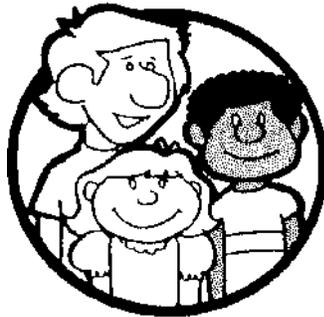


**St. Mary, Mother of the Church Parish
Fishkill, New York**

Religious Education Program

PARENT HANDBOOK



(845) 896-6430
(845) 896-6764 fax
stmaryre@optonline.net

Revised – Sept, 2017

"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!"

INTRODUCTION

"Let us walk in the light of the Lord!" Isaiah 2:5

Religious Education is the process of communicating the beliefs, values, and practices which make people Catholic Christians. It is the work of handing on, from one generation to the next, the faith that has come down to us from Jesus and the apostles and the way of life to which that faith calls us.

The goal of Religious Education is:

- To teach students what a Catholic believes and how a Catholic lives in response to that message;
- To encourage involvement in the life of the parish, .e. in worship, community and service;
- To encourage continued religious development and ongoing religious education throughout one's lifetime.

Priest: "You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

Parents: "We do."

Rite of Baptism

Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. They teach informally but powerfully by example and instruction. They communicate Catholic Christian values and attitudes by:

- Showing love for Jesus and the Church and each other.
- Reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit.
- Fostering justice and love in all their relationships.
- Being actively involved in their parish community.
- Seeking opportunities to serve others.
- Praying frequently and spontaneously.

In this way parents make meaningful their professions of belief and nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith.

Excerpt from the National Catechetical Directory (N.C.D.#212)

Essential to a child's growth and development in the Catholic faith is the life of faith lived at home. The Religious Education Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their children in the faith. It complements the foundational education in faith being given by the parents. It furthers the child's growth in faith by giving specific religious instruction which builds upon and reinforces the positive faith development fostered by the parents. On entering the parish religious education program, the child begins to study in a community much wider than the family.

THE PRINCIPLE GOAL OF ST. MARY'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM IS TO SUPPORT, ASSIST AND ENCOURAGE PARENTS IN THEIR ROLE AS THE PRIMARY CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS OF THEIR CHILDREN. IT IS IN THE FAMILY, THROUGH THEIR PARENTS' WORDS AND EXAMPLES THAT CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT GOD.

THUS, PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IS THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH PARISH CATECHESIS IS BUILT AND IS NECESSARY AND EXPECTED THROUGHOUT EACH CHILD'S ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM.

THE PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Since Vatican Council II, the responsibility of providing a comprehensive, integrated and total approach to Religious Education in the parish is shared by the Pastor and the parochial staff.

ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE GRADES K THROUGH 8.

The Kindergarten through eighth grade program available at St. Mary's gives the student an opportunity for a systematic, foundational presentation of the faith and the benefit of a variety of teaching and learning styles through the different catechists and classmates they encounter.

Classes meet weekly for thirty (30) weeks each year (mid-September until mid-May) and are 90 minutes in length. In addition, the Archdiocesan requirement for 5 hours of Family Catechesis is offered in a variety of formats.

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of New York that the parish hires a certified Director of Religious Education, who, under the authority of the Pastor and along with the parish catechetical staff and/or the parish education committee, establish policies and make decisions concerning the administration of the Religious Education Program.

Mrs. Katherine Hamilton, St. Mary's Religious Education Director, holds a Masters Degree in Religious Education and Youth Ministry and has been certified and re-certified every five years, by the Archdiocese of New York as a Director of Religious Education.

Sr. Jean Tavin, the Program Coordinator, holds a Masters Degree in Elementary Education, is certified by the State of New York and has an extensive background in Catholic Education, Religious Education and Parish Ministry.

Ms. Connie Puswald, the program secretary, holds a Bachelors Degree in Communication and Archdiocesan Level I & II Catechist Certification.

The men and women who volunteer to teach in our parish Religious Education Program are known as catechists. Catechists are expected to participate in a variety of teaching and learning programs which are provided both by the parish and by the archdiocese.

