

Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church  
**Religious Education Catechist Handbook**  
2013 – 2014



703-433-6564  
46639 Algonkian Parkway  
Potomac Falls, Virginia 20165  
[www.ourladyofhope.net](http://www.ourladyofhope.net)

## Table of Contents

<i>Overview of Program Elements</i> .....	4
Religious Education Mission Statement.....	4
The Parent/Catechist Partnership.....	4
Curriculum .....	5
Children’s Holy Hour .....	5
Eucharistic Adoration.....	5
The Sacrament of Confession.....	6
Festival of Lessons and Carols.....	6
Prayers to be Taught.....	6
May Crowning.....	6
Diocesan Formation in Christian Chastity Program.....	7
Resource Room.....	7
Substitutes.....	7
<i>Classroom Policies</i> .....	8
Attendance/Absentee Policy .....	8
Homework Assignments .....	8
Report Cards .....	8
Respect for School Property.....	9
Dress Code .....	9
Classroom Discipline.....	9
Learning Disabilities / Health Related Problems.....	10
Classroom Parties & Celebrations .....	10
Dismissal Policy .....	10
Cancellations.....	11
Physical Security .....	11
<i>Sacramental Preparation</i> .....	12
Introduction to Sacramental Preparation .....	12
Sacramental Preparation for Older Children (SPOC).....	12
Mass Attendance Record .....	12
<i>Diocesan Catechist Guidelines</i> .....	13
Catechist Certification.....	13
The Diocesan Child Protection Policy .....	13

Dear Catechists,

The formation of the students of Our Lady of Hope Parish in the Catholic Faith is a vital and important ministry. Thank you for your commitment, dedication and willingness to share the Catholic Faith.

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command - to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded" (*Catechesi Tradendae*). As the General Directory for Catechesis notes, "The Lord Jesus invites men and women, in a special way, to follow Him, teacher and formator of disciples. This personal call of Jesus Christ and its relationship to Him are the true moving forces of catechetical activity."

We are looking forward to working with you this school year. It is truly a privilege to know that God has entrusted us as catechists with "the heart of the Church," the youth. May God bless you in your catechetical efforts.

As a Catechist, you demonstrate the qualities of a person who has responded to the call of Christ to give witness to His Gospel, and to be committed to the work of the Church. Through this work, you share in and are a servant of the faith community at Our Lady of Hope. To reflect this position all catechists and aides are asked to read, sign, and return an Oath of Fidelity and make a public Profession of Faith.

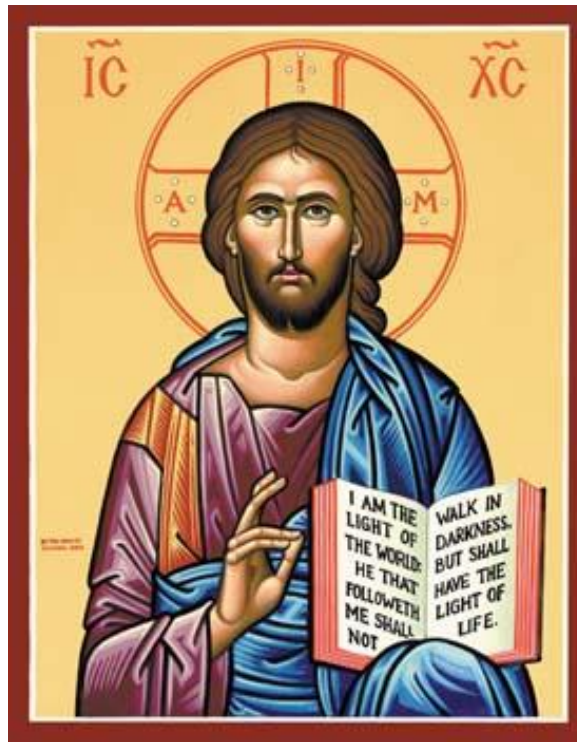
Jesus was sent to reveal the deepest truth about God. He then commissioned His Church to do the same: to teach about God, and to foster love of God and one another.

All Catechists, as Heralds of the Word, must give support to the Church's official teaching on all matters of faith and morals. We are not bearers of our own message, but rather the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You represent Christ to the youth, and speak in His name. Thank you for your service!

Sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cathy Plummer".

