



2017 – 2018
Sunday Religious Education
Handbook

Saint Mary Catholic Church
2300 West Jackson Street
Muncie, IN 47303
765-288-5308

www.stmarymuncie.org

Aug. 20, 2017 – May 6, 2018
9:45AM – 10:50AM
Cyr Center



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STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION

The family well deserves the beautiful name “domestic Church.” The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family that is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized.

As it is the parents who have given life to their children; it is their responsibility and gravest obligation to give a “faith life” to their children. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily responsible for their child (ren)’s education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.

Evangelii nuntiandi, #71

Just as the family is considered the “domestic Church,” an ancient title for the Church is a “school of discipleship.” As fellow disciples of Jesus within our Church community we assist each other in sharing the content of our faith, forming our children, and handing on the Gospel. Being a “school of discipleship” is less about the collection of certain facts than it is shaping and forming minds and hearts to God. The Religious Education Program seeks to assist parents in their role as Christian educators and formers of their children in the Catholic faith. The program is a means of supplementing what is already occurring in the home and providing additional opportunities to families for the spiritual formation and transformation of their children. Fellow members of the “school of discipleship,” that is St Mary parish, and the Religious Education Program endeavors to do the following: serve families by creating a communal atmosphere which promotes the development and embodiment of a responsible Christian way of life, calls forth the unique potential of the whole person – mind, body and spirit – and fosters a sense of self-discipline, stewardship, charity and service in imitation of Christ and his Gospel.

The Catholic Church has issued many documents that describe the ministry of catechesis. This program is based upon the principles and guidelines found in these documents. *The General Directory for Catechesis, The National Catechetical Directory, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church* as well as diocesan statements on the ministry of catechesis provides a framework for our parish programs. The following is a summary of the most important directives provided by these documents and a clarification of how they help guide the catechetical program in this parish.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes from Pope John Paul II from *Catechesi Tradendae* as he describes what is entailed in the ministry of catechesis:

Catechesis is an education of the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life. CCC, #5

The National Catechetical Directory further clarifies what elements should be a part of a quality catechetical program:

Like other pastoral activities, catechetical ministry must be understood in relation to Jesus' threefold mission. It is a form of the ministry of the word, which proclaims and teaches. It leads to and flows from the ministry of worship, which sanctifies through prayer and sacrament. It supports the ministry of service, which is linked to efforts to achieve social justice... NCD #32

Guided by the principles found in the documents of the Church concerning the ministry of catechesis, the catechetical program of this parish will include the following elements:

Message:

The story of Scripture and the teachings of the Church will be communicated within the context of the faith story of each student and the signs of the times.

Community:

Efforts will be made to form Christian community among the students through interaction and faith sharing.

Worship:

The participants will experience many forms of Catholic prayer and worship to help them become prayerful people.

Service:

Participants will be called to service and justice, which is inherent in the message of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

St Mary Catholic Parish strives to be a Christian community faithful to the Gospel and the Catholic Tradition. The parish is, in reality, a community of communities: students, faculty, farmers, townspeople, commuters, all united in the endless struggle and search to know, love and serve God, self and one another. The unique diversity of the parish offers at once a challenge and a rich resource for learning. The goals of St Mary's catechetical program are:

- To provide a program of formal religious instruction for the children and youth of the parish.
- To support parents in their role as primary educators of their children.
- To offer sacramental preparation to children and youth.

- To help youth discover the richness and challenges of Scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church.
- To build a strong Catholic identity among the youth of the parish.
- To allow youth to experience the Church as community.
- To deepen the prayer life of children and youth.
- To motivate youth to live lives rooted in charity and justice based on the moral teachings of the church.
- To expose students to the liturgical and sacramental richness that is part of the Catholic Tradition.
- To enable students to become responsible, self-reflecting, loving and praying individuals.
- To make programs that meet diverse spiritual needs available to adults of the parish.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

REGISTRATION

Registration forms are available in the Parish Office, on the Parish website and at all the doors to the Church.

The registration form includes a section where the child's parent or guardian may list others into whose care they authorize their child to be released by the parish. ***Unless other adults have been explicitly authorized or restricted, the Religious Education Program will understand both parents to have equal access to and custody of their child, and that their child is to be released to no one other than the child's own parents or guardians.*** Please see the safety and security section of this handbook for one-time or emergency procedures and exceptions.

