

Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church
Religious Education Catechist Handbook
2009 – 2010



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Catechesis and the Proclamation of the Word

Dear Catechists,

The formation of the students of Our Lady of Hope Parish in the Catholic Faith is a vital and important ministry. Thank you for your commitment, dedication and willingness to share the Catholic Faith.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) set this year's catechetical theme as *Catechesis and the Proclamation of the Word*. Helping others to know and live the Word of God is a fundamental goal for all catechetical efforts. It is through the Church that we are able to truly encounter the living Christ through Scripture, Tradition, Liturgy and Sacraments.

“The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command - to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded” (*Catechesi Tradendae*). As the General Directory for Catechesis notes, “The Lord Jesus invites men and women, in a special way, to follow Him, teacher and formator of disciples. This personal call of Jesus Christ and its relationship to Him are the true moving forces of catechetical activity.”

We are looking forward to working with you this school year. It is truly a privilege to know that God has entrusted us as catechists with “the heart of the Church,” the youth. May God bless you in your catechetical efforts.

As a Catechist, you demonstrate the qualities of a person who has responded to the call of Christ to give witness to His Gospel, and to be committed to the work of the Church. Through this work, you share in and are a servant of the faith community at Our Lady of Hope. To reflect this position all catechists and aides are asked to read, sign, and return an Oath of Fidelity.

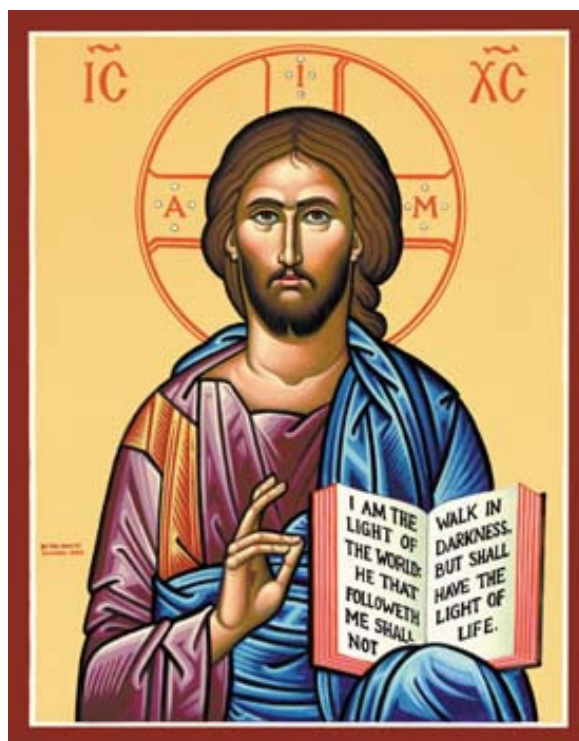
Jesus was sent to reveal the deepest truth about God. He then commissioned His Church to do the same: to teach about God, and to foster love of God and one another.

All Catechists, as Heralds of the Word, must give support to the Church's official teaching on all matters of faith and morals. We are not bearers of our own message, but rather the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You represent Christ to the youth, and speak in His name. Thank you for your service!

Sincerely in Christ



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Prayer for Catechists

Jesus, you told us that laborers for the vineyard would be few and that we should pray to the Lord in the hope that many might respond. You have answered our prayers by sending us catechists for your vineyard.

Bless these men and women who have responded to your call to the ministry of catechesis. May they be filled with zeal for your Church, with care for those they catechize, and with love for your Word of Life. Let your Spirit come upon them so that your Word may echo through their teaching and through the witness of their lives. Through our catechists, may the members of our parish whom they teach be transformed into witnesses to your Word. And may these catechists receive the blessing your Son promised to all who labor in your vineyard.

We pray to you, gracious Father, in the name of your Son, Jesus, the Word of Life, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit who transforms us by that Word, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Overview of Program Elements

Religious Education Mission Statement

Our Lady of Hope Religious Education Program looks upon each child as created in the image and likeness of God and as a reflection of His goodness. Realizing that God has created all things for His glory and our benefit, the challenge of being a living witness to the Gospel should be central to the development of each student. Therefore, at Our Lady of Hope, understanding Jesus and His message is essential to knowing Him, loving Him and serving Him always.

The core elements listed below form the foundation and strength of the Our Lady of Hope Religious Education Program. The dignity of the individual, as a unique child of God, is nurtured and developed.

