

Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education

379 Linden Street, Massapequa Park, NY 11762
(516) 799-5179

Director of Religious Education: Donna Kesselman
email: kesselmandonna@gmail.com

Pastor: Monsignor James P. Lisante
Moderator: Father Andiy Egargo

Religious Education Office Hours:

September through May

Mondays through Wednesdays: 9:00am to 2:00pm;

Thursdays by appointment

On class days only: Wednesdays until 8:30pm.

Saturdays: 9:30am to 10:45am

No Regular Office Hours in June, July, and August

For assistance, call and leave a voicemail message

PARENT HANDBOOK 2026-2027

"Catholic parents must learn to form their family as a 'domestic church,' a church in the home, where God is honored, His law is respected, prayer is a normal event, virtue is transmitted by word and example, and everyone shares the hopes, the problems, and sufferings of everyone else. All this is not to advocate a return to some outdated style of living. It is to return to the roots of human development and human happiness!" Saint John Paul II

Welcome to another year of Religious Education at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish!

We are grateful that you have chosen to continue your child's journey of faith with our parish community. As parents, you accepted the sacred responsibility of raising your child in the Catholic faith when you presented him or her for Baptism. The Catholic Church teaches that parents are the first and most important educators of their children in the faith. Our Religious Education program exists to support and strengthen what is already being lived in the home; it can never replace it.

Faith is not learned in one hour each week. It is formed day by day through family prayer, Sunday Mass, conversations about God, acts of kindness, forgiveness, service to others, and the witness of parents who strive to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The home is the first place where children learn to know God's love and experience what it means to belong to His Church. This is why the Church calls the family the **Domestic Church**.

Our partnership with your family is rooted in a shared mission: to help your child know, love, and follow Jesus Christ. Together, we seek to nurture a living faith that extends beyond the classroom and becomes part of everyday life.

Throughout this handbook you will find the policies, procedures, and expectations that guide our Religious Education program. These are intended not simply as rules, but as practical ways we work together to create a safe, welcoming, and faith-filled environment where every child can grow in knowledge of the Catholic faith and in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Thank you for allowing Our Lady of Lourdes Parish to partner with your family. We look forward to walking this journey of faith with you throughout the coming year. May God bless you and your family abundantly

Our Partnership with Families

"Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it." Proverbs 22:6

Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. Our Religious Education program exists to support families in forming lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Religious Education program at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish is most successful when families and the parish work together. While catechists provide instruction and guidance, the foundation of a child's faith is formed at home through prayer, participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and the daily witness of family life.

As partners in your child's faith formation, we ask every family to:

- Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Make prayer a regular part of family life.
- Discuss the Sunday Mass and Catholic faith at home.
- Encourage Christian values through word and example.
- Review lessons and practice prayers each week.
- Support regular attendance and active participation.
- Participate in parent meetings and sacramental preparation.
- Communicate with catechists and the Religious Education Office whenever questions or concerns arise.

Parents are encouraged to pray with their children, review class lessons, discuss the Sunday Gospel and the homily, read Scripture together, and look for opportunities to live the faith through kindness, forgiveness, and service. These simple moments strengthen the domestic church and help children recognize that faith is meant to be lived every day.

Working together, we can help children grow in their love of God, deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, and build a strong foundation for a lifetime of Catholic faith.

Our prayer is that every child grows in knowledge of the Catholic faith, and more importantly, in a lifelong friendship with Jesus Christ.

Christian Living

*"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father." **Matthew 5:16***

Every child is created in the image and likeness of God. We strive to create a respectful, welcoming, and Christ-centered environment where students learn not only the teachings of the Catholic faith, but also how to live them each day.

Religious Education is more than learning prayers and studying the Catholic faith. It is also about developing the habits and virtues that help us become disciples of Jesus Christ. Every student is expected to contribute to a classroom environment that reflects Christian charity, respect, and responsibility.

Christian Conduct

Students are expected to:

- Treat catechists, volunteers, classmates, parish staff, and school property with respect.
- Listen attentively and participate positively in class activities.
- Follow directions promptly and respectfully.
- Use appropriate language and demonstrate kindness toward others.
- Respect parish property and help maintain a clean and welcoming environment.
- Show reverence whenever entering the church or participating in prayer.