Cathy Plummer  
Director of Religious Education  
(703) 433-6564  
cplummer@ourladyofhope.net



### **Prayer for Catechists**

Jesus, you told us that laborers for the vineyard would be few and that we should pray to the Lord in the hope that many might respond. You have answered our prayers by sending us catechists for your vineyard.

Bless these men and women who have responded to your call to the ministry of catechesis. May they be filled with zeal for your Church, with care for those they catechize, and with love for your Word of Life. Let your Spirit come upon them so that your Word may echo through their teaching and through the witness of their lives. Through our catechists, may the members of our parish whom they teach be transformed into witnesses to your Word and may these catechists receive the blessing your Son promised to all who labor in your vineyard.

We pray to you, gracious Father, in the name of your Son, Jesus, the Word of Life, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit who transforms us by that Word, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## Overview of Program Elements

### Religious Education Mission Statement

Our Lady of Hope Religious Education Program looks upon each child as created in the image and likeness of God and as a reflection of His goodness. Realizing that God has created all things for His glory and our benefit, the challenge of being a living witness to the Gospel should be central to the development of each student. Therefore, at Our Lady of Hope, understanding Jesus and His message is essential to knowing Him, loving Him and serving Him always.

The core elements listed below form the foundation and strength of the Our Lady of Hope Religious Education Program. The dignity of the individual, as a unique child of God, is nurtured and developed.

- The doctrine of the Catholic faith is presented in its fullness and entirety as both knowledge to be learned and as life to be lived.
- Sacramental life is central to developing the Catholic faith.
- That the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the center of our faith.
- The frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist is promoted.
- Reverence for God's Word is fostered.
- Mary's example, as the first disciple of Jesus, is our model.
- Parents are recognized and respected as the primary educators of their children.
- That the Gospel message and moral life expressed in the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are professed, cultivated and practiced in everyday life.
- That the virtues are fostered and practiced in every day life.
- Reading and studying the lives of the saints as an example for us is encouraged.
- Prayer is necessary for growth in spiritual life - the Rosary, personal prayer, the Mass, etc.

### The Parent/Catechist Partnership

Parents are the primary religious educators of their children (CCC 1653). The home is where a child should first experience the Catholic faith. The Religious Education Program aims to work in partnership with parents, in order to assist them in living their vocation as educators of their children. The Religious Education Program should merely complement, not replace, the catechesis that children should receive in the home.

## Curriculum

*The Image of God* Series (Ignatius Press) is used for Kindergarten, and the *Faith and Life* Series for the first through eighth grades (Ignatius Press). The Sacramental Preparation for Older Children (SPOC) class will use the *Growing in Faith* curriculum by Sadlier, supplemented by the *St. Joseph First Communion Catechism*. It is recommended that catechists teaching a grade for the first time consult the Ignatius Press website click on *catechesis* and then *Faith and Life* for the theme, sequence and aim of the curriculum for each grade.

Each grade level has a specific curriculum guide provided by the Diocese entitled, "Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines." This curriculum guideline contains the required basic instructional objectives for each grade, and provides not only objectives but strategies as well. You can refer to it to plan your lessons to be sure all of it is covered in your year of classes. By covering the material in your Ignatius Press *Faith and Life* textbooks you will meet the Diocesan requirements. The Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines for your grade level can be obtained from the Diocesan website at [www.arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection/index.php](http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection/index.php).

Catechists should not feel obligated to complete every single chapter nor give the same time allotment to all chapters as long as the Diocesan guidelines are met. *Second Grade Catechists and SPOC catechists must prioritize sacramental preparation for First Penance and First Holy Communion over text completion.*

## Children's Holy Hour

An integral part of our Religious Education Program will be the Children's Holy Hour, which occurs approximately five times throughout the school year during the last 25 minutes of the session. In addition to learning the mysteries of the Faith, students are given the opportunity for worship and to express faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Participation will include grades second through eighth. Proper manners in God's house should be stressed and reviewed for a short time prior to the Holy Hour. Parents are encouraged to attend and catechists are urged to have their students encourage their parents to attend. Children will return to the classroom for dismissal.

## Eucharistic Adoration

The command to adore the one, true God was a command given to Moses. (Exodus 20:2-7). Eucharistic Adoration will be offered during Confession. Catechists are encouraged to plan their lessons in order to allow ample time for the students to examine their consciences and to pray before our Lord in the monstrance after receiving the sacrament.

