

PARENT HANDBOOK

**Holy Innocents Parish
Religious Education
431 Bedford Road
Pleasantville, NY 10570
(914) 769-3297**

Revised June 2017

**Pastor: Rev. Hugh Burns, O.P.
Director: Maria Lamorgese
Secretary: Tammy Guastella**

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GDC: General Directory of Catechesis
CT: Catechesis Tredendae
NCD: National Catechetical Directory

MISSION STATEMENT

We, at the parish of Holy Innocents welcome and accept all children and assist them in developing a loving relationship with Jesus.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We look upon religion as the education of a total parish experience. This involves not just the child, but also parents, families, catechists and clergy from our parish community of faith. We believe that religious education is getting to know Jesus and learning what is expected of one who chooses to follow Him in the Catholic tradition. Our program reflects an integral learning experience, doctrine, biblical studies, liturgy, community building and service, and other dimensions of vibrant church life. Through the light of Faith, we hope to develop in those entrusted to our care, a deeper relationship with God.

A. Role of Religious Education Director and Coordinator

The religious education director and coordinator are delegated by the pastor to be responsible for the development, implementation, and administration of the parish catechetical program in accordance with the Guidelines of the Archdiocese of New York.

The religious education director and coordinator have the responsibility of implementing the principles of civil law concerning the safety of students in accordance with the Archdiocesan Safety Guidelines.

The religious education director and coordinator are also required to provide catechesis/religious education for all students of the parish including those who have physical, emotional, mental, or learning disabilities. The church is responsible to nourish the faith of the baptized person to the degree that the individual is capable of growing. The placement of the student is determined by the director after consultation with the parent, pastor and catechist. These programs are developed in accordance with the Archdiocesan Guidelines for students with special needs.

B. Role of the Catechist

A catechist is a person of faith who seeks to share this faith by communicating God's love and by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ to those entrusted to their care. This is accomplished through the fourfold activities of message, community, worship, and service. The tasks of the catechist are as follows: to help others grow in their personal faith and spirituality, to initiate others into the faith community and its life, worship, symbols, and practices, and to pass on a world view of shared meanings and values that are Catholic and Christian. The basic values stressed by the catechist are: self

respect, relationship with God, relationship with other persons and relationship with the world.

C. Obligation of Parents

1. Parents are obliged in conscience to see that there is family attendance at Mass every Sunday(Saturday evening) and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. Parents are required to attend scheduled family catechesis sessions.
3. Parents are to keep updated through our parish bulletin, our Website www.hiparish.org, and by reading the e-mails sent by the Religious Education Office.
4. Parents are welcome and invited to volunteer in our program throughout the year. Your gifts and talents are very much needed and appreciated.

I. Programs

Our Religious Education Program offers instructions to students in first through eighth grade. It offers an eight year course of study in which all Catholic children attending public school are expected to participate. The Religious Education Program offers an ongoing, continuing development of the Christian personality. This program is not a convenience for the reception of the three sacraments of Confirmation, Eucharist and Reconciliation. Sacraments are not isolated events, but rather an integral part of Christian life. Our aim is to provide a loving and caring Christian atmosphere in which our parish youth can grow in sound Christ like attitudes and values.

A. Home Study

A family catechetical program is one in which the children of the family are instructed in the faith at home by their own parents according to the guidelines of the Archdiocese. This is not offered as an option, but rather as a necessity, where every other means of attending class has been exhausted.

“Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches all forms of catechesis.”

GDC 226

Education in faith by parents, which should begin from the child’s tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words, but which perseveres throughout a day to day life, lived in accordance with the Gospel.

CT 68

A catechetical program may offer a family centered program under the direction of the D/CRE using the Archdiocesan Guidelines.

B. Homework and Testing

The main objective of the Religious Education Program is to foster the love of God and neighbor. However, there should be some assurance as to a level of knowledge and understanding of our Catholic faith, and its practices. We do periodically assess the students on their prayer knowledge and understanding of our faith.

Progress reports will be distributed twice a year: at mid-year and at the end of the program year. The progress of the child is based on their prayer knowledge, class work, home assignments, participation and behavior.

If a child does not fulfill the grade level requirements according to the Archdiocesan Guidelines, a meeting will be arranged with the parents to discuss the situation. Advancement is not automatic.