- The doctrine of the Catholic faith is presented in its fullness and entirety as both knowledge to be learned and as life to be lived.
- Sacramental life is central to developing the Catholic faith.
- That the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the center of our faith.
- The frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist is promoted.
- Reverence for God's Word is fostered.
- Mary's example, as the first disciple of Jesus, is our model.
- Parents are recognized and respected as the primary educators of their children.
- That the Gospel message and moral life expressed in the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are professed, cultivated and practiced in everyday life.
- That the virtues are fostered and practiced in every day life.
- Reading and studying the lives of the saints as an example for us is encouraged.
- Prayer is necessary for growth in spiritual life - the Rosary, personal prayer, the Mass, etc.

The Parent/Catechist Partnership

Parents are the primary religious educators of their children (CCC 1653). The home is where a child should first experience the Catholic faith. The Religious Education Program aims to work in partnership with parents, in order to assist them in living their vocation as educators of their children. The Religious Education Program should merely complement, not replace, the catechesis that children should receive in the home.

Curriculum

The Image of God Series (Ignatius Press) is used for Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten, and the *Faith and Life* Series for the first through eighth grades (Ignatius Press). The Sacramental Preparation for Older Children (SPOC) class will use *Growing in Faith* curriculum by Sadlier supplemented by the *St. Joseph First Communion Catechism*. It is recommended that catechists teaching a grade for the first time consult the Ignatius Press website under catechism series for the theme, sequence and aim of the curriculum for each grade.

Each grade level has a specific curriculum guide provided by the Diocese entitled, "Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines." This curriculum guideline contains the required basic instructional objectives for each grade, and provides not only objectives but strategies as well. You can refer to it to plan your lessons to be sure all of it is covered in your year of classes. By covering the material in your Ignatius Press *Faith and Life* textbooks you will meet the Diocesan requirements. The Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines for your grade level can be obtained from the Diocesan website at www.arlingtondiocese.org.

Catechists should not feel obligated to complete every single chapter nor give the same time allotment to all chapters as long as the Diocesan guidelines are met. *Second Grade Catechists must prioritize sacramental preparation for First Penance and First Holy Communion over text completion.*

Children's Holy Hour

An integral part of our Religious Education Program will be the Children's Holy Hour, which occurs five times throughout this school year. In addition to learning the mysteries of the Faith, students are given the opportunity for worship and to express faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Participation will include grades second through eighth. Proper manners in God's house should be stressed and reviewed for a short time prior to the Holy Hour. Parents are encouraged to attend and catechists are urged to have their students encourage their parents to attend. Children will return to the classroom for dismissal.

Eucharistic Adoration

The command to adore the one, true God was a command given to Moses. (Exodus 20:2-7). Eucharistic Adoration will be offered during Confession. Catechists are encouraged to plan their lessons in order to allow ample time for the students to examine their consciences and to pray before our Lord in the monstrance after receiving the sacrament.

The Sacrament of Confession

The opportunity for Confession will be offered three times during the school year: near the beginning of the new school year, during Advent and during Lent. All students grade three through eight participate. All students are expected to know the Act of Contrition by heart and the proper procedures for the sacrament. Third grade catechists must allow class time for review as many students will not have received the sacrament since their First Penance. All catechists should encourage students to go to Confession with their families on a monthly basis.

Festival of Lessons and Carols

The Festival of Lessons and Carols will be held on Tuesday evening, December 22, 2009. This service is a sequence of readings from Sacred Scripture interspersed with the singing of traditional Christmas carols that foretell Jesus' birth. The service also includes a Nativity scene in the form of a tableaux vivant. Children in the lower grades are encouraged to dress as angels and shepherds. A reception follows in the parish hall.

Prayers to be Taught

Each class should begin and end with a prayer. The Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines assign basic prayers to be learned for each grade level. Most of the prayers are in the back of the *Faith and Life* textbook. These prayers are to be reviewed, explained and memorized by the students. It is crucial for students to learn these prayers in order to most fully participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the church.

Throughout the year, catechists are to review the prayers and have the students pray the prayers learned both in their current grade and in the preceding grades.

