

# OUR LADY OF LORETTO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

8925 S. Kostner  
Hometown, Illinois 60456  
(708) 499-0832  
Rev. Thomas S. Cabala, Pastor  
Mrs. Marianne Powers, Catechetical Leader

## PURPOSE

The primary task of Religious Education is to build a loving, caring and sharing Catholic Faith Community. We seek to develop the faith and love of Jesus Christ within your children. In accordance with the National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), we remind parents and guardians that faith formation begins at home first and foremost. The NDC says “Because it is the ‘church of the home,’ the family provides a unique locus for catechesis. It is a place in which the word of God is received and from which it is extended. Within the Christian family, parents are the primary educators in the faith and ‘the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.’” You are the primary Religious Educators of your children through your example and daily life. Parents should understand that Catholic faith formation is not limited to preparation for a sacrament, but rather must continue as long as one lives. This includes instruction in basic doctrine, scripture and worship while relating this to daily living. Catechesis is based on a word meaning “to echo”. Through this process of education and formation for all ages our Catholic faith is shared and our children grow in the knowledge and discipleship of Jesus Christ. So, as parents and guardians, go forth “to echo” your faith.

## POLICIES

### REGISTRATION

Early registration for Religious Education (to be called RE from this point forward) for classes will be held in May. Registration information will be given to families previously enrolled. Transfer or new registrations will be done in person with the Catechetical Leader. Copies of Baptismal and other sacramental certificates along with sacrament dates need to be provided to the RE office at the time of first registration.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBER

It is extremely important that the Religious Education Office be notified immediately of any change of address, and/or change of phone number at home or work. Our records must be kept up-to-date for emergency use.

### CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

Our Lady of Loretto Religious Education Program presumes that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorced or separated. Thus, unless informed otherwise

in writing and with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have unqualified access to the child, the catechetical program will permit either parent to have access to the child while at the catechetical site and will release the child from the site to either parent. If other custody arrangements are in effect, divorced and/or separated parents should provide a court certified copy of the custody section of the divorce decree (or separation agreement) when the child is enrolled in the program. Legal Guardians must also provide pertinent information.

## **FEES**

Because of the importance of religious education in the life of your family and the parish, we are a tuition free site for our registered families. Fees for the 2017-2018 year have been changed to **\$25.00 per child for books and materials**. This was done to make the program more affordable and open to all. With the change in fees, you are being asked to make regular contributions to the Sunday offertory as you attend weekly Mass and are involved in the life of the parish. All fees should be paid in full by October 29, 2017.

## **TRANSFERS**

Children transferring into Our Lady of Loretto's RE program are required to provide previous RE information. Copies of Baptismal and other sacramental certificates along with sacrament dates must be given to the RE office at the time of registration. Written program information and attendance records must be provided to Our Lady of Loretto at the time of registration from all previous RE or Catholic school programs.

## **WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE**

The RE office should be informed in advance of withdrawals from the program so that proper arrangements can be made. The book fee is non-refundable.

## **SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION**

Basic sacramental information must be provided at the time of first registration. If sacraments were received at Our Lady of Loretto, only dates are needed. If sacraments were received at other churches, then certificates must be provided. The church of the child's Baptism holds the records for all sacraments. Therefore, Our Lady of Loretto will provide that church with appropriate information at the time of sacraments.

## **SCHEDULE**

Classes are held on Sunday mornings from 9:30 AM to 11 AM. Students gather in church at the beginning of class and receive weekly instruction from the pastor. They then go to the school building for class with their catechist. Each registered RE family will receive the RE calendar on the first day of class. The calendar is also available on the parish website at [ourladyloretto.com](http://ourladyloretto.com), when you use the Religious Ed link. If schedule changes occur, families will be notified.

## **ATTENDANCE**

We expect all parents to understand that Religious Education should take precedence over other activities. Your child is expected to attend all the classes for the entire year. If a child is absent, it is the responsibility of the parent to contact the RE office at 708-499-0832 prior to the beginning of class on Sunday. Please leave a message on the answering machine with the name of the student and grade. For the safety of your children, if your child is absent and you have not called

the RE office, you will receive a call from us. Children who miss class due to parental visitation rights will be helped to make up the class material.

