

# Our Lady of Sorrows Religious Education Handbook

## OUR LADY OF SORROWS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

At your child's baptism the priest offered this prayer for you as fathers and mothers: "God is the giver of all life human and divine; may He bless you and your wonderful children; may the Holy Spirit inspire you as you are your child's first teacher of our beautiful faith." In addition to instructing your children in Christian truth, we welcome the opportunity to assist you in fulfilling your primary obligation to help you teach them. This can only be done when each family places Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of their lives through Sunday worship, family prayer and daily living as Catholics. Regular attendance at Sunday Mass with your family is an essential part of their religious education. We look forward to genuine cooperation with you in communicating Catholic Christian values to your children. We need to pray, talk and plan together.

## OVERVIEW OF THE PARISH BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Parish Based Religious Education Program offers instruction to children who attend public or private (non-parochial) school whose families are enrolled parishioners at Our Lady of Sorrows Parish. An eight year sequence of formation is offered with classes for children attending 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

The Religious Education Program is an ongoing, continuing development of the Christian personality that offers an opportunity for catechists and children to meet regularly to learn our Faith. Sacraments are not isolated events, but an integral part of the Christian life. Each level/grade in Religious Education adds to the development of your child's growth in Christian life.

Special Religious Education is a ministry that responds to the religious/ spiritual needs of persons with a physical, mental, or emotional disability which impairs their functioning in a regular classroom. Because of their disability, a child may require individualized instruction in a small group, in a one-on-one setting, or, if assistance is available, may be mainstreamed into the regular catechetical program. In consultation with the parent, the coordinator will appropriately place each child in a program that will address his/her special needs and encourage spiritual growth. We strive to offer all children Religious Education, however the Parish, at the direction of Fr. Thomas Collins, Pastor, we reserve the right to make the final determination regarding whether the Parish can meet the needs of each specific child. If we cannot meet a child's needs we will offer viable options to the family to enroll their child in a Parish that has a more specialized Religious Education Program.

**Mass Attendance** - An integral part of our Religious Education Program is that the children are expected to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Each week a different class is sent to Mass.

**The Role of the Parent** - The parent has the primary and sacred responsibility to educate his/her children in the Catholic faith. Our Religious Education Program is established to assist parents and families in fulfilling this responsibility. It is essential to the child's growth and development in the Catholic faith that the parents live the life of faith at home; the effectiveness of the religious education process radically depends upon this. The child learns in the religious education classes, that celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday is essential to being a Catholic. A child receives a "mixed message" when what is taught in Religious Education classes is not experienced by the child at home.

**The Role of the Child** - The religious obligations of children enrolled in the program include:

- Participation in the Celebration of the Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Experience the Lord's forgiveness by receiving the Sacrament of Penance frequently
- Leading a sacramental life, frequently receiving the Eucharist and following the laws, and guidelines that tell Catholics how to love God and neighbor (The Ten Commandments, Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy, The Beatitudes, Laws of the Church.)

**The classroom obligations of children enrolled in the Religious Education program are:**

- Weekly attendance at Religious Education classes;
- Proper preparation for class instruction ... Bring textbook, pencil and notebook to class;
- Completion of homework; Participation in class discussions and activities;
- Completion of special assignments; Knowledge of prayers required at each grade level;

**The Role of the Religious Education Coordinator** - The Coordinator of the program of OLS Parish is delegated by the Pastor to be responsible for the development, implementation and administration of the parish catechetical program, in accordance with the Guidelines of the Archdiocese of New York.

Responsibilities include:

- Be a resource person for parents, catechists and other adults of the parish.
- Implement the procedures for the safety of the children in accordance with Archdiocesan Safety Guidelines.
- Provide religious education for all children of the parish including those who have disabilities, to the best of our ability.

**The Role of the Catechist** - The catechist is a person of faith who has the task of creating the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in faith among believers. The primary mission of catechists is to communicate God's love to those entrusted to their care, by proclaiming the good news of Jesus. The tasks of the catechist are:

- to help individuals grow in their personal faith & spirituality;
- to assist individuals as they are initiated into the faith community, worship, and practices;
- to attend Catechist Formation Classes leading toward personal fulfillment and certification;

### **ADMISSIONS & REGISTRATION**

**Registration procedure for children presently attending classes:**

Registration for the Religious Education Program takes place each spring for classes that begin the following September; registration does not carry over from year to year, families must re-register their children each year.