Grade	Prayers to be Learned
Kindergarten:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genuflection • Grace Before Meals • Hail Mary • Our Father • Sign of the Cross
Grade 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glory Be
Grade 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guardian Angel Prayer • Act of Contrition • Act of Faith (simple form) • Act of Hope (simple form) • Act of Love (simple form) • Morning Offering
Grade 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apostles' Creed • Rosary • All Mysteries of the Rosary
Grade 4:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts of Faith, Hope & Love (Standard Form) • Rosary
Grade 5:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divine Praises • Hail Holy Queen • Memorare
Grade 6:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stations of the Cross
Grade 7:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer to the Holy Spirit • The Angelus • The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi • The Regina Coeli
Grade 8:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write personal petitions for liturgical use • See Psalms as prayers that express our needs

May Crowning

The Religious Education Program celebrates each May with a traditional May Crowning honoring Mary, the Mother of God. This Marian celebration is an important devotion; therefore, each class session will have its own May Crowning on May 11 or 12. Each child will present a flower to a statue of our Blessed Mother. There will also be a time for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and benediction. CDs are available with the Marian hymns sung, in order that the students can practice beforehand and participate more fully. Catechists' lesson plans in April should allow some time for this practice.

Diocesan Formation in Christian Chastity Program

The Diocese of Arlington has implemented a program as part of their Child Protection Policy called "Formation in Christian Chastity." The Diocese has mandated that grades second through fourth be taught at home; and for grades first and fifth through eighth to be implemented in all Catholic schools and Religious Education Programs.

Formation in Christian Chastity helps children to develop an awareness of the dignity of the human person and the integrity and holiness of the human body. We want to ensure that the years of innocence of the children be respected and that the parents are their primary educators of the children. There are two lesson plans for each grade first and fifth through eighth; all the lessons are very tame and avoid any discussion of human biology or anatomy. Some of the topics that will be covered are Love God and neighbor, Chastity, the key to holiness, vocations, love and responsibility, and the sacrament of marriage. Parents can review any of the material that will be taught in the classroom. All lesson plans used are on the Diocese of Arlington website. The Diocesan lessons refer to the book *Talking to Youth about Sexuality: A Parents Guide*. The Religious Education Office has obtained several copies of this book for catechists or parents to use or review.

The lessons are opt-in / opt-out. The class date for the teaching is January 26 and 27. Parents will be notified ahead of time, and if they do not desire to have their children attend, they may simply not bring them to class that evening.

Resource Room

Audio-Visual materials can provide an excellent stimulus for discussion, clarification or review. Students are familiar with audio-visuals and look forward to the discriminate use of such media. DVDs, books, catechisms, activity books, music and posters are available in the Religious Education library located in the Parish Offices. A catalogue of the library's videos and resources is available online. Please do not check out more than two videos at a time; and please return all resources as soon as possible (*Please do not keep the videos for more than two weeks*).

Substitutes

If you are unable to teach your class on a given day, please first ask your aide to teach the class. If the aide does not feel comfortable in a teaching role, please call the Religious Education Office and inform them of your absence from class as soon as you can. Never have someone substitute in your class who has not completed the Diocesan Child Safety requirements.

Classroom Policies

Attendance/Absentee Policy

Attendance taking is typically a task assigned to the aide. Attendance should be recorded as soon as possible after the start of class. Please keep accurate records. For those classes preparing students for the reception of the sacraments, no more than five total absences will be permitted. For all classes, it is recommended that after two consecutive absences, the catechist or aide should contact the parent by phone or email. *Please be sure to turn your attendance sheets into the Religious Education Office at the end of December and May.* These sheets are very important to the Religious Education Office in recording accurate attendance for students' permanent records, particularly when a student transfers to another parish or is preparing to receive a sacrament. Perfect Attendance Certificates are awarded to students with no absences at the end of the Religious Education school year.

It is imperative to return the attendance sheet to your lobby mail box at the end of each class session. If for some reason you are unable to attend the next class and your sheet is missing, it is difficult to annotate attendance properly.

Classroom Visitations by Parish Priests

Father Saunders and Fr. Fimian will be visiting each class. Ideally, each class will be visited by one priest once per semester. Please have the children stand and greet the priest as he enters the classroom. For your planning purposes, a schedule will be given out at the beginning of each semester. They will spend about 20 minutes of class time. Students are encouraged to ask the priests any questions they may have. If you have a specific topic that you would like the priest to discuss, please contact the priest or the RE Office ahead of time to plan accordingly.

Homework Assignments

Catechists are asked to assign homework weekly for the students in first through eighth grades. The Activity Book should be used in class as well as homework. Questions at the end of each chapter should be assigned as well. The parents should assist their child with homework if needed. Homework should be reviewed each week in class.