Tuition fees are due when the completed registration form is returned. Regular tuition fees are **\$50.00** per child for grades K-8, with a maximum fee of \$100.00 for tuition per family. ***Sacramental preparation fees for First Confession and First Communion are an additional \$35.00 and for 8th graders with Confirmation an additional \$65.00.*** This additional fee does not contribute to the maximum family limit. In cases of true need, tuition assistance is available and may be obtained by contacting the Coordinator of Religious Formation.

ROLE OF COORDINATOR OF RELIGIOUS FORMATION/Director of Religious Education

The Coordinator of Religious Formation (CRF/DRE) is in charge of the operation and administration of the Religious Formation Program for grades K-8 on Sunday mornings. The CRF/DRE is responsible for overseeing catechist's certification and religious formation including but not limited to the Lafayette Diocese E.L.M. program. The CRF/DRE can be found in the Cyr Center when the Religious Education Program is in session.

ROLE OF CATECHISTS/ASSISTANTS

Catechists that teach the classes in the religious education program are volunteers. The assistants are also volunteers who help the catechists. The parish has made every effort to screen them to insure that they are capable of handling the responsibility involved in this ministry. The parish also offers training courses that increase the skills needed for the catechists to be successful. The CRF supervises the catechists in order to help them fulfill their responsibility. As parents you are asked to recognize the challenges involved in being a volunteer catechist and to support them in whatever ways possible.

ROLE OF CATECHISTS FOR SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Catechists for Sacramental preparation work to educate and form the children seeking to celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. They work to provide the children with an initial understanding of the Sacrament they will be celebrating with the Church. They begin the process of formation that is a lifelong journey.

ROLE OF THE SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS

Substitutes fill in for the regular catechists or assistants when a conflict arises that prevent them from leading a session. Many times, substitutes are individuals who have served the parish as catechists or assistants before, but are unable to make a yearlong commitment to the Religious Education Program at the current time.

EXPECTATIONS

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CATECHISTS AND STAFF

The honor of helping children develop and form their faith is a sacred trust that the catechists and staff share with the parents and the Church. The catechists and staff can be expected to:

- Seek the image of God in the children
- Be motivated by love and reverence
- Be kind, sympathetic and understanding
- Be consistently impartial and fair
- Recognize the child's need for motivation and interest, especially by making use of enrichment materials, maintaining a physical environment conducive to formation and education
- Take into account other factors which influence the child's behavior...home life, companions, interests and recreation.

The catechists and staff in the Religious Education Program are committed to:

- Helping children see the relevance of a Christian value system in their daily lives.
- Helping children learn to relate human culture and knowledge to the news of salvation.
- Showing Christian concern about the joys and problems of each child.
- Speaking with charity and justice about children, even when called upon to discuss sensitive matters.
- Working with children in preparing liturgies, prayer services and other religious programs.
- Respecting confidential information concerning children and their homes.
- Planning appropriate service projects for children that will develop their sense of responsibility to the community.
- Enabling children to grow in a sense of self-worth and accountability by selecting activities that promote the positive self-concept that characterizes a maturing Christian.
- Developing the child's knowledge and understanding of the Church teachings and Traditions of our Catholic faith, without suppression or distortion.

EXPECTATIONS (continued)

PARENTS

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Parents do not relinquish their right and duty to formally educate, but look to the parish for additional assistance. Catechists work with parents as collaborators in a cooperative effort to help the child. The expectations of the parents are:

- It is expected that the parents will take an active role and interest in their child's religious formation and education
- They will support the catechists and their assistants
- Have their children to class on time and will not be late when picking up
- Make religious education a priority by their children attending every class
- Parents are expected to model the Catholic Faith for their children
- Parents and children will attend mass every Sunday and Holy Day
- Parents will pray with their children

PARTICIPANTS

For effective formation to take place, it is expected that the children will:

- Give their quiet attention to the catechist, any other adult, or any child who is speaking.
- Treat the property, good name and physical safety of others with respect.
- Be present only in the areas of the building for which they have permission at a specific time.
- Act in a safe manner in and around the building.
- Use voice and display actions in a manner appropriate for a classroom.