- Completion of a Religious Education Registration Forms as instructed on the Parish Website
- Completion of student information record (medical emergency) for each child enrolled in the program & payment of the registration/tuition fee

**Registration procedure for children new to the program:**

- Complete steps outlined on the Parish Website.
- Submit Baptismal certificate and First Communion certificate (copies are acceptable).
- Any previous records if the child attended a Religious Education Program in a different parish.

**Tuition & Other Costs**

Registration Fees	One Child = \$175, Two Children = \$225, Three Children or more = \$300
Sacramental Fee	Communion Fee (2 <sup>nd</sup> graders) = \$100, Confirmation fee (8 <sup>th</sup> graders) = \$175

### **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Christian Initiation is celebrated in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion. Through these visible actions a young person is incorporated into the Church. Requirements for the reception of First Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation are determined by Canon Law

according to the following:

- ☐ Age of reason (to be able to distinguish right from wrong); Proper knowledge of sacraments;
- ☐ Emotional and spiritual preparation; Approval by parent, catechist, director and pastor;

The policy of OLS Parish is that a young (baptized) person who plans to receive the sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion must have completed one full year of the catechetical program and be currently enrolled in his/her second year.

**The Sacrament of Reconciliation** - The Sacrament of God's love and forgiveness continues His work of forgiving and reconciling. Catechesis of children for reconciliation seeks to...

- ☐ Make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life;
- ☐ Help the child recognize good and wrong, repent wrong doing, turn to Jesus and the Church for forgiveness.
- ☐ Encourage the child to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving;
- ☐ Encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly;

Preparation of children for Reconciliation starts in the second grade level and is a joint effort between parent and catechist. Instruction includes the second grade curriculum covered weekly in class as well as a focus on the Sacrament of Reconciliation that helps children learn what it means to share Jesus' gift of Himself, to know they are forgiven, and understand that they belong to the community of Jesus'.

**Responsibilities of Parents as their Child prepares for Reconciliation:** - The example set by parents is of the utmost importance. Parents are the primary educators of their children, they are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life of the church. Parents are expected to:

- ☐ Serve as models for their children by being moral Christians;
- ☐ Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with their families;
- ☐ Help children in forming a good conscience and a Christian code of morality;
- ☐ Take time with their child to talk about reconciliation, to read Bible stories and to pray together;

**The Sacrament of First Holy Communion** - The Sacrament of the Holy Communion is the heart of Catholic life. Providing instruction on the Sacrament of Holy Communion helps children understand that the celebration of the Eucharist forms and nourishes the faithful with Jesus. Children are taught that the Holy Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Christ, and what appears to be bread and wine are actually Jesus' Body and Blood.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated each May. All children preparing to receive their First Holy Communion must have already received the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Parents have a right and duty to be involved in preparing their children for First Holy Communion. Catechesis for First Holy Communion is conducted separately from catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation since each sacrament requires its own concentrated preparation. Preparation for First Holy Communion is a joint effort of the parents and catechists as described below:

- ☐ The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade curriculum is covered weekly in class by a catechist and followed up at home by a parent
- ☐ The First Holy Communion program helps explain the Eucharist to children, familiarize them with the main events of Jesus' life, help them to participate more meaningfully in the action of Mass, and to receive Christ's Body and Blood in Communion
- ☐ The children learn that they may receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue. Catechesis includes making the children aware of the Church's requirements for fasting (no food or drink except water or medicine for one hour before receiving Communion).

**Responsibilities of Parents as their Child prepares for First Eucharist:** Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental

life of the church. Parents are also expected to:

- ☐ Serve as models for their children by being moral Christians;
- ☐ Participate in Sunday Mass regularly with their families;
- ☐ Nurture their child in faith;
- ☐ Take time to talk with their first communicant about the Eucharist, Bible stories and pray <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

**The Sacrament of Confirmation** - The Sacrament of Confirmation is related to the other sacraments of initiation: Baptism and the Eucharist. Catholics are reborn in Baptism, strengthened by Confirmation, and sustained by the food of the Eucharist. In Confirmation young people are signed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. As the primary educators of their children, parents along with sponsors are to be intimately involved in catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, enabling them to set a better example for their children or godchildren.