Your child is allowed absences for religious purposes from their public schools. The day will be marked as an absence according to the state but will not affect perfect attendance. Schools are notified in writing from OLL pertaining to retreat days scheduled within the Religious Education program. If you have a question, please contact the school Principal directly or the Catechetical Leader at OLL.

If you need a letter for an activity documenting your child's participation in RE and the hours, please let us know. Students should not be punished for attending RE if they miss a game or practice.

Early dismissal will be handled through the RE office. The RE office must be notified prior to class time of the early dismissal time and reason. A parent/ guardian must come to the RE office to pick up the student. Your child will meet you in the RE office and must be signed out to leave.

### **BEHAVIOR/ATTIRE**

Children are asked to be respectful of people and property while attending class and to cooperate with the catechist. Classroom attire should reflect the willingness to learn. If a serious problem arises, the child will be sent to the RE office and a parent or guardian will be called. Food of any type is prohibited. Toys or sports equipment are not allowed. Cell phones and other electronic devices are not to be used during class time. These items are to be kept in the student's bag during class time. The RE program is not responsible for the loss or theft of devices brought to class. Cheating on tests or papers, bullying, fighting and false accusations are not tolerated.

### **FAMILY MASS**

An integral part of the RE program centers on the Mass. Family Masses are held throughout the school year. Each grade takes a turn hosting and participating in the Mass. Families are invited and encouraged to attend these Masses throughout the year, even when their children aren't hosting the Mass. Pews are reserved for all RE students and their families on these Sundays. Sunday Mass is a time to give thanks to God for all that has happened in our lives and it is a time to call out to God, asking for help in all the things that are about to happen in our lives.

Why do Catholics go to Mass on Sundays?

For all Christians, Sunday is the first of all days because it is the day of the Lord's resurrection. Put simply, it is the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

The very first Christians took Sunday, above all other days, to assemble, to pray, to read the Scriptures and to break bread. From that time until today this celebration, that Catholics call the Eucharist, has continued. In our own time, we can find Catholic communities moved by the Holy Spirit coming together on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist.

In the First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul used the image of the body of Christ when he spoke about the Church. He said, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Cor. 12:27)

Sunday Eucharist – also commonly called the Mass, is the center of the Church's life; it is where Catholics meet each other; not so much as a social event, but rather as a faith filled encounter.

Coming together in faith gives members of the Church the opportunity to worship God, to provide for those who are in need; to comfort those who are suffering and to encourage those who are weighed down by life's challenges and difficulties.

Each member of the Church is like a different part of the Body while Jesus is the head. For the body to function all of the parts need to come together under Christ. It is a great image because it reminds us that while each person is equal not everyone is the same. In Jesus Christ there is unity in diversity.

While each Catholic finds their place and purpose in the assembly on Sunday, they do not do so in isolation. Partaking in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a witness of belonging to the body of Christ and of being faithful to God.

Sunday Mass is a time to give thanks to God for all that has happened in our lives and it is a time to call out to God, asking for help in all the things that are about to happen in our lives.

It is a time for the believer to see God's love present in the world in many ways, but most especially in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

At times it is all too easy to find yourself caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday life where work becomes a burden, relationships are overly complicated and family life is chipped away. In the Catholic tradition Sunday has long been a day of prayer and rest. The celebration of Mass on Sunday reminds us that God is the center of our lives and by rising from the dead Jesus Christ makes all things new.

### **CURRICULUM/COMPETENCY**

The following basic themes are covered at each grade level:

Grade 1: God as Father and Creator

Grade 2: Preparation for Reconciliation

Grade 3: Preparation for First Eucharist

Grade 4: The Ten Commandments

Grade 5: The Seven Sacraments

Grade 6: The Old Testament

Grade 7: The New Testament and the Life of Jesus, beginning preparation for Confirmation

Grade 8: Preparation for Confirmation

A basic understanding of our faith, appropriate for the grade level, is expected of each student. Tests and assessments will be administered in different ways to accommodate the learning capacity of each student. A progress report will be sent home for each student twice a year: at the end of January and at the end of the RE year in May.

### **SERVICE**

Service to others is an important part of the Religious Ed program. Students are encouraged to do service in their home, parish, and community. Each grade works on an age appropriate service project during the RE year. Altar Serving and the Children's Choir are two opportunities to be of service to the parish.

### **ALTAR SERVERS/ CHILDREN'S CHOIR**

All 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade RE children who have been baptized and have received Reconciliation and Communion are strongly encouraged to be altar servers at Our Lady of Loretto.