All the program catechists volunteer their time, talents and energies to this ministry. Any parish members interested in entering this catechetical ministry are invited to do so by calling the Religious Education Office or the Rectory. Catechists must agree to submit to a background check, attend a Safer Spaces seminar, provide references, and follow the topics listed in the Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines when presenting their classes. Catechists are encouraged and expected to attend the educational, spiritual, and methodological courses of the Catechist Formation Program which leads to certification by the Archdiocese. Resources and educational opportunities are also provided on the parish level.

POLICIES

Attendance

- **Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes.**
- When a student is absent, the office should be contacted by the parent or legal guardian explaining the reason for the absence.
- Every attempt should be made to communicate with the child's Catechist.
- **It is the responsibility of the student and parent(s) to make up the work missed. If a child is absent, the parent should contact the catechist so that the missed lesson can be completed at home. If a parent expects a student to miss a number of classes, the office should be contacted to make arrangements for the assignments to be completed at home. Failure to do so may result in the student receiving a failing final grade.**
- **Missing three classes per semester is considered frequent absences.**
- **Excessive absence will result in the repeat of the year's material or attendance in our summer remedial program to make up work. Excessive absence is attending less than 75% of scheduled classes. (For example, 6 absences of 30 scheduled classes is excessive.)**

Please note: Because we don't generally schedule make-up classes, the number of scheduled classes may change due to occurrences such as cancellation due to inclement weather. This may happen later in the school year. In such a case, it is possible for a student with frequent or borderline excessive absences earlier in the year to become excessively absent without missing another class.

- Students are expected to be on time for class in order to attend the full class period each week.
- "The Archdiocesan recommended method of dismissal is to have the parent come to the classroom where the children are waiting under the care of the catechist." Therefore, parents are asked to wait in the school lobby until the dismissal bell rings, at which time they are asked to proceed to and wait, if necessary, outside the classroom door. **Transportation providers must PRINT and SIGN their name on the sign-out sheet for each student before they may be dismissed by the catechist.**
- Any behavior which can cause harm to self or another student such as hitting, kicking, pushing, throwing objects or possession of any items that can cause harm to self or others is strictly prohibited. Also, use of profane, intimidating, harassing, insulting or disturbing language or actions are similarly prohibited. Students must understand that engagement in any such behavior or possession of such items will result in immediate removal from class and parent notification.
- St. Mary's Parish Religious Education Program reserves the right to remove a student from the group session: if it is believed that the student would benefit significantly from an individual or a smaller group situation, if the student's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group as a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior
- Mass attendance is central to our Catholic Faith. It is the Source and Summit of our faith as Catholics. Regular Mass attendance is expected of all children in our Religious Education Program.

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES:

We seek to have a cooperative learning environment for ALL of our children to learn and grow in their Catholic faith and religious knowledge. Disruptive behavior impacts an entire class. Our catechists are volunteers with varying levels of expertise in classroom management.

- Catechists will establish classroom norms and communicate them with their students.
- Behavior issues will be promptly addressed. Children who are unable to participate in a cooperative fashion will be sent by the catechist to the Director/Coordinator for assessment.
- Parents will be notified when disruptive behaviors are unable to be managed in our environment.
- Parent participation is welcome when children have special behavioral concerns that cannot be managed in the classroom.

ELECTONICS: Electronic devices (ie phones / games etc.) represent a challenge for classroom management.

- Unless phones are being used as part of a classroom activity they are to be turned off and out of sight the entire time the students are in the building.
- The catechist has the right to confiscate phones / games if they are visible and being used inappropriately.
- The catechist will return them at the end of the session to the parent who is signing the student out.
- Electronic games have no place in the classroom and should be left at home along with any items that would be distracting in a learning environment.

FAMILY CATECHESIS:

In order to support parents in their role of First Teachers of the Faith the Archdiocese of NY has instituted a requirement of all Catechetical Programs to provide Family Catechesis in multiple formats. This requirement stipulates that Families participate in 5 hours of Family Catechesis in addition to the classroom experience. We offer Family Catechesis in a flexible format with multiple options to meet this requirement.

- See Passport to Faith Brochure for our annual selections.
- Attendance is taken at each event.
- Attendance at 'Adult Only' Formation offerings will count as one credit for the entire family.
- Pre-registration and small fees for certain events may be required as space is limited and specialized supplies or guest speakers are often provided.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL AT ALL GRADE LEVELS.