Report Cards

Catechists/Aides will provide a standard written evaluation of a student's progress to the parents three times during the school year (November, February and May). Catechists are asked to keep the returned report cards during the school year for the final report card in May. Report cards will include the child's understanding of the material covered as reflected by test scores, the child's completion of homework assignments, prayers mastered, class participation, and behavior. We recognize that marks may not adequately reflect the degree to which a student is maturing in his/her Catholic life, but they do reflect how well they comprehend the material being presented. A ranking of Excellent or Needs Improvement or a grade of A or D and below must include a comment from the catechists.

Respect for School Property

Children should be told not to touch or play with any of the materials in the classroom; they belong to Our Lady of Hope School and must remain where they are. If a student damages any of the school property, parents and the Director of Religious Education are to be notified. Please ensure that the students do not touch classroom artwork. If you move anything, move it back to its original position prior to leaving. Desks, tables, chalkboards, and the screen cover should be left in their original condition. Be especially careful with the SmartBoard screen – never use regular markers on this board! It is extremely important that aides walk around the classroom during class time to prevent any children from damaging classroom materials. Otherwise, the students will quickly learn that they can do what they want.

Dress Code

Catechists and aides are expected to wear modest clothing appropriate for the classroom. **Shorts are never appropriate to wear to class.** Catechists are also expected to enforce the student's dress code with particular emphasis on the days that Adoration, confessions and Holy Hour are scheduled. Students also are expected to wear modest clothing to class. Shorts, tops which do not cover the midriff area, pants hanging off of hips, mini-skirts, spaghetti straps, graphic depictions or written references to drugs, alcohol, weapons or graphic sexual connotation or profanity may not appear on any clothing. If a student violates this policy, his or her parents should immediately be called. The parents should bring alternative clothes for the student to change into so that he or she may return to class.

Classroom Discipline

All disciplinary action should be administered with Christian love. Good discipline is a part of Christian education; be firm and consistent. It is necessary to establish order in the classroom.

In the event that a student's classroom behavior is disruptive, the catechist should:

- Not allow the disruptive situation to continue to persist in the classroom
- Not embarrass the child in front of classmates
- Speak to the child and try to encourage the student to change their behavior
- If the student continues to be disruptive, send the student to the Director of Religious Education who will speak to the student.
- If this attempt is not successful, the parents will be contacted and asked to work with their child and the catechist to have this behavior corrected.
- Talk to parents if necessary
- If this does not work, the parent **MUST** accompany the student to class until the student's behavior is acceptable for the classroom environment.

Note: Never tell a parent that their child has been disruptive *for the first time* on a student's report card without having spoken to the parents about the problem beforehand.

Learning Disabilities / Health Related Problems

If a child has a learning disability or health-related problem, this information will be on the child's registration card, if the parents have chosen to share the information with us. *All information should remain confidential.* If you have any concerns about the child, please speak to the parent. The Religious Education Program has a group of Special Education volunteers that may be able to assist you with any special learning or behavioral challenges. Please call the Religious Education Office for their assistance. Catechists will not be expected to administer any medications or epi-pens.

Classroom Parties & Celebrations

The Festival of Lessons and Carols should be viewed as the Christmas celebration. A small celebration at the end of the year may occur with permission from the Religious Education Office. These are the only two dates when food should be brought to class. Please alert parents of any celebration, keeping in mind that there may be food allergies in your class.

Dismissal Policy

The following *safety regulations* have been formulated to ensure the safety of each student and will be strictly enforced.

Parking Directives

- Catechists, Aides, and Other Volunteers are to park in the upper parking lot closest to the school building.
- Parent Parking: Parents may park in any area in the church parking lot that is available.

Drop off and Pick up of Students:

- Entrance and Exit: The entrance and exit on the Cascades and Algonkian Parkway side of the property will be open for drop off and pick up of students
- Students must wait quietly in the hall until either the catechist or aide arrives. Children will not be permitted to be in the classrooms unattended.
- Drop Off: At the discretion of the parents, students in grades 3 through 8 maybe dropped off in front of the school. Parents that have Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and first and second grade students are asked to bring their child into the class room.
- Families that will be sharing carpool duties need to inform you ahead of time if someone other than the parent will pick up their children from class.
- Pick Up: All parents and carpools are asked to come in and pick up the students in their classroom. The only exceptions are the eighth graders, who can be picked up in the lobby. For the safety of every student, no student will be dismissed to the parking lot by themselves.
- For the safety of all the children, no child will be dismissed early from class, unless the parent comes in to pick up their child.