The Altar Server Coordinator will arrange special training and scheduling.

The children's choir accepts children grades 2 and up. Rehearsal is after the 11:15 Mass on Sunday during the RE year. Religious Ed students are strongly urged to take part in either of these service opportunities. All questions should be directed to the Rectory at 708-424-7471.

## **PARENT MEETINGS**

Your attendance at general Parent Meetings and for the various sacraments is a requirement for your child's reception of the sacraments. Dates and times are listed on the calendar and reminders are sent home with the children.

## **SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM**

First Reconciliation - Grade 2

First Communion - Grade 3

Confirmation Preparation - Grades 7 & 8

Confirmation - Grade 8

## **RECONCILIATION/COMMUNION**

A proper understanding of each sacrament is taught to the children. Participation at regular Sunday liturgies is essential in the children's understanding of sacraments. Celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation takes place during Lent. Celebration of First Communion takes place in early May. Parents are expected to take an active part with their children in the preparation for the sacraments. There is at least one parent meeting scheduled for the sacrament of Reconciliation, and at least one parent meeting for the sacrament of First Communion. Enrollment and Sacramental Retreat experiences are celebrated for both sacraments with family participation.

As mandated by the Archdiocese of Chicago, children must attend an RE program or Catholic school one year prior to the preparation year for these sacraments.

## **CONFIRMATION**

While Confirmation is a distinct and complete sacrament in its own right, its purpose is to perfect in us that which was begun in Baptism. We might say—in a sense—that we are baptized in order to be confirmed. Growing beyond a self-centered spirituality. We are born spiritually in the sacrament of Baptism. We become sharers in the divine life of the most Blessed Trinity. We begin to live a supernatural life. As we practice the virtues of faith and hope and love and as we unite with Christ in His Church in offering worship to God, we also grow in grace and goodness.

But at this stage our spiritual life, like the life of a child, is largely self-centered. We tend to be preoccupied with the needs of our own soul, with the effort to "be good." We cannot be wholly self-centered, of course—not if we understand what it means to be a member of Christ's Mystical Body, and not if we understand the significance of the Mass. In general our religious life does revolve around self.

### **Living for Others**

When we are confirmed. We receive a special grace by which our faith is deepened and strengthened, so that it will be strong enough not only for our own needs but for the needs of others with whom we shall try to share it. With the onset of adolescence a child begins to assume, progressively more and more, the responsibilities of adulthood. He begins to see his place in the total family picture and in the community at large. Similarly, the confirmed Christian begins to see more clearly (or ought to) his responsibility to Christ for his neighbor. He becomes deeply concerned (or ought to) with the welfare of Christ-in-the-world—which is the Church—and the welfare of Christ-in-his-neighbor. It is in this sense that Confirmation is a spiritual "growing up."

### **Special Grace**

In order that we may have such a concern for Church and neighbor, in deed as well as in feeling, the sacrament of Confirmation gives us a special grace and a special power.

Just as the "mark" or character of Baptism made us sharers with Christ in His role of priest, giving us the power to participate with Him in divine worship, so also the character of Confirmation makes us sharers with Christ in His role of prophet or teacher.

We now participate with Him in the task of extending His kingdom, of adding new souls to His Mystical Body. Our words and our works are directed not merely to our own sanctification but also to the purpose of making Christ's truths alive and real for those around us.

The Catechism's section on Confirmation says that Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Its effects are to:

- Root us more deeply in divine filiation (being children of God)
- Unite us more firmly to Christ
- Increase the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us
- Strengthen our bond with the Church
- Associate us more closely to her mission of bearing witness to Christ
- Help us and more strictly obliges us to spread and defend the faith by word and deed

### **NON-SACRAMENTAL GRADES**

We strongly urge the participation of children in the Religious Education program from grade 1 through grade 8. In every grade, the program takes a developmental approach to the sacraments, liturgy, prayer, scripture, and doctrine in their daily lives. There is progressive development of initiating the children into a personal as well as communal relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In all grades the children are encouraged to participate in class, work on projects, and live their faith.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **CATECHETICAL STAFF**

Catechists are members of the Our Lady of Loretto parish community who desire to share their own faith with your children. They meet Archdiocesan and state requirements for Mandated Reporting, Virtus, and a background check. We request that you support what is done in the classroom by talking about our Catholic faith in your home. We ask for your continued prayers and support as the catechists commit themselves to this special ministry.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The faith of children is modeled on that of their parents. We value you as a vital and important part of our program along with your children and we know that we can count on your support, encouragement and assistance with the following:

1. Review the prayers at home by saying them at meals or bedtime.
2. Attend weekly Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday morning.
3. Attend parent meetings as required.
4. Assist children with completion of homework assignments.
5. Use the experiences of daily family living to develop Christian values.