- **Each week, Parents Are Expected to read and review the material covered in class and discuss it with their child prior to the next class.**
- **Each year, there will be multiple opportunities for Adult Formation, Family Formation and Liturgical celebrations as part of our Family Passport to Faith. Participation in 5 is the minimum requirement for each child/family. (Parents who attend the Adult only sessions receive credit for all of the children in our program)**
- **And, each year, since all teaching of the Catholic faith is meant to bear fruit in a person's Christian life, parents are encouraged to involve their child(ren) in parish activities and service.**
- **Celebration of Sunday Liturgy (Mass) is the primary expression of this membership. Therefore, any child enrolled in the Religious Education Program is required to attend Mass regularly with their family.**
- **One of the goals of Religious Education is to teach students to assume active membership in the Church. Children are encouraged to join the choir and serve at the altar as altar servers when they become of age.**

PREPAREDNESS:

- All students will be given a book or a weekly reader as part of their class supplies.
- The book is necessary for every class session. If the book does not come 2 weeks in a row it will be assumed that it is lost and there is a \$20 replacement fee.
- Pencils and other supplies are provided by the program.

PROGRESS REPORTS AND TESTING:

- Progress Reports will be distributed twice a year in midyear and at the conclusion of the session.
- The Archdiocese of NY encourages us to give quizzes and grade level assessments regularly in the classroom to ascertain students understanding and processing of the materials.
 - Parents will receive copies of all tests/ quizzes given and are asked to review them with their children for reinforcement.
 - Parents of children with special needs that would impact assessing are asked to be in communication at all times with the catechist and offer appropriate assistance in modifying assessment tools.

REGISTRATION:

All parents should call the Religious Education Office at 896-6430, in early spring of the year their child enters Kindergarten or First Grade, to arrange for enrollment in the program. Thereafter, parents of students are asked to re-register their children when re-registration begins in the spring.

- To register a child in the Religious Education Program, a family must be registered in St. Mary's Parish.
- Each child must be registered in the program by a parent or legal guardian prior to attending classes. Legal guardians must provide proper court documentation at registration.
- A Baptismal Certificate must be presented at the time of registration.
- Custodial parents must supply the Director with a copy of the court decree regarding custody, including the rights of the non-custodial parent. All information will be held in the strictest confidence.
- **All students are expected to complete grade levels one through eight. We do offer Kindergarten on several afternoons as well. Studies show that the younger a child is when he/she enters Religious Education, the more receptive they are to the concepts as they grow.**
- Students who have missed any grade will be expected to attend that grade or make-up the work missed in our catch up classes.
Arrangements to do so must be discussed and agreed upon with the DRE prior to implementation.
- If a child has a disability or a special need, it is very important that parents notify the Director at the time of registration, so that together they can plan a program of study in which the child's needs may be adequately met.
- A child who transfers from one Religious Education Program to another is required to bring a transcript from the previous parish in order to be properly placed in a grade level for which they are best suited.
- Each year, students will be given an emergency contact form will need to be filled out, signed, and returned by the parent to the religious education office. Throughout the school year, parents are expected to update the religious education office immediately upon any changes to the information contained on the emergency record sheet.
- In a serious emergency, attempts to contact parents will be made in the following order: home phone; parental cell phones; parental work phones; emergency contact. In most other cases, attempts to contact parents will be limited to home and cell phone numbers.
- In addition, each family is requested to have a Media Release form on file so that we have permission to complete certain class and sacramental projects that require display of photographs or names. Occasionally we will publicize student work on the parish website or in the parish bulletin.
- **Fees:** The current fee for the Religious Education Program is \$165 per child / \$225.00 for 2 or more children in the same family. All fees are due at the time of registration. We offer a parishioner rebate of \$50 for families who have used 40 or more envelopes at weekly mass. A Parishioner Rebate form is available to apply for the rebate. (Sacramental Program Fees and special materials may be required at certain grade levels.) There is a \$25.00 Late fee after July 1st of each calendar year for the coming school year. Once registered, classes may be refunded less the \$25.00 Registration fee. There are no refunds once our classes have begun in September.

There may be additional fees for Sacrament Years and Resource Books in certain grades.