Conflict Resolution: The ideal of discipline within Catholic education is to enable children to move from externally imposed discipline to self-discipline through discipleship. Children must first learn appropriate behavior through someone or something outside themselves. As soon as they are sufficiently mature, however, they should be helped to govern their conduct from within themselves so they can live responsibly. Ultimately, opportunities should be provided which lead them to look beyond themselves to principled living as exemplified by Jesus Christ.

Conflicts within the room are, for the most part, to be handled by the catechist and always in a caring and Christian manner. Catechists will approach discipline as an opportunity to assist character formation in a positive manner. Only in extreme cases will a catechist send the child to the CRF for disciplinary action. A frequent use of such a measure weakens the catechist's authority and proves ineffectual to the child. Catechists are, however, encouraged to seek advice from the CRF/DRE about possible procedures to be used in individual cases. Corporal punishment may not be given.

Reprimands, when necessary, should be constructive and suited to the age of the child. They should always be proportionate and reasonable. If a child is removed from the room, they must remain in visual proximity of the catechist. No child may be sent out of the room or be dismissed without adult supervision.

Students having disciplinary problems should be identified early and worked with continuously. Early attempts at helping the child should be handled by the catechist. Such attempts may include speaking with the child, conferencing with Parents and, most importantly, positive motivation when progress is being made by the child.

In discipline situations, children are provided due process. This process provides the child an opportunity to be heard in a situation. All situations are to be discussed between the catechist and child. Situations at this level may require that parents be included in the explanation and discussion of corrective actions. If the situations cannot to be resolved at this level, they will be presented to the CRF for resolution. All situations leading to possible removal from the program for the remainder of the year are to be directed to the CRF.

The behavior expected from the children in the Religious Education Program is a combination of common courtesy and safety considerations. The following types of conduct are never permissible:

- Fighting
- Defiance of a catechist or staff
- Use of profanity
- Use of gum (a common policy of the Religious Education Program and St Mary School)
- Refusal to participate
- Gambling
- Use of, or possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco is strictly prohibited. Such items will be seized and parents notified immediately. The child will be immediately removed from the environment.
- Using any electronic device during any sessions unless instructed to by the catechists or assistant.

Conflict resolution between Parents and Catechists: In the event a conflict should emerge between a parent and catechist, or regarding the program itself, the parent should contact the individual catechist first. If the conflict cannot be resolved at this level, a meeting with the CRF should be arranged. The final decision to resolve the conflict, which should benefit all involved parties, rests with the CRF/DRE and the pastor of St Mary Parish.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

- At the time of the first correction, the student will be warned.
- Students whose behavior becomes a continual problem in the classroom will be sent out of class to the CRF. Anytime a student is sent from class for disciplinary reasons their parent(s) will be contacted either by phone, in person, or in writing.
- If a student's behavior continues to be a problem, the student will be removed from class and the parent(s) will be contacted again. In order to return to the classroom, the student and parent(s) will meet with the catechist and the CRF to resolve the issues. At this time the parent(s) may be asked to sit in on the class for a few weeks to observe their child and his/her interaction with the catechist and other students.
- As a last recourse, when a conflict between a student and catechist cannot be resolved, the parent(s) will be asked to finish the year at home with the child. The child will be treated, as one who is being homeschooled and the parish will follow the Diocesan guideline concerning homeschooling.
- The child will be admitted into the program in the next calendar year with no prejudice.

CHILD ABUSE

The Pastor and CRF are required by the Indiana Code and Diocesan Policy on Child Abuse to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. All other staff members of St Mary, both paid and volunteer are bound by Christian conscience to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. All parish staff and volunteers have participated in an in-service training on child abuse and identification and reporting procedures.

WEAPONS POLICY

In order to ensure a safe and Christian environment, it is forbidden for anyone to possess a weapon or any object/material/substance that could be used as a weapon or confused with a real weapon by any reasonable person (toy guns, etc) in the buildings, or within the geographic boundaries of St Mary Parish, or in any location used by the parish to conduct any catechetical activity, or in any conveyance providing transportation to or from any activity related to the Religious Education Program.

Weapons or potential weapons will be confiscated by the CRF/DRE when this action does not place the CRF in danger. If the student has used a weapon against another person or will not surrender the weapon or offending object/material/substance immediately and willingly, the local police will be called first, followed by notification of the parent(s). This is a zero tolerance policy.