C. Special Needs

Holy Innocents Religious Education strives to meet the spiritual needs of all persons. Please inform the D/DRE of any special needs and we will make efforts to accommodate them. At times, we may need the parent or family to assist us. Children will be placed in the most appropriate setting that our resources allow.

D. Reverence and Respect

Respect, as Jesus taught us, is extended to God, ourselves and others. The children are expected to show respect to their catechists, assistants, peers, classmates, and all those who are here to help them expand their relationship with God. The children are also expected to show reverence in church and everything pertaining to God. Respect of the physical building is expected also.

II. SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The mission of the Archdiocese's Safe Environment Program is to insure the safety of children and young people who have been entrusted to our care in our parishes, schools, religious education classes, and other programs. Information about the Safe Environment Program in the Archdiocese of New York can be found at <http://archny.org/safe-environment-program>

Every child participates in a Safe Environment presentation appropriate for their age and grade level.

All employees and volunteers will submit to a background check and be rechecked every six years. They will also attend a Safe Environment Training Program.

Please know that our Program Doors will be locked during class sessions to ensure the safety of the children in our care.

III. SACRAMENTS

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

Sacramental catechesis has traditionally been of two kinds: preparation for the initial celebration of the Sacraments and continued enrichment following their first reception. Requirements for the reception of First Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation are determined by Canon Law:

- Age of reason
- Proper knowledge of sacraments
- Emotional and spiritual preparation
- Approval by Pastor, D/CRE, parent, catechist

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

Meetings are scheduled to help parents and students grow in their understanding and appreciation of these Sacraments. The required meetings will enable parents to participate in the sacramental preparation of their children.

A. Reconciliation

Jesus began his work on earth by calling people to repentance and faith: “ Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel.” (Mark1:15) The sacrament of Reconciliation continues his work of forgiving and reconciling.

Parents should be involved in the preparation of children for this sacrament. Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation starts at the second grade level. It is a joint effort of the D/DRE, catechists and parents.

Catechesis for the sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede First Communion (Eucharist) and must be kept distinct by a clear separation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation normally should be celebrated prior to the reception of First Communion. NCD 126

B. Eucharist (Holy Communion)

“For the administration of the most Holy Eucharist to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of

Christ according to their capacity, and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.” Canon 913

“It is primarily the duty of parents and of those who take their place, as it is the duty of the parish priest, to ensure that children who have reached the age of reason are properly prepared.” Canon 914

C. 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. NCD 118

As primary educators of their children, parents along with sponsors are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for Confirmation. Eight years in formal Religious Education is essential. Also, Confirmation meetings will provide necessary information regarding the requirements including sponsors, confirmation names, saint reports and community service. All the requirements need to be met in order to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

Each student to be confirmed must have a Sponsor. It is very fitting that the Sponsor at Confirmation be the same Sponsor one had at baptism. Requirements for Sponsors are the same as those for Baptism. Canons 893,874

All Sponsors must present a written statement from the Pastor of his/her parish affirming that he/she qualifies to be a Confirmation Sponsor. The Sponsor will be invited and encouraged to participate in the Mass of Introduction.

Formation Programs of Catechesis for Confirmation may include, but are not limited to:

- Regular Mass attendance
- Period of Instruction
- Service
- Retreat
- Letter of Intent to Bishop
- Patron Saint Report
- Mass of Introduction

IV. ADMISSIONS, PROCEDURES AND PLACEMENT

A. Registration

Registration dates and times are published in the parish bulletin and on the parish website www.hiparish.org . When a family is registering a child for the first time, we encourage them to register in the parish if they have not already done so.

Initial Registration

A parent must personally come to the Religious Education office and bring a copy of the child's baptismal certificate and any other sacrament that was received. In September there is a Meeting for the Parents who are new to the Program. This will be publicized in the parish bulletin, yearly calendar, and on our website.

Re-Registration

Re-Registration is required for all grades and must be done in person. It is very important to update ALL information each year. This includes medical information, allergies, special needs etc.

Transfers

Any child that is transferring from another parish must submit their Permanent record Card and a copy of their baptismal Certificate and certificates of any other Sacraments that they received.

Registration Fees

All Fees are listed on the Registration Forms.

B. Class Placement

Religious Education Programs are preparation for life; the students are expected to attend Religious Education consecutively from level one through level eight.