### **The Sacrament of Confession**

The opportunity for Confession will be offered three times during the school year: near the beginning of the new school year, during Advent and during Lent. All students grade three through eight participate. All students are expected to know the Act of Contrition by heart and the proper procedures for the sacrament. Third grade catechists must allow class time for review as many students will not have received the sacrament since their First Penance. All catechists should encourage students to go to Confession with their families on a monthly basis. Second graders and students in SPOC will be afforded the opportunity for Confession during classes before their First Holy Communion.

### **Festival of Lessons and Carols**

Pending available support from the parish music ministry, the Festival of Lessons and Carols will be held on in late December or early January. This service is a sequence of readings from Sacred Scripture interspersed with the singing of traditional Christmas carols that foretell Jesus' birth. The service also includes a Nativity scene in the form of a *tableaux vivant*. Tableaux characters volunteer and are selected from the middle school grades. Children in the lower grades are encouraged to dress as angels and shepherds. A reception follows in the parish hall.

### **Prayers to be Taught**

Each class should begin and end with a prayer. The Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines assign basic prayers to be learned for each grade level. Most of the prayers are in the back of the *Faith and Life* textbook. These prayers are to be reviewed, explained and memorized by the students. It is crucial for students to learn these prayers in order to most fully participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the church.

Throughout the year, catechists are to review the prayers and have the students pray the prayers learned both in their current grade and in the preceding grades.

### **May Crowning**

The Religious Education Program celebrates each May with a traditional May Crowning honoring Mary, the Mother of God. This Marian celebration is an important devotion; therefore, each class session will have its own May Crowning in May. Each child will present a flower to a statue of our Blessed Mother. Flowers are provided by the parish. There will also be a time for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and benediction. CDs are available with the Marian hymns sung, in order that the students can practice beforehand and participate more fully. Catechists' lesson plans in April should allow some time for this practice, if at all possible.

### **Diocesan Formation in Christian Chastity Program**

The Diocese of Arlington has implemented a program as part of their Child Protection Policy called “Formation in Christian Chastity.” The Diocese requires all students in grades one through eight to participate.

Formation in Christian Chastity helps children to develop an awareness of the dignity of the human person and the integrity and holiness of the human body. We want to ensure that the years of innocence of the children be respected and that the parents are their primary educators of the children. There are two lesson plans for each grade first and fifth through eight; all the lessons are very tame and avoid any discussion of human biology or anatomy. Some of the topics that will be covered are Love God and neighbor, Chastity, the key to holiness, vocations, love and responsibility, and the sacrament of marriage. Parents can review any of the material that will be taught in the classroom. All lesson plans used are on the Diocese of Arlington website. The lessons are opt-in / opt-out.

The class date for the teaching will be announced in early fall. Parents will be notified ahead of time, and if they do not desire to have their children attend, they may simply not bring them to class that evening.

### **Resource Room**

Audio-Visual materials can provide an excellent stimulus for discussion, clarification or review. Students are familiar with audio-visuals and look forward to the discriminate use of such media. DVDs, books, catechisms, activity books, music and posters are available in the Religious Education library located in the Parish Offices. A catalogue of the library’s videos and resources is available online.

### **Substitutes**

If you are unable to teach your class on a given day, please first ask your aide to teach the class. If the aide does not feel comfortable in a teaching role, please call the Religious Education Office and inform them of your absence from class as soon as you can. Never have someone substitute in your class who has not completed the Diocesan Child Safety requirements.



## Classroom Policies

### Attendance/Absentee Policy

Attendance taking is typically a task assigned to the aide. Attendance should be recorded as soon as possible after the start of class. Please keep accurate records. For those classes preparing students for the reception of the sacraments, no more than five total absences will be permitted for the Confirmation class and no more than three for the First Communion class. For all classes, it is recommended that after two consecutive absences, the catechist or aide should contact the parent by phone or email. *Please be sure to turn your attendance sheets into the Religious Education Office at the end of each semester.* These sheets are very important to the Religious Education Office in recording accurate attendance for students' permanent records, particularly when a student transfers to another parish or is preparing to receive a sacrament. Perfect Attendance Certificates are awarded to students with no absences at the end of the Religious Education school year.

It is imperative to return the attendance sheet to your lobby mail box at the end of each class session. If for some reason you are unable to attend the next class and your sheet is missing, it is difficult to annotate attendance properly.