You are always welcome to observe a class in session on Sunday. However, you need to check in at the RE office before doing so. Accurate records must be kept of who is in the building due to fire regulations.

## **COMMUNICATION**

A Religious Education newsletter will be sent home to you monthly. If schedule changes occur, the changes will be noted on the monthly newsletter. This is our way to communicate with you and keep you informed of what is happening in the RE program. We welcome phone contact whenever you have a question or concern. Please leave a message on the answering machine when we are not in the office.

## **RCIA**

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC) is offered to those who have not received their sacraments or are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith. These sessions are held separately for adults and children. If you are interested, please call 708-499-0832.

## **CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE**

As a Catholic educational community, we firmly believe in discipline based on self-respect, concern for others, and Christian ideals. Students learn through proper guidance, self-motivation, and self-discipline. A mutual respect is expected among the students, faculty, staff, and parents.

The support of the entire parish community - parents, staff and students - fosters the spiritual, intellectual, social and emotional growth of the students. The RE program is an entity outside of the home that has its own purpose, plan, policies and rules. We believe that in order for our students to meet the challenges presented by our society, the development of self-discipline and individual responsibility are essential. Students are expected to respect the requirements of the RE program, even if those requirements may, of necessity, be different than home rules. Most students easily meet these expectations.

Guidelines for student behavioral expectations:

- Show respect to self and others;
- Be considerate and courteous to other students and adults by not swearing, making inappropriate gestures, calling names, or using verbal harassment;
- Follow directions given by RE personnel and other authorized adults;
- Give courteous attention when anyone is addressing the class;
- Follow all adopted rules for classrooms, church and the parish grounds.

In order to promote an atmosphere conducive to learning and to maintain a safe environment, the students are expected to comply with behavioral guidelines and will be held accountable for any behavior that is non-compatible with the mission and philosophy of the program. Parental permission is not necessary for parish administration to immediately address any school-related issue involving any child. Listed below are some general rules of conduct for our students:

- Keep hands, feet and objects to self
- Arrive to school and classes on time and be prepared for class with appropriate materials and textbooks.
- Be in compliance with the dress code
- Respect all physical properties of the school and those of others
- Walk orderly to all classes and school activities
- Promote an environment free of weapons (or any item that could be construed as a weapon), illegal drugs, controlled substances, or alcohol
- Refrain from inciting or participating in acts of aggression, bullying, harassment, meanness, threats (written, verbal, electronic), vandalism, theft, or any gang/group related activities. Any such behavior must be brought to the attention of an adult
- Use non-aggressive methods to resolve conflicts

Serious violations/infractions of school rules may result in an automatic in-building or out-of- building suspension. Serious violations include but are not limited to:

- Fights
- Acts of aggression resulting in physical harm or property damage
- Vandalism
- Theft
- Bullying, meanness, harassment or threats (written, verbal, electronic)
- Alcohol or drug possession or use
- Disrespect and/or disobedience toward a staff member or adult in charge
- Intent to inflict bodily harm, fighting, tormenting, or inappropriate touching of another student
- Possession or use of alcohol, cigarettes, matches, lighters of any type, drugs, weapons (or
- anything that may be construed as a weapon), bombs, or pornographic or offensive material
- Use of vulgar or obscene language which is oral, written or texted, or represented by gestures
- Setting false fire alarms or bomb threats
- Leaving a classroom, building premises, or RE functions during class hours without permission
- Displaying and/or wearing gang/cult signs, inappropriate or offensive messages, symbols or colors

Since it is impossible to anticipate all types of inappropriate behavior, the Pastor and/or the Catechetical Leader reserve the right to take disciplinary action on conduct not specifically listed or covered in this handbook.

Parental permission is not necessary for program administration to immediately address any school- related issue involving any child. The program administration also has the right to restrict any activity, trends or fads that might not be addressed in the handbook.