**Components of the Confirmation Program:**

- ☐ Regular attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- ☐ Fulfilling the Religious Education class requirements;
- ☐ Proper preparation for class instruction and completed homework assignments;
- ☐ Selecting taking a Confirmation Name; Christian Community Service; Sponsor's Certificate
- ☐ Candidate demonstrates an adequate grasp of the content of the Catholic faith;
- ☐ Reception of the sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation (we suggest three times a year);
- ☐ Living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus;
- ☐ Participation in a Confirmation retreat;

**Responsibilities of Parents as their Child prepares for Confirmation:** Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life of the Church. Parents are also expected to:

- ☐ Serve as models for their children by being committed Christians; Worship with their families;
- ☐ Share their faith with their children both in word and action; Encourage their child to reflect on and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> sacrament of Confirmation; Attend scheduled parent sessions, participate in any activities and prayer services that may be planned to assist their son/daughter prepare for and freely request the Sacrament of <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Confirmation;
- ☐ Assist their child with the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, through <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> prayer, study, and Catholic service;
- ☐ Stress the initiation aspect of the Sacrament by encouraging their son/daughter to continue learning more about the Catholic faith;

**INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDELINES**

Our Lady of Sorrows Religious Education Program meets all of the requirements of the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York. The Archdiocese of NY has published Guidelines for Catechesis for Grades 1-6 and Grades 7 & 8, which ensure a clear and uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level. While the Guidelines are not considered a substitute for the textbook, they are of assistance to the catechist in the use of the textbook by identifying the essential content to be taught.

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

**Progress Reports** - Religious formation of the child takes place in the home, in church, and in the class setting. We will ONLY send Progress Reports home if there is a concern in any of the following areas: attendance, class performance, missing assignments, missing homework.

**Retention** - Children who do not satisfactorily complete the course of study at each grade level or do not attend the required number of catechetical sessions, may required to repeat the grade level course. This is at the discretion of the Coordinator / Pastor. In some cases make-up classes may be scheduled or additional homework assigned as a means of avoiding retention.

**Textbooks** - The Religious Education Program provides textbooks to all children enrolled in class sessions. Textbooks are distributed by the catechist to the children on the first day of classes. Textbooks are to be brought home and back to class weekly.

**Homework** - Homework reinforces classroom learning and can provide opportunities for independent study and creative thinking. Parents can help their children by checking to see that assignments are done. Parents are also encouraged to refer to the section at the end of each chapter, which offers suggestions for family activities pertaining to each lesson.

**Parent Sessions** - The purpose of these meetings is to inform families of any changes in procedure or policy and answer questions. Parent sessions also take place throughout the year for those who have children preparing for the Sacraments.

### ATTENDANCE

**Absenteeism** - Your child's attendance at Religious Education classes is **MANDATORY**. These classes should take top priority over all other programs and activities. Repeated absences will necessitate a conference between the Coordinator and the parents; excessive absences may result in a child having to repeat a grade level. Depending on the situation, attendance at make-up classes or additional homework may be assigned in order to catch up or move on to the next grade level. Always call / email the Religious Education Office when your child will be absent from class. Contact numbers are 914-949-3896 (during the week) or Email address; [olsreled@optonline.net](mailto:olsreled@optonline.net)

**Arrival Procedure** - All classes are held on Sundays at Our Lady of Sorrows School. Punctuality is very important, both for the children and the catechist. Children can begin arriving ten minutes before class time; we will have a movie / reflection music playing in the gym until the start of classes / prayer meeting. Upon entering the building for class, all children should be dropped off at the door (parents should not enter the building) and proceed directly into the gymnasium for our prayer meeting. If a child is late for class, he/she should see the attendance clerk and sign the late book before proceeding to the classroom. Three or more late passes will necessitate a conference between the Coordinator and the parents. All lateness is recorded. Parents will be consulted about chronic lateness and the child may be required to make up time missed.

**Dismissal Procedure** - Parents should arrive on time for dismissal, as we are not able to provide supervision for more than a few minutes. Children will be brought directly to the car picking them up, no parents need to enter the building at pick up time. Unsupervised children are not permitted on the grounds at any time. If it is necessary for an unescorted child to leave the building at dismissal time, a written note describing the circumstances and signed by the parents/guardian should be given to the Coordinator before the class.

**IF ARRIVING EARLY** for pick up please wait in your car or outside. Door will not open for release until the times listed above. **PLEASE NOTE:** If a child needs to be dismissed from class early, the request should be made in writing, signed by the parent and given to the Coordinator or email to [olsreled@optonline.net](mailto:olsreled@optonline.net), not the catechist, prior to the scheduled class. If anyone other than the child's parent or guardian is to pick up the student at dismissal, a Release Instruction form must be completed and returned to a staff member.

### CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

Every child who participates in the Religious Education Program is expected to cooperate in the maintenance of the building where classes are held as well as its grounds. Disruptions, disrespect, defacing or damaging property will not be tolerated. The behavior expected from each child is a combination of common courtesy and safety considerations.