In some cases tardiness is unavoidable; however, the start of class should not be delayed because of anticipated tardiness on the part of specific students.

**Punctuality of Catechists:** The majority of our catechists arrive at the school from full time jobs, hectic commutes and busy parenting. We realize it is sometimes very difficult to arrive on time. However, if a family commitment or necessary errand is scheduled and being able to arrive on time is not likely please let your aide know, so they can make an extra effort to be on time.

### Homework Assignments

Catechists are asked to assign homework weekly for the students in first through eighth grades. The Activity Book should be used in class as well as homework. Questions at the end of each chapter should be assigned as well and the "words-to know". The parents should assist their child with homework if needed. Homework should be reviewed each week in class.

### Report Cards

Catechists/Aides will provide a standard written evaluation of a student's progress to the parents two times during the school year at the end of each semester. Catechists are asked to keep the returned report cards during the school year for the final report card in May. Report cards will include the child's understanding of the material covered as reflected by test scores, the child's completion of homework assignments, prayers mastered, class participation, and behavior. We recognize that marks may not adequately reflect the degree to which a student is maturing in his/her Catholic life, but they do reflect how well they comprehend the material being presented. A ranking of Excellent or Needs Improvement or a grade of A or D and below must include a comment from the catechists.

## Respect for School Property

Children should be told not to touch or play with any of the materials in the classroom; they belong to Our Lady of Hope School and must remain where they are. If a student damages any of the school property, parents and the Director of Religious Education are to be notified. Please ensure that the students do not touch classroom artwork. If you move anything, move it back to its original position prior to leaving. Desks, tables, chalkboards, and the screen cover should be left in their original condition. **Be especially careful with the SmartBoard screen – never use regular/whiteboard markers on this board!** It is extremely important that aides walk around the classroom during class time to prevent any children from damaging classroom materials. Otherwise, the students will quickly learn that they can do what they want. Under no circumstances should students touch the contents within the desks.

## Dress Code

Catechists and aides are expected to wear modest clothing appropriate for the classroom. **Shorts are never appropriate to wear to class.** Our adult volunteers are, as a minimum, expected to adhere to the dress code guidelines they enforce for their students, which are explained below. Catechists are also expected to enforce the student's dress code with particular emphasis on the days that Adoration, Confessions and Holy Hour are scheduled. Students also are expected to wear modest clothing to class. Short shorts (must reach knee length), tops which do not cover the midriff area, pants hanging off of hips, mini-skirts, plunging necklines, spaghetti straps, or graphic depictions or written references written on clothing (e.g., to drugs, alcohol, weapons, graphic sexual connotation, profanity) are not permitted. If a student violates this policy, his or her parents should immediately be called. The parents should bring alternative clothes for the student to change into so that he or she may return to class.

## Classroom Discipline

All disciplinary action should be administered with Christian love. Good discipline is a part of Christian education; be firm and consistent. It is necessary to establish order in the classroom.

*In the event that a student's classroom behavior is disruptive, the catechist should:*

- Not allow the disruptive situation to continue to persist in the classroom
- Not embarrass the child in front of classmates
- Speak to the child and try to encourage the student to change their behavior
- Assigned seating should be enforced the very first day with a pre-planned seating chart. Physically separate students. Classroom capacity is thirty students. If you have 15 students assigned seating every other desk. Never have students sit next to one another if there is space available not to.
- If the student continues to be disruptive, send the student to the Director of Religious Education who will speak to the student.
- If this attempt is not successful, the parents will be contacted and asked to work with their child and the catechist to have this behavior corrected.

- Talk to parents if necessary
- If this does not work, the parent **MUST** accompany the student to class until the student's behavior is acceptable for the classroom environment.

**Note: Never tell a parent that their child has been disruptive *for the first time* on a student's report card without having spoken to the parents about the problem beforehand.**

### Learning Disabilities / Health Related Problems

If a child has a learning disability or health-related problem, this information will be on the child's registration card, if the parents have chosen to share the information with us. *All information should remain confidential.* If you have any concerns about the child, please speak to the parent. The Religious Education Program has a group of Special Education volunteers that may be able to assist you with any special learning or behavioral challenges. Please call the Religious Education Office for their assistance. Catechists will not be expected to administer any medications or epi-pens. A "strictly confidential" special needs listing will be provided to each catechist the first day of class

### Classroom Parties & Celebrations

A small celebration at Christmas and the end of the year may occur with permission from the Religious Education Office. If food is introduced it should be tied in with a feast day. These are the only two dates when food should be brought to class. **Please alert parents of any celebration, keeping in mind that there may be food allergies in your class.**

### Dismissal Policy

The following *policies* have been formulated to ensure the safety of each student and will be strictly enforced.