Any student who violates this policy will be subject to immediate parish disciplinary action over and above any civil/criminal action brought by injured parties.

The student will be removed from the religious education class and an alternative method of religious education will be negotiated with the parent(s) for the remainder of the year. Judgments for re-admittance to the program for the following year will be made on a case by case basis and this decision is at the sole discretion of the pastor.

If the incident involves an exchange of bodily fluids (for example, as in a wound which breaks the skin), the student(s) will be asked to submit to medical tests for transmittable diseases, such as HIV and Hepatitis B, as recommended by a doctor:

These tests will be at the parent(s) expense. In the name of being a community of Christians motivated by care and respect, this policy asks that the results of these tests, which are governed by guidelines of strict confidentiality, be openly shared with the respective parties on a need-to-know basis.

THREATS OF VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

As a community of believers who value patience over aggression, and love above all else, it is inconsistent with our basic values to tolerate an environment of threat or fear. Threats of harm made against another individual or group of individuals are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

This policy recognizes that in any community of people there will always be some conflict. Students will always be encouraged to manage their conflict in a positive, non aggressive manner. Behavior such as cursing, pushing or fighting will not be tolerated.

In cases which are deemed by the catechist or CRF to be “minor” (meaning: no reason to believe the situation would lead to physical harm) the students will be separated and encouraged to work out their differences after a “cool-down” period.

If the catechist regards the altercation as “serious” (meaning reasonable expectation that the conflict will lead to physical harm) the students will be immediately separated, the CRF will be notified, and the parent(s) of the students will be called. The CRF/DRE must determine that the conflict is resolved before the students will be readmitted to the program.

Students are expected to report to their Catechist or CRF any threat made by a student, which mentions the killing of any person. Such threats will be immediately reported to the police for investigation. The student making such threats will be suspended from the program until such time as the police investigation is completed and the appropriate authorities are satisfied that there is no real threat of harm. In such a case, judgments about re-admittance to the program will be made on a case by case basis and this decision is at the sole discretion of the pastor.

HARASSMENT

Respect for the dignity and worth of each individual is a basic precept of Catholic doctrine and therefore of St Mary Parish. Each person is entitled to work in an environment free from discriminatory practices such as any form of harassment based on race, sex, creed, color, age, or disability including sexual harassment. Parish leadership wishes to be vigilant regarding harassment whether between or among catechists and/or parish leaders, among students or between catechists/parish leaders and students. Such behavior will not be tolerated and if persistent harassment is proven, the offender will be dismissed when this is appropriate. Harassment of all forms is illegal as well as immoral and individuals will be encouraged to seek legal protection when necessary.

The term "Harassment" refers to behavior that is not welcome, that is personally offensive and that fails to treat others with dignity and respect. It includes treating someone unfavorably because of his or her race, sex, creed, color, age or disability. Harassment may take the form of discrimination, unwelcome or critical comments or action. Harassment on the basis of sex might include unwelcome sexual advances, requests or demand for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct, including, but not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, intimations or comments.
- Visual contact such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures.
- Physical contact such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movements, or interfering with work, studies or plays because of sex.
- Retaliations for having reported or threatened to report such harassment.

The term "sexual harassment" refers to harassment based on the gender of the offended individual when the people involved are of different "level" within the parish. It involves threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of employment, grades or other benefits or to avoid some other loss and offers of benefits in return for sexual favors. It also means creating a hostile environment for the student or employee such that it is an unfit environment for learning or work. Examples include, but are not limited to repeated unwelcome sexual advances, repeated sexually explicit jokes or comments, or the displaying of sexually inappropriate materials.

Allegations and complaints of any type of harassment must be reported as soon as possible. Parent(s) who become aware of incidents of sexual harassment should report them immediately to the pastor or the CRF/DRE.

USE OF PROPERTY

Our Catholic understanding of “stewardship” is one that displays a sense of reverence and respect for all that has been entrusted to us both materially (objects) and relationally (people) as gifts. At St Mary Parish we have been entrusted with the gifts of our facilities with each other.