INCLEMENT WEATHER:



- St. Mary's Religious Education Program follows the **Wappingers Central School District** regarding inclement weather. **THIS IS ONLY FOR** weather related closings.

*If the Wappingers schools close because of poor weather conditions, then our classes for that day are cancelled even if the weather conditions improve during the day.

*If the Wappingers schools close early because of poor weather conditions, then our classes for that day are cancelled.

If snowy or icy conditions begin in the afternoon:

Cancellation of our classes will be announced via email or posted on www.cancellations.com

Make-up classes - To compensate for class time missed due to inclement weather, parents will be notified by individual classroom catechists of lessons to be completed at home. **These lessons will necessitate parental involvement and supervision, include assignments to be submitted or discussed in subsequent classes, and impact student's grade and/ or grade level completion.**

PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE TO SEE IF CLASSES ARE CANCELLED.

Finally, always follow your judgement concerning the conditions for driving. If classes are not cancelled but you believe the weather conditions in your area are unsafe for you to transport your child to classes, please stay at home. Call your child's catechist sometime before or after class so that you may complete that day's activities and assignments with your child at home.

TRANSPORTATION:

Fire code regulations forbid parking along either side of the drive toward the school, in front of the school or around the circle. Please be certain that anyone who may be responsible for transporting your child to or from class knows not to park along the drive or around the circle.



The drive to the school and around the circle is one way, from the lower parking area toward the upper parking lot.

In order to establish a safe environment for all students enrolled in the program, it is essential that:

- No child be left more than ten minutes before or picked up ten minutes after their scheduled class time. In the event of an emergency please call 845-896-6430 to contact Religious Ed Staff on the premises.
The parish cannot guarantee supervision beyond these times.
- Transportation providers must park in the upper parking area, use the front lobby doors and drop students off in the gym.
- At dismissal time, transportation providers must park in the upper parking area and wait in the school lobby for students to be dismissed. Parents can then sign their children out at the classroom.
- No student may be brought to class or dismissed to anyone not of legal age or responsibility, unless specific arrangements have been made with the RE Office staff by the student's parent or legal guardian.
- **There are NO early dismissals permitted during the last 15 minutes of class time.** If a child must be released from class early, parents/guardians are asked to submit a signed letter to the re office indicating the reason, the date and time their child is to be released, and the name of the person picking the child up at the beginning of the class session. Upon arrival, the designated person must notify the office staff of their arrival and the child(ren) will be brought to the school lobby by an office staff member.
- Please make every effort to prevent the need for early dismissal from class. Taking your child early disrupts the student's learning process. In addition, it disrupts the flow of the class for the teacher. Multiple early dismissals will result in the need to make up classes.

CURRICULUM

The Archdiocese of New York has published Guidelines for Catechesis which ensures a clear and uniform presentation of the faith for each grade level (1-8). These Guidelines are implemented in all parish Religious Education Programs and parochial schools throughout the Archdiocese.

Through the use of the Guidelines, all children of St. Mary's Parish and their families are invited and encouraged to grow in faith, in their ability to pray, in their appreciation for the sacraments and in their awareness of themselves as vital members of the community of faith.

The following are the themes and objectives as stated in the Guidelines.

Grade 1 - God is our Father who loves us. Jesus is the Son of God who tells us about our Father. The Holy Spirit helps us to be holy.

Objective: To develop an awareness of God who gives life and grace to us, the wonders of creation and the promise of eternal life.

Grade 2 - Jesus comes to nourish and strengthen the God-life, grace, within us.

Objective: To present Jesus as the model of Christian Living.

Grade 3 - Jesus continues His Life and work through His Church.

Objective: To deepen the child's understanding of the Church and to help the child experience the Church as Christ

Grade 4 - As God's people, we are called to live as Jesus did, choosing a life of love, characterized by obedience to God and service to others.

Objective: To help the children form their consciences according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, and to learn the basis of Christian morality especially as taught in the Old and New testaments.

Grade 5 - Through the Sacraments, the Church celebrates the life giving signs of Christ's saving action in our lives.

Objective: To help the child become a conscious and active member of the Church through an appreciation and celebration of its sacramental life, and to experience and understand the rites of the Sacraments.

Grade 6 - God's saving actions are found throughout history. The Bible, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records God's plan of salvation.