Our goal is not simply good behavior, but the formation of Christian character rooted in the Gospel.

Dress Code

Students should dress modestly and appropriately for participation in Religious Education classes and for entering the church.

- Clothing should be neat, clean, and appropriate for a Catholic learning environment.
- Clothing displaying inappropriate language, images, or messages is not permitted.
- Hats and hoods should be removed while indoors.
- Students are not permitted to use shoes with built-in wheels ("wheelies") on parish property.

Personal Belongings

To minimize distractions:

- Students should leave toys, games, and other personal items at home.
- **Cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, AirPods, and other electronic devices must be turned off and put away during class.**

No Food Policy

- No food, snacks, candy, or gum are permitted in the building due to the prevalence of food allergies.
- Students may bring a **water bottle only**.

Responding to Misconduct

When concerns about behavior arise, catechists and staff will work together with parents to help students learn from their mistakes, accept responsibility for their actions, and develop habits that reflect Christian discipleship.

Depending on the nature and severity of the behavior, one or more of the following steps may be taken:

- Verbal reminder or redirection.
- Private conversation with the student.
- Parent notification by the catechist or Director of Religious Education.
- Meeting with the Director of Religious Education.
- Parent may be asked to attend class with the child if previous interventions have not been successful.
- Temporary removal from the classroom.
- Suspension or dismissal from the Religious Education program in cases of serious or repeated misconduct.

Every child deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. At the same time, we must ensure that the safety, well-being, and learning environment of all students are protected and respected.

The Director of Religious Education reserves the right to determine the appropriate response based on the circumstances of each situation.

Program Participation

*"Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others." **Colossians 3:23***

Faith formation is most effective when students attend faithfully, participate actively, and receive the support and encouragement of their families.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential to your child's faith formation. **Each class includes prayer, discussion, activities, and experiences that cannot be fully replaced through independent work at home.**

- Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes.
- Up to **three absences** are permitted during the instructional year. After the third absence, **regardless of the reason**, the family will be contacted to discuss ways to improve attendance.
- More than **five absences** (approximately 25% of the instructional year) may result in the student repeating the level.
- Weekly participation at Sunday Mass is expected of every family.
- If your child will be absent, please notify the Religious Education Office. The workbook lesson will be assigned for completion at home.
- Families may arrange, in advance, for a student to attend another session during the same week if space is available.
- Students receiving temporary home instruction through their school district should contact the office to discuss an individualized catechetical plan.
- **Extracurricular activities, including sports, are not considered an excused reason for missing Religious Education.**

Preparation for Class

Students should arrive each week prepared to participate fully. Please bring:

- **Workbook** (*replacement fee applies if lost*)
- **Folder**
- **Pen or pencil**

Parents are encouraged to review each week's lesson with their child, reinforce the concepts being taught, and help children practice the prayers appropriate for their level.

Assessments

Students are assessed throughout the year through classroom participation, discussions, reviews, written activities, and chapter assessments. Accommodations will be provided in accordance with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or documented learning needs.

Prayers to Know

Prayer is at the heart of our Catholic faith. Students are expected to learn and pray the following prayers appropriate to their instructional level:

- **All students:** Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.
- **Levels 2–8:** Act of Contrition.
- **Levels 3–8:** Apostles' Creed.

Parents are encouraged to pray these prayers regularly with their children as part of the family's life as the Domestic Church.

Faith Formation Requirements

- All students are expected to participate regularly in class, complete assigned work, and practice the prayers appropriate for their level.
- Advancement to the next instructional level is contingent upon satisfactory attendance and completion of all program requirements.

Level 2

Preparation for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion is a partnership between the family and the parish. In addition to regular class attendance, students and parents are expected to participate in all required meetings, retreats, and sacramental preparation activities. Students must successfully complete all program requirements before receiving the Sacraments.

Levels 3–6

- Students will receive three Mass Reflection Worksheets during the year. These reflections help students connect what they experience at Sunday Mass with what they are learning in class.
- Completed reflections are due by the end of February. Students who do not complete this requirement will be placed on **Incomplete Status**. An extension will be granted, and if it is still not completed by the new due date, the student will be withdrawn from the program.

Levels 7–8

Students preparing for Confirmation will receive a Confirmation Preparation Workbook outlining all diocesan and parish requirements, including Mass reflections, community service, saint reports, and other required assignments.