Gifts of stewardship in regards to our possessions means that we do not treat the things we have been given to use carelessly or destructively. Should a child display a lack of respect for such gifts through loss or damage of supplies, equipment or facilities Christian justice dictates that restorative action take place. Should such cases arise, the student and, by extension, their parents, will be asked to see that a suitable apology is extended and, if appropriate, any clean-up and/or financial restitution is made.

MEETING TIMES AND PARTICIPATION LISTS

The regular Religious Education Program for grades K-8 meets on Sunday mornings from 9:45 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. on the dates indicated on the annual calendar. For the 2017-2018 school year, classes begin on Sunday August 20, 2017 and end on Sunday, May 6, 2018. Enrollment per room in the Religious Education program shall not be more than thirty (30) children. Soon after the start of the program, the CRF will have a list available of all participants in each room including their names and phone numbers should anyone need the information.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In cases where children have special needs, additional assistants will be added to the room as necessary to allow these children to participate with their peers. The intention is to overcome any obstacles that would prevent such students from being so integrated. The special needs of the children in question should be referred to the CRF/DRE by the parents at the earliest possible date to provide sufficient time to enlist the necessary personnel. As much as it is desirable to integrate children with their peers, it may not always be possible. Needs of a child may surpass the ability of the Religious Education Program to provide. The assessment of such a situation will be made by the catechist and their assistant, who will contact the CRF. In the event of a referral, the CRF will arrange a meeting with the parents and decide the best alternative for the child.

ATTENDANCE, TARDINESS, AND PARTICIPATION

Conflicting events and competing schedules are now commonplace in modern life. When we choose sleeping over praying or competitive sporting events over shaping and forming our lives of discipleship, we reveal to our children not the faith we profess with our lips, but the faith we profess with our lives. Please carefully consider in these events what your child is being taught to value through your family's attendance decisions.

Regular attendance is necessary to achieve the maximum benefits of the religious education being offered. Children learn from the decisions and actions made within the family and the underlying values which those actions profess. Weekly commitment to faith and parish life through regular Mass and Religious Education Program attendance educates children more on the importance and value of faith than any lesson plan every created.

Illnesses and serious situations necessitating a child's occasional absence from class are to be expected. **Please notify the CRF at 765-716-5466 or email religioused@stmarymuncie.org if a child is going to be absent from the Religious Education Program for an extended period of time.**

The catechists and their assistants are entrusted to monitor the attendance and tardiness of the students in their room. If, in their opinion, the continued absence and/or tardiness of a child (ren) are deemed to be a matter of concern, the catechist, after consulting with the CRF, will contact the child's parents to better understand the circumstances behind the absences/tardiness and determine if any assistance may be extended to help remedy the situation.

SUNDAY MASS ATTENDANCE

Sunday Mass is the source and centerpiece of our entire Catholic-Christian life. Learning and speaking *about* God during the Religious Education Program is no substitute for participating and speaking *to* God in the Sunday Liturgy. There is a profound inconsistency in a family who wishes to *expose* their child to the faith life of the Catholic Church through Religious Education, but does not consistently *participate* in the faith life of the Church through prayer at the weekend Masses. The scheduling of the Religious Education Program between the 8:30 a.m. and 11a.m. Masses are designed to support and encourage families in their weekly obligation of communal prayer at Mass. Please consider, once again, what you child is being taught to value through your family's attendance decisions at weekend Mass.

ROOM VISITATION AND PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Room visits by parents are encouraged as a way to offer an opportunity to observe their child (ren) in a formational setting and better learn about the program. At times, parents may also be needed on Sunday morning to help with projects. Please contact your child's catechist or the CRF to volunteer for classroom assistance or to arrange a classroom visit. All volunteers must undergo Protocol Training. The training is good for 5 years. Protocol training is offered throughout the year. Check the bulletin for dates and times. In addition, most if not all Catechists are CPR/AED and First Aid trained and know blood-borne pathogens best practices.

FIELD TRIPS

Catechists/CRF may occasionally schedule retreats, events and other outings during the year. Parents will receive notice of field trips well in advance and will be asked to complete, sign and promptly return the necessary permission form. Only the official forms may be acknowledged; phone calls or hand written notes cannot be accepted. Any child who does not have the proper forms on file cannot participate.

