

**ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL HANDBOOK
2011-2012**



MISSION STATEMENT

St. Mary's Disciple Formation Team strives to provide continuing education in the Catholic faith for all ages (kindergarten through adult) to allow parishioners to grow in their faith, to enrich worship as a community, and to preserve our Catholic traditions. We rely on the cooperation and support of the entire parish community, especially the parents of the children, to help us carry out the Baptismal call of Discipleship.

GOALS

1. To stress that parents are the primary educators of their children and raise awareness of the parishioners that we are all responsible to share in the faith formation of our children.
2. To provide on-going faith development for the catechists and aides and encourage participation in parish and diocesan programs to obtain diocesan certification.
3. To train catechists in their responsibilities and specific duties in relationship to their role in assisting the parents in the faith formation of their children.
4. To provide catechists with current materials and resources for session use.
5. To develop better communication with parents so they are informed of the content covered in each session and what areas need to be reinforced at home.
6. To provide an atmosphere where the student can grow spiritually, morally, intellectually and to recognize their individual talents so they may reach out in service to others.
7. To help provide a better understanding of the Eucharist and teach a connection between faith formation and active participation at Mass.
8. To encourage all age levels to develop the spirit of volunteering their talents so they remain actively involved in their parish activities.
9. To provide the youth with the opportunity to learn about religious vocations.

REGISTRATION

A general registration for students is held in August. During the year, new students are asked to register by contacting the coordinator during office hours. The fee will be adjusted accordingly.

An annual student fee helps cover part of the expenses of the Sunday School program. The following fee schedule has been established:

One Child = \$30.00
Each additional child = \$10.00
Maximum \$50.00 family

Please note: if circumstances in your family exist that the payment of fees would present a problem, please contact Deacon Vincent "Blue" Wilson at (903) 757-5893 ext. 305 or Lea Kottwitz at ext. 301.

SESSION TIMES

Sessions take place on Sundays from 9:45 – 11:15 a.m. Parents and students may start gathering in the Parish Center beginning at 9:30 a.m. for refreshments and fellowship. At 9:45 a.m., a short program will begin. (Children should be seated at this time.) This will be a time for prayer, song and reflection on the Sunday liturgy. This will also be a time for Sunday School announcements. At 10:00 a.m. the students will go with their catechists to their rooms for their lessons. At 11:15 a.m. all of the children will return to the Parish Center where parents may pick them up. If your child is between the ages of 5 and 7, we ask that an adult come inside the building to retrieve them. If you want an older sibling to gather your child, please notify your child's catechist so they can be added to the "approved to pick-up" list.

SUMMARY OF CURRICULUM

The curriculum for each level has been developed by the diocese of Tyler.

"Forming disciples for Jesus Christ is the mission of all the baptized. Handing on the Faith: Religious Education Curriculum Ages 4 - 18 has been approved as the diocesan guide for the Diocese of Tyler faith formation programs and was incorporated into parish programs for religious education and catholic school religion sessions beginning in the fall, 2001" (excerpt from letter of Bishop Corrada. August 1, 2001). The curriculum is divided into seven (7) levels:

Level I (Ages 4-5) pre-stage of faith. Very basic - no real faith development.

Level II (Ages 6-7) imitation of faith. "I am comfortable here", imitates parents and other adults.

Level III (Ages 8 - 9) belonging faith. "I am part of the larger community".

Level IV (Ages 10-11) conventional faith. Begin to understand why they belong.

Level V (Ages 12-13) questioning/discerning faith. Begin to question differences and meaning of symbols.

Level VI (Ages 14 -18) individual/reflective faith. Faith takes on more of an individual expression.

Level VII (Adult) owned or lived faith relates faith to day to day living and events.

The objectives are divided into Cycles "A" and "B". We will work on "A" this year (2011-2012) and "B" next year (2012-2013). There are sixteen goals based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Each goal has the goal stated, rationale from the CCC, and objectives with suggested activities. All 16 goals are presented at each level according to the child's faith developmental level. Therefore each year they cover the same goals with different objectives to go deeper into the topic.