All requirements must be completed by the published deadlines.

- Level 7 students who do not complete all requirements may not advance to Level 8.
- Level 8 students who do not complete all requirements will not be eligible to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- In accordance with diocesan policy, all Level 8 students must also participate in a Confirmation Interview with the Director of Religious Education or a designated representative.

Program Procedures

"Let all things be done properly and in order." 1 Corinthians 14:40

Clear procedures help provide a safe, organized, and welcoming environment where every child can learn and grow in faith.

Arrival Procedures

To ensure the safety of all students, families are asked to follow these arrival procedures:

- Elementary-aged students must be escorted into the building by a parent or designated adult.
- Middle and high school students may be dropped off and picked up at the designated entrance.
- Please use only the front and side entrances near the chapel. The rear doors facing the convent are locked for safety and may not be used.
- Parents and visitors are not permitted beyond the lobby doors during class. Anyone who needs access to the office should check in with the safety monitor.
- Students should use the restroom before class begins whenever possible.

Dismissal Procedures

Student safety is our highest priority during dismissal.

- Parents or designated adults should wait outside the building.
- Catechists will escort students to the designated dismissal area.
- Elementary-aged students will only be released to a parent or authorized adult.
- If someone other than a parent or guardian will be picking up your child, please notify the Religious Education Office in advance.
- Students who have not been picked up at dismissal will wait safely in the Religious Education Office until a parent arrives.

Late Arrivals and Early Dismissals

Late arrivals and early dismissals interrupt instruction and should be reserved for emergencies.

- All late arrivals and early dismissals must be processed through the Religious Education Office.
- Students arriving late must be signed in by a parent or authorized adult.
- Parents requesting an early dismissal must sign their child out in the office. A staff member will escort the student from class.
- Catechists are not permitted to dismiss students directly from the classroom.
- Three late arrivals or early dismissals will be counted as one absence.
- Families of students with repeated lateness or early dismissals may be contacted to discuss solutions.
- **Doctor's appointments, sports, and extracurricular activities should be scheduled so they do not conflict with class time**

Communication

Open communication between families, catechists, and the Religious Education Office is essential to a successful partnership.

Important information is shared through:

- Written notices sent home in student folders
- Email communications
- Parent meetings
- The parish bulletin
- The parish website

Parents are encouraged to check their child's folder and email regularly, and to contact the Religious Education Office whenever questions or concerns arise.

Weather-Related Closures

When classes are canceled because of severe weather or another emergency, families will be notified as soon as possible through email.

When possible, announcements will also be posted on:

- News 12
- The office voicemail
- Entrance doors to the Religious Education building

We generally follow the lead of the Farmingdale and/or Massapequa School Districts regarding weather-related closures.

Instruction on Parish Grounds

Throughout the year, catechists may escort students to the church or grotto for prayer, instruction, or the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

These activities are considered part of our regular Religious Education program and are **not** field trips.

Our program does not conduct off-site field trips.

Registration & Placement

"Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God." Romans 15:7

Every child is welcome in our Religious Education program. We are committed to working with families to provide a faith formation experience that meets each child's needs while remaining faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Admission

Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education welcomes all families seeking to raise their children in the Catholic faith. Admission does not discriminate on the basis of race, nationality, gender, financial circumstances, or disability.

To enroll, a registration form must be completed each year.

Parish Registration

In accordance with diocesan policy, families enrolled in our Religious Education program must be registered parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and have a current Parish Census Form on file.

Baptismal Certificate

A copy of each child's Baptismal Certificate is required upon initial registration, including children baptized at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

Transfer Students

Students transferring from another parish Religious Education program or Catholic school must provide a Letter of Transfer indicating:

- Years of attendance
- Religious education level completed
- Sacraments received

Placement

- Religious Education is a sequential eight-year faith formation program.
- Each level builds upon the previous year's instruction. Therefore, students are placed according to the last level successfully completed rather than their public-school grade.
- Students who have missed one or more years of Religious Education are required to complete the missing levels before advancing.

Students New to Religious Education

- Children who have not previously participated in a parish Religious Education program will be evaluated individually to determine the most appropriate placement.
- When necessary, students may participate in the **Order of Christian Initiation of Children** to prepare for the Sacraments of Initiation.