COMMUNICATIONS - BULLETIN

The Weekly Bulletin contains the schedules of upcoming events in the Religious Education section. The events will include those of St Mary Parish as well as those of St Francis and St Lawrence. Since the wording can change every week as more information becomes available, be sure to check every article every week.

COMMUNICATIONS – E-MAIL

The CRF/DRE intends to keep families informed through e-mail about upcoming events in the Religious Education schedule and this can be easily accessed through Flock notes.

FAMILY TIME/GET CONNECTED

These resources (either in the text book or torn out) are to be sent home weekly to the parents. They serve to notify you of what will be going on in your child's classroom the next Sunday. It is important that you spend five or ten minutes with your child looking over this resource before they return to their session the following Sunday. Besides helping them have a more successful group experience, these resources will also connect you to your child's experiences!

CONCERNS, CONFLICTS AND FEEDBACK

Concerns: The CRF is interested in your concerns about the program. If you have any accolades, questions, or concerns about the program, feel free to see the CRF on Sunday Morning during the Religious Education Program sessions. You may also contact the CRF on our cell phone: 765.716-5466 or 765.716.1982. You may also contact the CRF about concerns or questions by emailing: religioused@stmarymuncie.org.

ISSUES OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

While they are in our care, the safety and security of the children of St. Mary parish is of the utmost concern. Safety and security measures described below are not meant to be burdensome but, rather, to ensure that every reasonable effort has been made to provide a safe and secure environment for the children. At the beginning of the year, catechists will instruct the children on the procedures to be followed in case of an emergency and the particular details and instructions for their individual rooms.

DROP OFF/PICK UP PROCEDURES

All children K-4 should be escorted into the Cyr Center Cafeteria by a parent or older sibling. Grades 5-8 may be “dropped off” at the entrance doors. Catechists will be in the cafeteria 10 minutes prior to the start of the session and will take the children to their room together. There is a short “Gathering Time” at 9:30 am for the students, parents and catechists. **Bring your child by 9:25 am so we can begin on time.**

At the end of the session, please come to the Cyr Center Cafeteria (NOT their classroom) to meet your children. NO CHILD WILL BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE CYR CENTER WITHOUT A PARENT OR AUTHORIZED GUARDIAN PRESENT. Out of courtesy for the catechists and CRF wishing to attend the 11:00 a.m. Mass, please make every effort to pick up your child promptly upon dismissal. If the wait to be picked up is over five minutes, the CRF will attempt to contact the parents by phone and take the child to the church for mass. Late arriving parents will have to pick the child up from the church.

For the safety of the children being dropped off or picked up, **there is NO PASSING in the Cyr Center parking lot or driving into the lot behind the Cyr Center.**

These protocols are for the children’s own safety. **Please do not encourage your child to circumvent these safety and security procedures!**

PARENTAL AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE A CHILD TO ANOTHER ADULT

If someone other than a parent or designate authorized on the child's registration form is to pick up your child, the parent must let the catechist know in writing by the start of the session.

DOOR ACCESS AND SECURITY

All exterior doors will be locked five minutes after the start of class. Any children arriving after that time should be brought through the main entrance to the Cyr Center and escorted to the cafeteria. An adult volunteer will escort them to their room. Only this set of doors will remain open while the program is in session.

ADULT PRESENCE IN THE ROOM

Children are to be supervised by an adult at all times when they are in the parish's care.

ILLNESSES OR ACCIDENTS

All accidents are reported to the CRF as soon as possible. In case of illness or injury, a program member will care for the child temporarily. They will render first aid treatment only. If emergency medical treatment is necessary, every effort to contact the parents will be made. If parents are not available the child will be taken to the emergency room at the hospital. (Please remember that an emergency contact person and telephone number should be recorded on the child's registration form that is kept on file in the Religious Formation Office.)