Objective: To understand the Old Testament as the revelation of God in the history of a people, a revelation fulfilled in the New Testament.

Grade 7 - The growth and change experienced during adolescence are the unfolding of God's plan for our development as fully Christian persons.

Objective: To develop in the young adolescent a sense of self-worth and self-respect nurtured and strengthened by a knowledge of God's love.

To acquaint the young adolescent with an understanding of the virtues necessary for a life of goodness and faith.

The gospels reveal Jesus as the Savior and Risen Lord who calls us to advance the Kingdom of God through discipleship.

Objective: To broaden the young adolescent's understanding of the Gospels through a study of their formation, themes, message, and literary aspects.

To help the young adolescent grow in a personal relationship with Jesus by encountering Him in the Gospels and learning to live His message.

The mystery of Christ continues in the Church through the Sacraments which are visible signs of the love and saving action of Jesus.

Objective: To help the young adolescent understand, appreciate, and celebrate the continuing presence and saving action of Jesus in the Church.

To lead the young adolescent to a full and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Sexuality is a gift from God. It embraces psychological, spiritual and physical characteristics of men and women. We human beings need to integrate our sexuality into our total personality in order to develop into the persons God has called us to be.

Objective:

To help the young adolescent appreciate the gift of sexuality.

To assist the young adolescent in developing correct and positive attitudes concerning sexuality.

To clarify for the young adolescent how the gift of sexuality can be misused.

Grade 8 - Developing relationships with others and God is essential to becoming our true selves.

Objective:

To help the young adolescent understand the elements which are essential to developing positive relationships.

To help the young adolescent understand that true community is built on honest, loving, and respectful relationships.

Jesus' life and mission continue through the Church, the community of believers called by God and empowered by the Spirit to be the sign of the Kingdom of God

Objective:

To deepen the young adolescent's knowledge of the history of the Church. To lead the young adolescent to a fuller participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Through our relationship with Jesus, we grow in an ever-deepening awareness of who God is, who we are, and particularly how God calls us to live. Catholic Christian morality gives direction to our response to God's call.

Objective:

To help the young adolescent grow in an understanding of the moral responsibilities arising from one's relationship with Jesus.

To help the young adolescent understand what conscience is and how to form his or her conscience according to the Catholic faith.

To help the young adolescent learn basic concepts of morality and develop skills for moral decision making.

To enable the young adolescent to recognize the role of the Spirit and the witness and guidance of the Catholic Christian community in moral living.

Prayer is an expression of our awareness of and response to God's presence, love, goodness, and saving power.

Objective:

To assist the young adolescent to grow in a desire for and appreciation of prayer as essential to the Christian life.

To help the young adolescent, through the presentation and experience of a variety of prayer forms, to develop the ability to pray.

These Guidelines are designed so that the curriculum of each grade level builds upon that of the year before. More detailed grade level curriculum can be obtained by contacting your child's catechist or the DRE.

Particular requirements concerning homework and testing will be determined by individual catechists. Catechists are expected to notify parents of any such requirements. However, when picking up students at the end of class, parents should regularly check with the catechist to see how their child is progressing and if any assignments are due or outstanding.

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CATECHESIS

Our Catholic tradition has always affirmed the dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God. Every person with whom we come in contact deserves to be seen by us with the eyes of God. We know that ministry with children and youth, in particular, is a sacred trust.

St. Mary, Mother of the Church Parish is committed to preserve, at all times and in all places, this sacred trust which is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ.

In 2002, the Bishops of the United States approved The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, in an effort to protect children and youth from sexual abuse at all levels of church life and to restore trust in a Church scarred by the scandal of clergy sexual abuse. Article 12 of the charter directs all dioceses to create programs and processes to teach children and youth about sexual abuse and its prevention. In the Archdiocese of New York, this training will be integrated into the religious education curriculum each year in all schools and parish religious education programs.

The following sexual abuse awareness elements are being integrated into the religious education program curriculum. In order to keep our children safe, we need the continued support and interest of our parents.

Curriculum for Catechesis with Safe Environment Topics Pre-K; K; Grade 1

The Good Shepherd wants to keep us safe from harm.

The “wolf in sheep’s clothing” wants to get close to hurt us. Jesus wants us to be safe.

God made us special and sacred.