The sixteen (16) goals are:

1. Trinity
2. Relationship with God
3. Faith
4. Church
5. Scripture
6. Creation
7. Sacraments
8. Community of believers
9. Human Dignity
10. Moral Conscience
11. Discipleship
12. Relationship with one another
13. Social Justice
14. Christian service
15. Catholic tradition of prayer
16. Holy Mary Virgin and Mother

ROLE OF THE PARENTS

As parents, you are your children's primary educators. Children learn first and most from YOU. Therefore, it is important that the parents, parish, and catechists work together to teach and model the Catholic faith. As parents, you are called to:

1. Acknowledge that you are the primary influence on your children.
2. Share faith and values with your children and openly discuss these and other religious beliefs.
3. Encourage children to respect life and property, pray, praise, and worship together and individually.
4. Attend Mass with your child on Saturdays/Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Attend the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.
5. Be aware of what the children are learning each week.
6. Take time to listen to your children and encourage them to grow in faith.
7. Become active participants in the parish programs. (Examples of programs include L.I.F.E. sessions, Lenten services, Adoration, Parish mission, Sunday luncheon, Saturday social, Parish picnic, etc.)
8. Be supportive of the Sunday School catechists and program, especially when it comes to discipline.
9. Bring your child (children) to session no sooner than 9:30 a.m. and pick them up at 11:15 a.m., unless special arrangements have been made in advance.
10. Contact the catechist if you know that your child will be absent for an extended time period.
11. Teach your children their prayers as required in each grade level.

As catechists, we will provide the opportunity for children to experience a variety of prayer forms and practice the common prayers of our Church. However, we also depend upon the child's daily lived experience of prayer with family, at meals, before bed, spontaneously, in praise and thanksgiving, in petition and need. Take the opportunity to explain liturgical events to your children. Explaining holy days, the missalette, and basic Catholic traditions and customs can go a long way in helping your child become more familiar with his/her faith.

Included in this handbook are the prayers the children are expected to learn throughout the years. You will notice that prayers are introduced early in the child's experience by their parents. It is your role to initially teach these prayers to your children. We will continue to assist you by reviewing and reciting the prayers in session. Sharing the rosary as a family experience will provide a great opportunity for you and your child to develop a devotion to Mary.

ROLE OF CATECHIST

Catechists, not only bring themselves to the session rooms, they volunteer their time, share their talents, enthusiasm, and faith with the children of St. Mary's Parish. As catechists they are called to be witnesses of our Catholic faith and model Catholic-Christian attitudes and traditions. They agree to do the following:

1. Share the lives and love of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the saints with each other and the children.
2. Be aware of developmental processes and individual differences of the children.
3. Teach the message of God in interesting and understandable ways.
4. Encourage children to respect life and property, pray, praise, and worship together and individually.
5. Be loving, but firm using appropriate discipline techniques. Assertiveness is important.
6. Prepare ahead of time. Plan the lessons and activities before arriving.
7. Appear on time (at least by 9:30 a.m.) for each session.
8. Be encouraged to grow in faith along with the children by attending courses offered by the diocese or parish.
9. Make use of parish resources, such as people. Let the individual experiences some people have attained enrich the lives of the children.
10. Pray for and with the children.
11. Continually evaluate the sessions.
12. Maintain open and ongoing communication with parents.

ROLE OF PARISH

1. Call forth catechists from the parish community and provide for their training.
2. Provide facilities and materials for effective catechesis.
3. Provide opportunities for catechists to grow in their faith and achieve various levels of Catechist Certification.
4. Encourage and support the efforts of our catechists.

ROLE OF SUNDAY SCHOOL STEERING COMMITTEE

To support, plan, implement, review and evaluate the Sunday School program.

To represent the parents of children enrolled in the Sunday School program.

Provide input and support for the Sacramental Preparation programs.