## **Final Review**

The Pastor and/or the Catechetical Leader is the final recourse in all-disciplinary situations and may waive or reduce any penalties for just cause at his/her discretion after meeting with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s).

## **ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO - BULLYING PREVENTION**

These statements apply to all educational programs in the Archdiocese including Religious Education. (In this context “school” refers to both school and RE programs.) The following is a statement from the Archdiocese of Chicago on "Bullying Prevention.” As Catholics, we believe in the dignity and respect of each individual created in the image of God. Bullying is contrary to Gospel values and has no place in the Catholic educational community.

**Bullying is:**

Any intentional, repeated, hurtful act or conduct (physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual) including communications made in writing or electronically,

Occurring on campus or off campus during non-school time,

Directed toward another student or students, that has or can be reasonably predicted to:

Place the student or students in an unreasonable fear of harm to the student or student's person or property;

Cause a substantially detrimental effect on the student or student's physical or mental health;

Interfere substantially with the student or student's academic performance;

Interfere substantially with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or privileges provided by the school.

Bullying can take many forms, including violence, harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, cyber stalking, theft, public humiliation and retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying.

Cyber bullying can include all of the above as well as the use of electronic tools, devices, social media sites, blogs and websites to harm a student or students with electronic text, photos, or videos.

Bullying acts or conduct described above can include the following:

Physical which includes, but is not -limited to, punching, poking, stalking, destruction of property, strangling, hair pulling, beating, Offing, spitting, stealing, pinching, and, excessive tickling;

Verbal which includes, but is not limited to, name-calling, teasing, taunting, gossiping, and threats whether in person or through any form of electronic communication and the Internet.

Emotional which includes, but is not limited to, intimidation, rejecting, terrorizing, extorting, defaming, humiliating, blackmailing, rating/ranking of personal characteristics

such as race, disability, ethnicity, perceived sexual orientation, manipulation of friendships, isolating, ostracizing, and peer pressure;

Sexual, which includes, but is not limited to many of the emotional acts or conduct described above as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual propositioning, sexual harassment and abuse involving actual physical contact or sexual assault.

No student shall be subjected to bullying:

During any school sponsored education program or activity, while in school, on school property, on school buses or school vehicles, at school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities.

Through the transmission of information from a school or home computer network, or other similar electronic school or home equipment. .

All members of the Catholic community, parents/guardians, teachers, staff, administrators and others, are expected to work together in preventing bullying and promoting Gospel values in a Christ centered environment. Students are expected to participate in age appropriate educational programs developed by the RE program that address bullying and teach respect for all. Bullying by a student or students may result in suspension and/or expulsion from the program.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN CONDUCT**

As partners in the education of children, the parent/guardian in the school community is expected to demonstrate respectful behavior at all times with faculty, administration, support staff, students, and volunteers whether on or off the grounds or at school-related events. If, in the opinion of the Pastor and Catechetical Leader, that partnership is no longer viable, the school reserves the right to require the parent/guardian to either remove their child/ren from the school or not accept re-registration for the next school year.

Unacceptable behaviors include, but are not limited to: harassment, verbal abuse, assault of or threats to the faculty, administration, staff, students and volunteers of the school.

Parents/guardians who post defamatory or threatening statements about the school, its staff or students on social media can be required to remove the offensive material or withdraw their child/ren from the school.

Ordinarily, a student is not to be deprived of a Catholic education on grounds relating to the actions/attitudes of a parent/guardian. However, one of the following actions may be required to permit the continuation of the student in the school:

Schedule meetings between school staff and the parent/guardian outside of regular school hours in a monitored setting;

Conduct school business with the other parent/guardian of the student.

When, in the judgment of the principal or Catechetical Leader, as confirmed by the pastor or juridic person, the behavior of a parent/guardian seriously interfered with teaching, learning, or a positive school environment, the administrator may: inform the parent/guardians that their right to be present on school grounds is temporarily or

permanently suspended; dismiss the child/ren of the parent/guardian temporarily or permanently from the local educational community.

**ADMINISTRATION RIGHT TO AMEND HANDBOOK**

The Pastor/ Catechetical Leader reserves the right to amend statements in this Handbook with or without notice. School will attempt to keep the parent/guardian informed of all changes as soon as practical.

Revised 7/15

Revised 7/16

Revised 6/17