Any child older than the first grade level who enters the program without previous formal religious education must complete the first and second grade curriculum to receive First Holy Communion. The child will only be placed in the appropriate grade level after completing the curriculum of the grade(s) missed and demonstrates knowledge and an understanding of the material.

If a child returns to the program after dropping out, they will have to re-enter at the grade level that they left.

C. Attendance and Absences

Students are expected to attend class each scheduled week, and be on time. If a student arrives late they must report to the office before entering the classroom.

The Religious Education Office must be notified when a student is absent explaining the reason for the absence. The office will call the home whenever possible if a child has been marked absent and we have not heard from a parent.

Our policy at Holy Innocents is that no more than 4 absences are permitted in a given school year. After that, make-up classes are required. Also, any child arriving late, combined with absences may require a make-up class.

D. Cancellations/Closings

If sessions are canceled due to an emergency, listen to radio station SHUD or watch News Channel 12. Both have web sites and will post our closing. Also, WHUD has a voluntary sign –up and will text when they announce a closing.

<http://whudstore.hipcricket.com/default.asp>

When Pleasantville schools are closed due to weather conditions, we will be closed also. If the schools have an early dismissal due to weather conditions we will not have classes.

E. Custodial Rights of Parents

The D/CRE should be informed in writing by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent as these pertain to the child's participation in the program, as well as release from the program.

V. DISMISSAL FROM BUILDING

At the end of the catechetical session children in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade are dismissed to the care of the parent or designated parent substitute. If the child is to be dismissed in the care of ONLY certain people, it must be in writing and kept in the child's file.

If a student needs to be dismissed early, a written request or phone call must be given to the Religious Education Office and presented prior to the scheduled class.

The person picking up the child must go to the Religious Education Office and sign the Attendance Book. One of our staff or volunteers will then go and get the child from class.

Early dismissals combined with late arrivals and absences may require a make-up class.

VI. DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL OF STUDENT

The Religious Education Sessions take place in an atmosphere of learning within a Christian setting. Each student is expected to be respectful when in the church and

the classroom. Respect should be shown to the Catechist, Assistants, all Volunteers, his/her fellow students, and the parish property.

Normal discipline problems will be managed by the Catechist, Depending on the nature of the problem the D/CRE will manage the issue and the parents will be contacted.

Students may be removed from the group session when:

- It is believed that the student would benefit significantly from an individual or smaller group situation.
- The student's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group.
- Temporary removal is used as a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior.

If in an extreme case, the D/CRE finds it necessary to remove a student from the Program entirely, a meeting will be scheduled with the D/CRE, parents and the student. The final decision must be approved by the Pastor.

VII. CELLPHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cellphones should only be used to let parents know when a child has arrived in the building prior to class and /or they are ready to be picked up. During class time, all cellphones are to be disabled and stored. They are not to be used during break, in restrooms or any other time. If a child is using a cellphone or electronic device, it may be taken from them and returned only to the parent.

VIII. VISITORS

No unauthorized persons are allowed in the area where Catechetical sessions are taking place. All Doors will be locked during scheduled class time. When classes are in session, Parents and Visitors must use the Tompkins Avenue Entrance and knock on the Door in order to go to the Religious Education Office.

IX. RESTROOMS

When classes are in session, the restrooms should not be a meeting place for students or a place for children to use cellphones or electronic devices. Adults are to use restrooms in the Social Hall when children are in the building before, during and after class.

X. NOTICES, ANNOUNCEMENTS and REMINDERS

Notices, Announcements and or reminders of meetings, events or things of interest to the parents, as possible will be communicated through:

- Bulletin
- Rel. Ed. Calendar
- E-mail
- Website www.hiparish.org
- Posted notices in the Religious Ed. Space
- At times – flyers sent home with the students
- At times – mailings through the U.S. Post Office

XI. SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Every child will receive a Safe Environment Presentation appropriate for their grade level. Parents may choose and opt-out by signing a form that states they will provide the Safe Environment instruction, with their child at home. These forms are available in the Religious Education Office.

XII. PARISH WEBSITE

Our Parish has a website www.hiparish.org

Parishioners can find information such as:

- Who We are
- Program Calendar
- Sacramental Information, Requirements, Dates, and Forms
- Upcoming Events
- Registration Information

Parents should be periodically checking the website.