Children with Special Needs

- We are committed to providing every child with the opportunity to grow in faith.
- Please inform the Religious Education Office of any learning differences, medical needs, or accommodations identified in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or other educational plan so we can provide appropriate support.
- When needed, we will work with families to develop an individualized catechetical plan that best supports the child's special needs.

Class Placement Requests

- Classroom space and availability are limited.
- Class assignments are made prayerfully and carefully.
- Requests for specific catechists or classmates cannot generally be accommodated.
- Exceptions may be made when necessary to meet documented educational, medical, or developmental needs.
- **Carpooling alone is not considered sufficient reason for placement in a particular class.**

Home Study

- Our program does not offer an independent home study option.
- Families whose schedules prevent regular attendance are encouraged to contact the Religious Education Office. We will gladly assist you in locating a neighboring parish whose program schedule better meets your family's needs.

Faith Formation Beyond Childhood

Teenagers and Young Adults : Our program offers an **Order of Christian Initiation** program for teenagers and young adults who have not yet received one or more Sacraments of Initiation. Please contact the Religious Education Office for additional information.

Adult Faith Formation: Adults interested in becoming Catholic or completing Sacraments should contact the Parish Rectory regarding our OCIA program. Please consult the parish bulletin for current adult faith formation opportunities being offered for parents and other adults.

Safety & Security

"The Lord will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever." Psalm 121:8

The safety and well-being of every child entrusted to our care is a shared responsibility. Our policies are designed to provide a secure environment where students can learn, pray, and grow in faith.

Student Health

- Parents are responsible for informing the Religious Education Office each year of any medical conditions that may affect their child's participation, including allergies, asthma, diabetes, seizures, learning differences, hearing or vision impairments, or other health concerns.
- This information should be updated annually on the registration form so that catechists and staff can respond appropriately.
- No medication may be administered by our staff, with the exception of an EpiPen in accordance with a current Food Allergy Action Plan.

Food Allergies and EpiPens

- To help protect students with severe food allergies, no food, candy, gum, or beverages other than water are permitted in the building.
- Families of students who require an EpiPen must submit a current Food Allergy Action Plan each year.
- EpiPens may only be administered by individuals trained in accordance with diocesan policy and New York State law.
- If no trained administrator is available, emergency medical services and the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately.

Restroom Procedures

- Students are encouraged to use the restroom before arriving for class.
- During class, students must use only the designated student restroom.
- Frequent restroom visits during class should be avoided whenever possible, as they interrupt instruction.
- If your child has a medical condition requiring regular restroom use, please notify the Religious Education Office in writing.

Custody and Legal Documents

- Please inform the Religious Education Office of any custody arrangements, Orders of Protection, restraining orders, or other legal circumstances that may affect your child's participation in the program.
- Copies of any applicable court documents should be provided before classes begin.
- Unless legal documentation directs otherwise, both parents retain equal access to information regarding their child and may attend parish events and sacramental celebrations.
- Only individuals authorized by the parent or legal guardian may pick up a child from class.

Safe Environment

In accordance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocese of Rockville Centre, all students participate annually in the **Thoughtful and Safe** program. These age-appropriate lessons help children recognize potentially unsafe situations and promote personal safety, healthy relationships, respect for others, responsible technology use, and Christian decision-making.

Our calendar indicates the dates that this lesson is scheduled.

Emergency Procedures

The safety of our students is our highest priority. Throughout the year, students and catechists participate in required emergency drills and follow diocesan and local safety procedures. These include:

- Fire Drills
- Lockout Procedures
- Lockdown Procedures
- Shelter-in-Place Drills

Catechists receive instruction regarding emergency procedures, and evacuation routes are posted in every classroom. Should an actual emergency occur, parents will be notified as soon as possible using the program's established communication methods.

Respect for Parish Property

- Students are expected to respect all parish buildings, furnishings, classrooms, and materials.
- Any student responsible for vandalism or intentional damage to parish property may be required to make restitution and may be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension or dismissal from the Religious Education program.

A Final Word

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant that you think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus." Romans 15:5

Thank you for choosing to share your child's faith journey with Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

Together, may we continue to build strong Catholic families, strengthen the Domestic Church, and form joyful disciples of Jesus Christ.

May God bless you and your family throughout the coming year.