Following the session a brief accident report will be filled out by the catechist and kept on record with the CRF. Illnesses or accidents including, but not limited to, those listed below will be reported to the parent immediately:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Severe abdominal pain
- Persistent nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Injury where there is swelling, severe pain, or a question of sprain or broken bone
- Injury where there is significant bleeding or if bleeding does not stop in a short period of time
- Chipped or uprooted tooth
- Eye injury
- Rash accompanied by fever
- Animal bite (also reported to proper authorities after emergency care has been given)

- Burns
- Head injury
- Poisoning
- Any other problem about which there is a concern

{Catechists are trained annually in blood-borne pathogens and emergency protocols and every room in the school has a universal precautions kit. This kit is to be used when cleaning up body fluids. Gloves are worn when aiding a person that is bleeding or vomiting, or has urinated. Universal Precautions are also used for the disposal of any items used to aid a person in need.}

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Cancellation of the Religious Education Program takes place only during extraordinary circumstances such as extreme weather, equipment failure, or public crisis when a significant safety risk has been created by these circumstances.

According to diocesan policy, when a snow emergency is declared in a county, the obligation to attend Mass is suspended. **When a snow emergency is declared for the city or county, the Religious Education Program for that day is likewise cancelled.** As circumstances dictate, classes may also be cancelled due to weather apart from an actual snow emergency declaration. **In all other instances, every attempt will be made to contact families by 8 am through a flock note, the website, and e-mail and/or a special announcement at the 8:30 a.m. Mass. The message of closure will also be released to the local radio stations WLBC, NASH, and TV stations WISH-TV WRTV, WTHR-TV, WTTV and WXIN FOX 59.**

Please use prudence and good judgment in determining if your particular road conditions and location make it possible to reach the parish safely.

FIRE EMERGENCIES

Detailed escape routes to an outside area a safe distance from the building are posted inside each room and reviewed at the start of each year. Children are to be conducted to their designated areas in less than 75 seconds in a safe, quiet, orderly manner. A fire drill will take place during the first month of each quarter of the Religious Education Program.

In case of a fire emergency, catechists and children are to:

1. Walk quickly and silently in a single file line to the evacuation area posted in the room.
2. If a blocked exit is encountered, children should put both arms straight up, turn around and proceed as directed to a different exit.
3. Catechists should take attendance and remain outside until authorized to return.

EARTHQUAKES

In case of an earthquake, catechists and students are to:

1. **DROP AND COVER.** Duck or drop down to the floor and take cover under a sturdy desk, table or other furniture. If that is not possible, seek cover against an interior wall and protect you head and neck with your arms.
2. **TURN AWAY** from windows. Avoid danger spots near windows, hanging objects, mirrors or tall furniture.
4. **STAY** under the shelter until shaking stops.
5. You are to take cover under a piece of heavy furniture and prepare to move with it.
Hold that position until the ground stops shaking and it is safe to move.
4. **LISTEN** for instructions.
5. **EVACUATION** will follow fire drill plans if possible. Children will meet in the large grassy area east of the school.

TORNADOS

During a tornado warning, each room will be escorted to a designated area within the Cyr Center. All children will kneel with heads covered and faces toward a wall. Children are to be conducted to their designated areas in less than 75 seconds in a safe, quiet, orderly manner. A tornado drill will take place during the first month of the Religious Education Program.

BOMB THREATS

Immediate evacuation of the buildings and notification of authorities are standard procedures with bomb threats. All threats are taken very seriously and will be investigated and followed by the civil authorities.

SAFE CONDUCT PROTOCOLS AND PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE

By diocesan policy, all catechists and adults working with children have been screened and trained in **Safe Conduct Protocols** for interaction with minors and in **Protocols for Responding to Alleged Sexual Abuse**.

In general, children are not questioned or interrogated by persons not connected with the St Mary Religious Education Program unless a parent or guardian is present. In the case of suspected neglect or abuse, however, a report must be made to the local social services agency. In such situations, a caseworker may need to interview the child without specific parental/guardian consent. Any questioning of children by persons outside the Religious Education Program catechists and administration is to be referred to the CRF. This is the policy established and adopted by the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana that St Mary Parish also follows.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The following policy also established and adopted by the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana takes effect in all crisis situations. In the event of a crisis while the Religious Education Program is in session, or a crisis involving personnel or catechists, the Pastor of St Mary Parish will communicate with the media (newspaper, radio, television). In his absence, the CRF will communicate information. In the event that none of these persons are available, information will be communicated through the Pastoral Office of Catechesis of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. All information regarding the crisis shall be channeled to the media through designated speakers. No catechist and/or parent will speak to the press of his/her own accord on behalf of the parish or against their wishes. No child will speak to the press nor will the press be allowed to speak to the children. The media will not be allowed inside the parish buildings without the express consent of the Pastor or CRF.

