

**CATECHIST HANDBOOK**  
**ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**  
**RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM**

# Religious Formation Mission Statement

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The Aim of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Religious Formation program is to assist our parish families in understanding, participating and believing in Jesus and the Catholic faith that Jesus gave to us.

## **Requirements for Catechists**

- Completion of the Diocesan Background check.
- Completion of the Virtus program and receiving the “Because We Care” pamphlets.
- Completion of the Parish’s Catechist Formation class.
- The need to be fully prepared for each lesson and your commitment to the class.
- Communicate God’s love to those entrusted to your care by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ by your actions as well as by the lessons.
- All adult Catechists and all aides must comply with all parish “Safe Environment” requirements. (see below)
- Attend all meetings called by the Pastor, Catechetical Leader (C/L), or the grade level Coordinator.

The call to the ministry of Catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit. Catechists need to be practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church and follow the precepts of the Church.

## **The Precepts of the Church**

The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor.

1. The first precept “You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.”
2. The second precept “You shall confess your sins at least once a year.”
3. The third precept “You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.”
4. The fourth precept “You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the church.”
5. The fifth precept “You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.”

## **Safe Environment**

All children and youth participating in the parish faith formation program must be supervised by adults 18 years of age or older. No child should be left alone with the Catechist or any adult. Further, under no circumstances should the children ever be left without proper supervision by the Catechist.

The Catechist and the aide must be present at all times before, during, and after class, while students are on the premises. The Catechist is to walk their class outside at dismissal to the designated station where parents or their representative will meet the students. Catechists will be notified if a person (other than the parent), is picking up the child either one time, or on a permanent basis.

Any information shared by the Catechetical Leader about students or their families will remain strictly confidential. Information should not be shared with anyone, unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent harm to the child or others. No student should have access to attendance sheets, or any other printed information about fellow students.

## **Conduct/Discipline Policy**

We expect courtesy and respect from all, and at all times. At no time is physical contact to be used as a form of discipline. Inappropriate conduct should not be tolerated by Catechist or student.

In the event of student disruption, the Catechist should first speak to the student privately, but in a public area e.g., the hallway. In the event of a

second problem, the Catechist should call the parent and calmly explain the situation and ask for the parent's assistance. A call should also be made to the grade level coordinator, for their information. Any further disruptions should be handled by the C/L. If the C/L feels that the misconduct is serious, the parent will be called immediately to pick up his or her child. The C/L and the Catechist and Coordinator may determine that it is necessary to remove a student from the program entirely. The final decision must be approved by the Pastor. Student discipline records will be kept in a confidential file.

Homework is not required for all grade levels. This does not mean that homework can never be suggested or required by an individual Catechist. For example, specific levels, in order to complete requirements for reception of a Sacrament, will be expected to do homework. Homework should not be given as a punishment, but completion of a chapter that was not completed in class will reinforce the lesson for the day.

## **Snacks, Hand Held Devices, Restroom**

We request that no food, candy or drinks (except water) be allowed in class. Exceptions will be made for small Christmas parties. All hand-held devices or toys of any sort will be put on the Catechist's desk, to be returned at the end of class. Students who continually use hand-held devices in class will be removed from the program.

Students are expected to use the restrooms before class begins, but no Catechist should deny a student access to the restroom.

## **Substance Abuse**

Possession, use of, selling or distributing of any unauthorized illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, or injection, is strictly forbidden. Any Catechist found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property or at a parish sponsored event, will immediately be asked to leave the program.

## **Medical Conditions, Accidents, Vandalism**

The C/L will inform the Catechist of special medical conditions (allergies, asthma, auditory, or visual impairment, seizures, etc.) of any of the children in the class. No medication of any kind may be given to a child by a Catechist.

If an exception has to be made to administer an EPI Pen, the parent must provide the C/L with a “Food Allergy Action Plan” authorizing the C/L or the Catechist to administer the EPI Pen. A photo of the child must be attached to the “Food Allergy Action Plan” with required form. All EPI Pen administrators must be trained in accordance with law. In the event the person trained is not onsite, the parents of the child must be notified immediately.

Vandalism should be reported immediately to the C/L.

In the event of a serious accident or incident, these steps should be taken in the following order.

1. The Catechist notifies the C/L, who calls 911. If the C/L is unavailable, any Catechist or office staff member should call 911.
2. The C/L or Catechist reports the accident to the parent. If the parent cannot be reached, follow the instructions on the required form.
3. The C/L must immediately notify the pastor. The C/L will accompany the student in the ambulance, if one is needed
4. The Catechist & C/L fills out the “parish incident” form.
5. The C/L must call and fax a copy of the incident form to the Network Adjusters at 1-866-999-1231 and report a student accident.
6. The C/L should always keep a copy of all forms in the student file & send a copy of both forms to the OFF Children & Youth.
7. In the event of fire, or any need to evacuate the building, follow the posted signs in each classroom. Always remember to bring your attendance record to verify all students have gotten out safely.

## **Custody Issues & Orders of Protection**

The C/L will notify the Catechist regarding any issues related to the custody/ order of protection of a child. A copy should be kept on file, along with a photo of that person. Where there is an order of protection in effect, the parent or guardian must provide a list of names of those persons allowed to pick up the child. This list must bear a notarized signature of the parent or guardian. Where there is an order of protection in effect, anyone picking up the child must present photo I.D. to the Catechist or office staff.

If the person referred to by the Order of Protection is seen, the police should be called immediately.

## **Field Trips**

When a field trip is planned, the parents will need to fill out permission forms for each child going on the field trip. Telephone calls should not be accepted in lieu of written permission forms. The exception being, classes that are brought to The Assumption Church for a lesson, during class time. The C/L and Security will be notified, to assure the safety of the students.

## **Photographs/Videos**

Permission release forms for the use of photographs or videos must be signed by a parent or guardian and filled out for each child. All forms must be kept on file for three years after the child has left the program.

## **Visitors**

The C/L has to inform all parents and Catechists that no unauthorized persons will be allowed in the classroom or hallways unless they have been previously authorized by the C/L. All visitors require a visitors pass, for the R.F. Office. Catechists will walk their class outside at dismissal, to the designated places in the “Safety Area” on the East side of the parish center.

## **Communication**

We envision the Faith Formation of children as a cooperative effort of Parents, Catechists, the C/L and the entire parish community. We encourage parents to be in communication with the child's Catechist. The Parish Office of Faith Formation and the Catechists will communicate with parents, either by mail, or by sending letters home with students.

Our Parish web-site and Calendar is at [www.abvmcentereach.com](http://www.abvmcentereach.com).

Abbreviations used in the program: R.F. (Religious Formation), C/L (Catechetical Leader-director of program), S/R (Staff Room), M/H (Main Hall lower level of the parish center), C/H (Church Hall lower level of the church), LV. (level, the grade of the student), Rm. (classroom number), Lib.(Library, downstairs in the parish center, South end of the building) Rm. A (downstairs in the parish center, South end of the building OFF (The Diocesan Office of Faith Formation)

The Pastor and or C/L of the Faith Formation program, reserves the right to amend the Catechist Handbook for just cause. Catechists will be notified if changes are made.

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