Sunday School Steering Committee

Name	Phone Number	EMAIL Address
Susan Leatherman (Chairman)	903-295-2004	leatherman@sbcglobal.net
Steve Carden	903-297-7551	shadowbabe98@gmail.com
Dion Fauchaux	903-472-3287	innosolutions@yahoo.com
Jonathon Frels	903-295-3728	hmswyr@hotmail.com
Karen Scibona	903-291-1610	scibona@cableynx.com
Lyn Seidel	903-758-0190	jlseidel@sbcglobal.net
Teresa Shore	903-297-7930	tkshore@tecwell.com
Dcn. Vincent "Blue" Wilson	903-757-5855 ext 305	vwilson@stmaryslgv.org
Fr.Gavin Vaverek	903-757-5855 ext 503	FrGavin@stmaryslgv.org

ROLE OF DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION ADVOCATES

To initiate, organize, and implement programs to meet the faith formation needs of the total parish.

- Develop education programs for adults and children.
- Develop and present opportunities for sacramental preparation.
- Recruit and train volunteers to assist in the program.
- Prepare schedules.
- Maintain permanent records of programs and participants.
- Maintain communication with and support of parents.

Be aware of education resources and current catechetical methodology.

Evaluate program annually and make recommendations as needed.

Be familiar with diocesan policies in order to develop parish policies in conjunction with diocesan norms.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

ATTENDANCE

1. Attendance at Sunday School is very important for the continual, spiritual growth of the child. Students should make every effort to get to session on time so that a positive session room atmosphere can be maintained.
2. Students should arrive at the Parish Center between 9:30 and 9:45 a.m. Sunday School will begin promptly at 9:45 a.m. Dismissal will be at 11:15 a.m. from the Parish Center.

BEHAVIOR

1. Students are expected to behave in a manner that is respectful of all young people, catechists, and property.
2. No chewing gum. No food or drinks during session unless required for health reasons. (This should be cleared with the catechist.) Cell phones must be turned off in the class room.
3. Demonstrate a good attitude toward Sunday School and church activities.
4. Participate in session discussions and activities.

DRESS CODE

In order to maintain a respectful classroom atmosphere, we ask that students be dressed in a modest manner. This includes a clean and neat appearance. Inappropriate dress includes:

- Girls: spaghetti straps, halter tops, short shorts, short skirts, bare midriffs, excessively dirty shoes, flip flops
Boys: tank tops, bare midriffs, nylon athletic shorts, excessively dirty shoes, baggy pants that show boxer shorts.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is important for our program. Our discipline rules are simple.

1. Respect is to be shown for our catechists, catechist aides, all adults, pastor, one another, and property.
2. Obscene language and inappropriate responses will not be allowed.
3. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. At the discretion of the catechist, the child will be sent to the coordinator. If the situation can be resolved with the coordinator, the student will be allowed to return to session.
4. If the catechist and coordinator agree that the situation is serious enough, initial parental contact will be made by the catechist.
5. If the child's parents need to be contacted a second time, the parents will be required to come get the child and return to the session with the child during the next session.
6. If a child's parents need to be contacted a third time, the parents must accompany student for each session.
7. Catechists will handle discipline problems in a positive manner. A catechist will not physically touch a child in anger, use abusive or degrading names, or yell. Any catechist who reaches this point, should remove him/herself from the situation immediately and ask for help.

NURSERY

St. Mary's Catholic Church provides nursery care for children whose parents are serving as a catechist and children of adults who are participating in Adult Faith Formation opportunities.

The nursery is available for children between 6 weeks and 4 years of age. The nursery is staffed by volunteers and is available from 9:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. on days that Sunday School is in session. Parents should ensure that children are dropped off promptly as volunteers are dismissed after 15 minutes if no children are present.

ILLNESS

For the health and safety of all, children should not attend Sunday School or be dropped off in the nursery if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100 degrees or more within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Any unexplained rash
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Symptoms of any infectious, contagious disease, including German measles, mumps, chicken pox, etc.

Please contact the Dcn. Blue Wilson at 903-757-5893 ext. 305 or Lea Kottwitz at ext. 301 if your child develops serious allergies, problems, and/or contracts a childhood disease following a Sunday session.