Part of our body is always covered because this part is special and sacred. This part is the part covered by our bathing suit.

Only certain very good people should see or touch this part of our body, and then, they only see and touch us to help keep us clean and healthy. These very good people are usually our parents or caregivers, and a doctor or nurse. When these people see or touch us in the part covered by a bathing suit, they do so only when it is necessary to help us. If we do not need help, we say, “No, thank you; I don’t need your help.” Other people should never see or touch this part of our body because it is a special and sacred part of us. We are special and sacred. Jesus wants us to be safe and happy.

If someone tries to get close to see or touch this special and sacred part of your body, you should:

1. Tell a good adult
2. Tell another good adult
3. Keep telling good adults until you get help and are safe from the “wolf in sheep’s clothing”.

Curriculum for Catechesis with Safe Environment Topics Grades 2 through 5

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (grades 2;3;5) / Study of Morality (grade 4)

God loves us and created us for happiness. God's commandments are the way to happiness.

Primacy of the first commandment: The authority, wisdom, and goodness of a God of love who created us for happiness.

Fourth commandment: obedience to human authority

- obligation of all humans to obey God's standards
- requirement that human authority be honorable
- the moral obligation to disobey human authority that violates God's standards

Fifth, Sixth, Ninth commandments:

God made us special and sacred.

Part of our body is always covered because this part is special and sacred. This part is the part covered by our bathing suit.

Only certain very good people should see or touch this part of our body, and then, they only see and touch us to help keep us clean and healthy. These very good people are usually our parents or caregivers, and a doctor or nurse. When these people see or touch us in the part covered by a bathing suit, they do so only when it is necessary to help us.

If we do not need help, we say, "No, thank you; I don't need your help."

Other people should never see or touch this part of our body because it is a special and sacred part of us.

We are special and sacred. We honor, respect, and care for ourselves and other people should honor, respect, and care for us.

What to do when a person of authority/power wants you to violate standards of goodness and safety:

- Tell a trustworthy adult
- Tell another trustworthy adult
- Keep telling trustworthy adults until you get help and are safe from harm.

Curriculum for Catechesis with Safe Environment Topics Grades 6 through 8

The Study of Scripture (grade 6)

Adam and Eve: Original Sin

Refusal to obey the God of love who created us for happiness

Trusting the stranger who pretended to be concerned, to care.

Personal Growth / Sexuality / Sacrament of Reconciliation (grade 7)

Relationships and Morality (grade 8)

We are social beings and we have been created for relationships. Our need for relationships should never be a reason to permit our own dignity to be compromised. At the same time, we should always relate to others in a way that recognizes their human dignity.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

God loves us and created us for happiness.

God's commandments are the way to happiness.

Primacy of the first commandment:

The authority, wisdom, and goodness of a God of love who created us for happiness.

Fourth commandment: obedience to human authority

- obligation of all humans to obey God's standards
- requirement that human authority be honorable
- the moral obligation to disobey human authority that violates God's standards

What to do when a person of authority/power wants you to violate standards of goodness and safety:

- Tell a trustworthy adult
- Tell another trustworthy adult
- Keep telling trustworthy adults until you get help and are safe from harm.

Fifth, Sixth, Ninth commandments:

God made us special and sacred.

Part of our body is always covered because this part is special and sacred. This part is the part covered by our bathing suit.

Only certain very good people should see or touch this part of our body, and then, they only see and touch us to help keep us clean and healthy. These very good people are usually our parents or caregivers, and a doctor or nurse. When these people see or touch us in the part covered by a bathing suit, they do so only when it is necessary to help us.

If we do not need help, we say, "No, thank you; I don't need your help."

Other people should never see or touch this part of our body because it is a special and sacred part of us.

We are special and sacred. We honor, respect, and care for ourselves and other people should honor, respect, and care for us.

How we can be deceived:

1. A person appears to be good.
2. A person who offers us something we like or want.
3. A person who plays with our feelings.
4. A person who wants to be alone with us.
5. A person who wants to see or touch the bathing suit area of our body
6. A person who wants to hide the truth. (eighth commandment - grades 4 & 5)
7. A person who forces us to make promises or threatens us.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

Sacraments are celebrations of the Parish Community, thus preparation for the Sacraments occurs at the parish level and not in the classroom. The classroom is where the knowledge of our faith is imparted and reinforced. It is essential for a family faith life to be nourished in order that the Sacramental lives of children can flourish.

