Meetings is:

- To help parents in their role as the primary educators of their children
- To share necessary practical information about the event
- To offer adults the opportunity to update and continue their own faith development.

CLASS ATTENDANCE | ABSENCES

It is very important in any educational program that students attend regularly to ensure their progress. Think of Parish Youth Catechesis Program (PYCP) as the primary extracurricular in your child's life. If parents prioritize other activities over PYCP, there is not much we can do to help you. Parent attitude towards valuing religious education makes an impact on your child.

The Archdiocesan of Washington's policy requires all parishes to provide a minimum of 32 hours of instruction for the school year. That is **less than a full week of school** spread out in 9 months.

- Students are to attend at least 90% of the classes.
- Sacramental Preparation students who miss three or more classes are at risk of reception of the sacrament being delayed.
- Parental cooperation is anticipated to ensure that absences are at a minimum, please **avoid scheduling conflicting appointments on scheduled classes**.
- While understood, participation in non-religious activities is also important for a child's social and physical well-being, these activities should NOT interfere with religion classes, their spiritual well-being.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL – CHILD SAFETY

To ensure your child's safety and to comply with safe environment guidelines, parents and/or guardians are asked to practice following guidelines for arrival and dismissal.

ARRIVAL: School Doors do not open until 9:10am. Parents/Guardians are asked to walk their child(ren) to main entry of the school and remain with them until they are physically in the school. This allows our volunteer catechists to arrive and set up classes. Our Lady Star of the Sea or the Archdiocese is not responsible for students whose parents have not remained on campus to ensure their child is safely in the school building.

DISMISSAL: Dismissal will begin at 10:45am. Many of our catechists celebrate the 11am Mass, please coordinate schedules to avoid late pick-ups. While we understand accidents and bridge closure happen, coordinate shopping and breakfast accordingly. Each catechist gives more than an hour to assist students and parents in teaching the Catholic Faith.

VISITORS

Other than students, catechists, aides, hall monitors and parish staff, no persons are permitted in the halls, classrooms, or rest rooms during religious education classes and activities without the express authorization of the Office of Religious Education. Visitors, including parents, are to see the Parish Catechetical Leader before proceeding into the classroom areas. Catechists are asked to contact the hall monitors immediately if they notice any unauthorized persons in the building.

FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

PRAYER is essential to our spiritual life. A list of diocesan prayers required for each grade to memorize is provided on the Parish Youth Catechesis website and linked on your child's class page at www.olssyouth.org. Because of limited class time, the main catechist (Parents/guardians) are expected to work with their children on prayers year-round. All students will be tested verbally for their prayers throughout the program year.

HOMEWORK

Catechists will assign homework to the student on a regular basis. Students are responsible for completing these reading and completing assignments by the next scheduled class. Parents/guardians should review the assignments with their child.

RESTROOM USE - When arriving, please make sure your child uses the restroom **prior** to the start of class. Our class time is limited, students not only miss out on material, it disrupts the entire class. Lastly, we simply do not have enough parish family volunteers to

walk children to the restroom and/or monitor hallways. If your child has a medical condition, please contact the Director of Youth Catechesis and Sacramental Preparation at 410.326.3535x15 or email: youthministry@olss.org

DIGNITY OF SELF: DRESS CODE FOR STUDENTS

Most students attending 8am or 11am Mass will be dressed in their Sunday best. For those who attend on Saturday or attending Sunday afternoon, we ask that students dress appropriately for class and refrain from wearing anything that draws unusual attention to them or may affect their participation in class. No one may wear short shorts, crop-tops, tank tops, excessive torn and ripped jeans, clothing that is off the shoulder, and clothing with inappropriate sayings. **Leggings or yoga pants are not permitted without a fingertip length shirt.**

CELL PHONES| ELECTRONIC DEVICES & PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Cell phones and other electronic devices such as AirPods, or apple watches are not allowed in class. They can be very disruptive & distracting in a classroom setting. Students should not bring money or valuables with them to class as the parish and our volunteer catechists are not responsible for lost money or valuables.

Catechists have the right to collect cell phones and other electronic devices from a student when this rule is not followed; the device will be returned directly to the parent after dismissal.

CLASSROOM USAGE/ BEHAVIOR:

We are fortunate to have use of the Our Lady Star of the Sea School classrooms. Appropriate behavior and common courtesy are presumed and expected at every grade level. Students are asked to stay out of desks, leave displays in hallway and classrooms alone.

While in class, students are expected to be respectful to their Catechist, aides, and classmates. Students will receive one warning. Persistent behavior problems will result in parent discussion and if needed family discussion with Director of Religious Education and if needed, Fr. Bob.

Students who take part in disrupting their class by having a lack of respect for their teacher and/or peers will receive a verbal warning from their teacher. If the disruption occurs again, the student will be asked to:

- First Offense ~ Report to the office to speak directly with the Director of Religious Education.
- Second Offense ~ Report to the office and parents will be called. A conference will be set up between the parents, teacher and Director, immediately.
- Third Offense ~ Meeting with family, catechist, DRE and Fr. Bob.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS:

The Parish Religious Education Program & Sacramental Preparation is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their child/ren in the faith. As parents, the promise you made at your child(ren)'s Baptism to raise your children in the faith is fulfilled by your active participation in your child's religious education. To help us better assist you:

- Getting your child(ren) to class each week and on time.
- Working with your child on required prayers and class assignments.
- Familiarize oneself with child(rens) class page(s) and Family Resource Page
- Reviewing and discussing each session's lesson with your child(ren) thus, extending the lessons learned in the classroom throughout the week
- Inform us at the start of each year if there are circumstances that will affect your child's Mass & Class attendance. (Sports, sleepovers, and birthday parties and weekend trips are not excused)
- Inform us if your child has a disability or special need so we may adequately serve them in the program
- Attend all required parent meetings to grow in your understanding and appreciation of the sacraments and formal catechesis
- Inform Office of Youth Catechesis of any changes to mailing address, telephone number, e-mail or emergency information
- Return any forms or respond to emails requiring attention in a timely manner. Late forms may be subject to a delay in sacraments and or class placement.
- Read all emails correspondence from the program administrator and catechists
- I will make sure that my child(ren) attends all class sessions and arrives on time and fully prepared to participate (homework completed, class participation and book (if applicable) accompanies child).
- I will make note of my child's Catechist's name and contact information.
- I will contact the Catechist and/or Director of Catechesis when my child is absent and make sure all make up work is completed within a week of missed class.
- I will remind my child(-ren) that appropriate Catholic Christian behavior is required at all times. Respect for teachers, an appreciation for their time given inside and outside the classroom, other students and their learning environment and the school building is very important. You will be notified of consistent disruptive behavior and a meeting will be set up with the Director and/or the Pastor to discuss such.

X

Parent/Guardian Signature