Cancellations

If Loudoun County Public Schools cancels school for the day, dismisses school early due to inclement weather, or if county afternoon and evening activities are cancelled, then Religious Education classes are likewise cancelled. If classes are cancelled by the parish for whatever reason, an email will be sent to each family as soon as possible. When in doubt contact the Religious Education Office at 703-433-6777. Also make sure to check the front doors of the school building for a notice that classes are canceled.

Audio Visual

Occasionally, you may wish to use a video for class. Each classroom has a TV with a DVD & VHS player. To use the equipment, turn on the VCR. Then turn the TV to channel "001." Then press the channel down button slowly twice. This will put the TV on channel "AV2." If the movie does not appear, try pressing the "DVD/VCR" button on the DVD player.

Sacramental Preparation

Introduction to Sacramental Preparation

A very important aspect of the Religious Education program is sacramental preparation. Children are prepared for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation. The preparation involves both parents and students through parent meetings and student assignments. Students are required to attend Religious Education classes regularly for one year prior to the sacramental year to give the child a firm foundation on which to base specific preparation for the sacraments. Students preparing to receive a sacrament may not have any more than five total absences.

If you are a Catechist or Aide for any of the sacramental classes (2nd, 8th, SPOC) you are expected to be available to assist at all functions associated with the sacraments to include: retreats, rehearsals, receptions and the First Holy Communion and Confirmation Masses.

Sacramental Preparation for Older Children (SPOC)

The Sacramental Preparation for Older Children class is for students, between 4th and 8th grade, who have not yet received the sacraments of Baptism and/or Penance and First Holy Communion. Each student will need to complete homework assignments, memorize certain prayers, complete the weekly Mass Attendance sheets, and return them to the catechist on a monthly basis. By the end of this one-year class, the children will have received the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion for the first time.

Sacramental Preparation for High School Children

On an as needed basis, a sacramental preparation class for all high school students in grades 9 and 10 who have not yet received the sacraments of Baptism, Penance, First Holy Communion, and/or Confirmation will be scheduled. Please instruct parents to call the Religious Education Office to register their child for this class. High school students in Grades 11 and 12 who have not received the basic sacraments will be enrolled in the Parish RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) which begins in September each year.

Mass Attendance Record

Students in *second grade* and SPOC are expected to complete a Mass Attendance Sheet each week. This sheet must be returned to the catechist on a weekly basis for record keeping. Failure to complete these forms, and most importantly, failure to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, may jeopardize the child's timely reception of the sacraments. Monthly Mass Attendance logs should be forwarded to the RE Office.

Diocesan Catechist Guidelines

Catechist Certification

The Diocese of Arlington has recently revised the requirements for Catechist Certification. The new requirements can be viewed at <http://arlingtondiocese.org/religious/training.php>. It is not required for catechists or aides to pursue certification; however, everyone is encouraged to do so. Various programs and classes are available to assist you in acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to communicate the Gospel message effectively. You may take advantage of these opportunities (and others) to work your way toward Catechist Certification:

- Notre Dame Graduate School Courses (for audit or credit)
- Master Catechist Training Program
- Catholic Education Center
- Diocesan Catechetical Conference
- Our Lady of Hope Catechist Workshops
- Catholic Distance University Online Courses
- Father Saunders' annual Inquiry Class

The Diocesan Child Protection Policy

For the safety of the children in its care, the Diocese of Arlington requires all volunteers who have substantial association with children to adhere to its *Policy on the Protection of Children*. This includes all catechists and aides in the Religious Education Program. The requirements of this program are as follows:

- Complete the following policy forms: the Questionnaire, the Code of Conduct signature page, and the Acknowledgment of Receipt form (which is the last page in the policy).
- Complete the Background Check forms, which must be notarized.
- Attend the "Protecting God's Children" *Virtus* Seminar. Anyone who has previously attended this seminar will not need to attend again. You must **pre-register online** to attend the seminar.

Please note that there will be a *Virtus* Seminar at Our Lady of Hope Parish on Saturday, November 21, 2009, from 9am-1pm. If you have any questions about this, please contact our Parish Coordinator of Child Protection Ben Zumdahl at 703-433-6777.