Christian initiation is celebrated in Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Through these visible actions a person is incorporated into the church and shares its mission in the world. Full initiation into the Church occurs by stages.

When we have been weakened by sin, we are healed and strengthened through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Excerpt from N.C.D. #115,123

Requirements for the reception of First Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation are determined by Canon Law.

- 1) age of reason
- 2) proper knowledge of sacraments
- 3) emotional and spiritual preparation
- 4) approval by parent and Pastor.

Meetings are scheduled to help parents grow in their understanding and appreciation of sacraments. These meetings are designed to assist parents in their efforts to prepare their children to receive sacraments.

FIRST RECONCILIATION AND HOLY EUCHARIST

In as much as the sacraments require lifelong participation and study, **two consecutive years of formal religious education are essential for the reception of First Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist.**

Students who have attended Grades 1 and 2 in either St. Mary's School or Parish Religious Education Program are eligible to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist for the first time.

Preparation will include: Family Retreats, Parent Sessions, Practices and include special materials provided in the classroom.

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede First Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation normally should be celebrated prior to the reception of First Communion.

N.C.D. #126

CONFIRMATION

As a Sacrament of Initiation, Confirmation is intimately related to Baptism and the Eucharist. Confirmation renews and strengthens the Christian's baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and work eagerly for the building up of His body.

N.C.D. #118

The formation program of catechesis for Confirmation includes but is not limited to:

- Regular attendance at Mass
- Service Experience
- period of instruction, Saint Report
- retreat experience
- willingness for continued growth in understanding and knowledge of their faith



PARENTS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY THEY FREELY ACCEPTED AT THEIR CHILD'S BAPTISM TO TRAIN THAT CHILD IN THE FAITH DOES NOT END WITH CONFIRMATION.

Students who have not attended grades 1 through 6 in St. Mary's Religious Education Program must submit transcripts from the program where they attended any or all of those classes before they can be presented as candidates for the sacraments of Confirmation.

Students who transfer in to our program in 6th grade will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in 8th Grade. We will not accept transfers in grade 7 unless a family has had a physical change of address during the past year.

As primary educators of their children, parents along with sponsors, are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for Confirmation.

It is the role of the parent, along with the Pastor, to present the child for Confirmation to the Bishop.

Parents, because they already hold the primary position of responsibility for the faith development of their child, cannot be sponsors

It is the role of the sponsor to represent the faith community.

In keeping with the Code of Canon Law and the Archdiocese of N.Y., a sponsor must be a confirmed practicing Catholic who has completed his/her fourteenth year.

It is desirable that a baptismal sponsor (godparent) be the sponsor for Confirmation since the responsibilities undertaken by the sponsor at Confirmation are a continuation and development of the sponsor's promises made at the candidate's Baptism. (Canon 893)

A Confirmation sponsor need not be of the same sex as the candidate. However, if two sponsors are chosen, one must be female and the other, male.

Sponsors are to be chosen by the confirmand and his or her parents/guardians. Care is to be taken that the person chosen is qualified to represent the Catholic faith community. Questions regarding the suitability of sponsors should be discussed in consultation with the pastor.



TO BE A CATHOLIC PARENT MEANS TO NURTURE THE FAITH IN THE CHILD AND SHARE IT IN THE FAMILY. THROUGH THE WITNESS OF AN ACTIVE, CONSCIOUS FAITH, PARENTS RESPOND TO THE CALL OF GOD TO ENRICH THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN. THEY WALK WITH THEIR CHILDREN UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO DIRECTS THE GROWTH OF EACH "IN WISDOM, AGE, AND GRACE".

We particularly wish to thank the parents who, week after week, month after month, in good weather and in bad, cooperate with us by parking in designated parking spaces and walking their children to and from class, cheerfully reinforce the classroom curriculum with their children and participate with their children in Family Faith Formation and the liturgical life of the parish. Together, we partner to give the children of St. Mary's Parish the safest possible environment to grow in faith.

Katherine Hamilton, DRE

Sr. Jean Tavin, CRE

Rev. Joseph Blenkle, Pastor