2017-2018 PROGRAM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

PARENT ORIENTATION MEETING

The Parent Orientation Meeting is an informational meeting at the start of the Religious Education Program. For the 2017-2018 school years, this meeting is on **Sunday, August 20th, 2017 from 9:45a.m. to 10:50a.m.** at the Cyr Center Cafeteria. Its purpose is to familiarize parents with the program for the upcoming year, receive a copy

of the handbook if needed, and to be directed to the St. Mary- Muncie website for printable downloads. A review of important changes, details and practices concerning the program will be given during this Sunday morning reception. Any questions concerning the Sunday Religious Education program will be answered at this time.

CATECHETICAL SUNDAY

Catechetical Sunday is the day we officially recognize and commission the Religious Education Catechists for the year. This year, Catechetical Sunday is September 17th. Catechists will be taking the Oath of Fidelity at the 8:30 a.m. Mass.

PARISH RECONCILIATION NIGHTS IN ADVENT AND LENT

The seasons of Advent and Lent in the Church year have historically been times of preparation, reconciliation and renewal. During these seasons, the parish offers families the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation together. While frequent use of the Sacrament is encouraged throughout the year, these special nights are intended to give a greater focus to the season and to remind us of our identity as members of both an individual family and a faith community who often find ourselves in need of healing and forgiveness.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Sacramental Preparation for First Confession and First Communion will be conducted with both the students from St Mary School and Religious Education in the same program. The parents will also be asked to attend a special Adult Formation Program. Information will be published in the bulletin, school newsletter, website, Flocknote and at the orientation sessions for Sunday Religious Education.

REGISTRATION FOR SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

An invitation will be sent out to each family with a child eligible to receive the Sacrament, who according to our parish records, has not already done so or registered for preparation in the current year. If you receive this invitation and your child has already celebrated the Sacrament, please notify the parish office so that our record may be corrected.

Sacramental preparation fees are in addition to regular tuition for the Religious Education program. They are \$35.00 total for preparation for First Confession and First Communion. An additional fee of \$65.00 is for 8th graders preparing for Confirmation and this includes the Confirmation retreat.

PARTICIPATION IN PARISH LIFE AND ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Sacraments are gifts from God offered to those who are committed to their Catholic faith and striving to live it out. As such, children who are seeking to receive the First Confession and First Communion should evidence this commitment to faith and prayer by their active participation in the life of St Mary parish community. **In order to enter into sacramental preparation, all children and their families must be actively participating registered members of St Mary Parish.**

For Catholics, the first and foremost sign of a serious commitment to faith and the Church is participation in the life of the community evidenced by a weekly attendance at Mass. **Regular attendance at the Lord's Day Mass is a precondition for any child wishing to begin Sacramental preparation.**

Close behind the commitment to weekly Mass attendance is a commitment to continued religious formation through active participation in either St Mary School or St Mary Religious Education Program. **For a child to be admitted into preparation for the Sacraments, they must have displayed an earnest commitment to their faith the year prior to their preparation through regular attendance at Mass and one of the above mentioned parish education programs.**

During the course of preparation, a child's level of seriousness and faith commitment will continue to be assessed and securitized by those preparing them for their reception of the Sacraments. **Absences due to illness should be reported to the CRF/catechist in charge of their preparation so that they may be taken into account and appropriate measures taken.**

Along with the above policies, individual needs and circumstances will be considered in the final assessment of a child's preparedness to receive the Sacraments. The final determination of a child's preparedness will be made under the discretion of the CRF, and the catechist involved in their preparation.

FUTURE POLICY ADDITION AND AMENDMENTS

The parish retains the right to amend or add policies to this handbook. The new policy will supersede the existing policy on the date it is adopted by the parish. Parents will be given prompt notification if changes to any policies are made.

Respectfully submitted and updated by Sonya S. and Scott G. Paul: Co-Directors of Religious Education / Coordinators of Religious Formation.

Date: July 3, 2017

Approved by:

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. Flocknote – See the Parish Office to sign-up
2. Formed.org – Free registration available. St. Mary Access Code: **WQGRVG**
3. The Bible
4. The Catechism of the Catholic Church.