## Dress Code

In the interest of safety and maintaining order, the following guidelines for dress and conduct are to be followed:

- ☐ No pajama bottoms (or tops) may be worn to class.
- ☐ No shoes/sneakers with cleats or rollers (hidden or otherwise) may be worn in the building at any time.
- ☐ Hats or caps may not be worn in the building.
- ☐ Cell phones, MP3 players, and other electronic devices may not be brought to class. If found they will be confiscated and held in the Religious Education office until claimed by the child's parent.
- ☐ Young men are asked to remove their hats while in church or the school building, as a sign of respect.

## Unacceptable Behavior includes the following:

- Fighting, Defiance of staff, Use of profanity; Refusal to prepare assignments or to participate
- Possession of dangerous objects; Possession or use of tobacco or a controlled substance
- Damage to property; Leaving the building/premises during the class without permission;
- Habitual tardiness & absenteeism; Intimidating fellow students; Throwing snowballs;
- Gum chewing; Eating while classes are in session

## COMMUNICATIONS

**Calendar** - A calendar of all class dates, holidays, times of classes will be published and distributed to all children and families at the first class meeting. Dates and times for parent sessions and classes, retreats, and all events for Sacramental programs will be published and distributed as they become available.

**Letters/Fliers/Bulletin Announcement** - Letters to parents are by email. Please update the Religious Education office on any changes to your address, phone numbers, email addresses, etc so our records are kept current. Also, please inform us if you do not have email. In addition, fliers may be sent home with the children.

**Cancellation of Classes and Events** - Inclement weather can have an impact on the class schedule. In the event of bad weather or any other emergency; cancellations will be conveyed through an email from [olsreled@optonline.net](mailto:olsreled@optonline.net) or posted on Facebook at Our Lady of Sorrows Religious Education & Parish Updates.

## SAFETY & OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION

**Crisis Management Plan & Evacuation Drills** - A Crisis Management Plan will be followed in the unlikely event that in the interest of safety the children, catechists and other personnel must be relocated from the school building during class time. Evacuation drills are held twice a year (once in the fall and once in the spring).

**Medication** - No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) will be administered to, or taken by, any child during class sessions. If an exception needs to be made, the parent should speak to the Coordinator and there must be a doctor's note.

**Transportation** - Parents will assume responsibility for the transportation of their children to and from where classes take place. Please do not make arrangements to pick up your child on Mamaroneck Avenue (this is due to safety concerns noted by the church and White Plains Police Department). All children must be picked up from the OLS School. Any changes, requires a signed note and confirmed by the Coordinator.

**Medical Emergency Procedures (in case of accident or illness)** - If a child incurs a relatively minor

injury while attending the catechetical program, the following steps are taken: The catechist reports the accident immediately to the Coordinator; if bleeding is involved, the procedure outlined under “Blood borne Pathogens” (found in the “Catechist Handbook”) are followed;

- the Coordinator notifies the parent (if the parent cannot be reached, the Coordinator follows the instructions on the Student Information Record); if there does appear to be an injury, a copy of the accident report should also be sent to the Archdiocese of NY; the Coordinator keeps a copy of the accident report on file in the Religious Education office
- In case of serious accident or illness: The catechist immediately reports the accident to the Coordinator and 911 is called. The Coordinator notifies the parent. If the parent cannot be reached, the Coordinator follows the instructions on the Student Information Record; the Coordinator notifies the Archdiocesan Insurance Division so that they will be prepared in the event that an accident or illness gives rise to a claim;
- the Coordinator completes the accident form, keeps a copy in the file, and sends copies to: Archdiocesan Insurance Division, 1011 First Avenue, NY, NY 10022

**Medical Condition of a Child**- The parent must inform the Coordinator about any medical condition their child has which could flare up during a session (e.g. allergies, asthma, the possibility of seizures, etc.) or if the child has a condition which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. hyperactivity, ADD, other learning disability, etc.) This confidential information is communicated to the catechist by the Coordinator.

**Visitors** - All visitors must report to the Religious Education staff and sign in. Photo ID may be requested.

**Valuables** - The catechetical staff cannot be responsible for valuables which children bring to class. It is recommended that all valuables be left at home. Please have your child refrain from bringing toys to class; this is a huge distraction for the students and catechists.

**Snacks** - Food is not permitted in the classrooms during the class sessions because some children may have medical restrictions or allergies to certain foods or ingredients. Children should have their meals/snacks before entering the building for classes.

June 2023