#### **Building Security:**

The school will be secured during Religious Education classes. In the event the staff is unavailable in the lobby, the lobby doors will be locked. Please ring the doorbell to the right. If a child needs to be picked up early, arrangements need to be made ahead of time and the catechist notified, so that the aide can escort the child down to the lobby to meet the parent.

#### **Parking Directives**

- Catechists, Aides, and Other Volunteers are to park in the upper school parking lot closest to the school building.
- Parents may park in the lower church parking lot.

### Drop off and Pick up of Students:

**Drop Off:** At the discretion of the parents, students in grades 3 through 8 may be dropped off in front of the school. Parents of kindergarten, first and second grade students **must** bring their child to their classroom.

- All students must enter and exit through the lobby only. No students will be able to exit through the gym or east side fire exits by the playground.
- Students must wait quietly in the hall until either the catechist or aide arrives. Children will not be permitted to be in the classrooms unattended.

### **Pick Up:**

- **Students in grades Kindergarten through fifth: Parents must pick students up in the classroom.**
- **Students in grades sixth, seventh, and eighth:** There is no requirement for parents to come to the child's classroom. However, if you do not feel comfortable having them walk out of the school building unattended, require your child to wait for you in the lobby until you arrive. Since all classes will soon be dismissed during hours of darkness, it is recommended that students wait in the lobby.
- **Carpools for grades Kindergarten through fifth:** If you plan to share a carpool with other families, please notify the catechist/aide and let them know in writing who is eligible to pick up your child from class and specify the date.

<b>Cancellations</b>
----------------------

If Loudoun County Public Schools cancels school for the day, dismisses school early due to inclement weather, or if county afternoon and evening activities are cancelled, then Religious Education classes are likewise cancelled. If classes are cancelled by the parish for whatever reason, an email will be sent to each family as soon as possible. When in doubt contact the Religious Education Office at 703-433-6564.

<b>Physical Security</b>
--------------------------

The school lobby is manned by the Religious Education staff. When that is not possible, the lobby doors will be locked. Side and emergency exits are locked at all times. All students, parents and adult volunteers must enter and exit via the school lobby only.

# Sacramental Preparation

## Introduction to Sacramental Preparation

A very important aspect of the Religious Education program is sacramental preparation. Children are prepared for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation. The preparation involves both parents and students through parent meetings and student assignments. Students are required to attend Religious Education classes regularly for one year prior to the sacramental year to give the child a firm foundation on which to base specific preparation for the sacraments. Students preparing to receive a sacrament may not have any more than five absences in the eighth grade and three absences in second grade Sacramental Preparation for Older Children (SPOC).

If you are a Catechist or Aide for any of the sacramental classes (2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, SPOC) you are expected to be available to assist at all functions associated with the sacraments to include: retreats, rehearsals, and the First Holy Communion and Confirmation Masses.

## Sacramental Preparation for Older Children (SPOC)

The Sacramental Preparation for Older Children class is for students, between 4th and 6th grades, who have not yet received the sacraments of Baptism and/or Penance and First Holy Communion. Each student will need to complete homework assignments, memorize certain prayers, complete the weekly Mass Attendance sheets, and return them to the catechist on a monthly basis. By the end of this one-year class, the children will have received the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion for the first time.

## Mass Attendance Record

Students in *second grade* and SPOC are expected to complete a Mass Attendance Sheet each week. This sheet must be returned to the catechist on a weekly basis for record keeping. Failure to complete these forms, and most importantly, failure to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, may jeopardize the child's timely reception of the sacraments. Monthly Mass Attendance logs should be forwarded to the RE Office. This form is very "child friendly" and age appropriate; most catechists use this form as a discussion starter after the opening prayer.

## Diocesan Catechist Guidelines

### Catechist Certification

The Diocese of Arlington has recently revised the requirements for Catechist Certification. The new requirements can be viewed at <http://arlingtondiocese.org/religious/training.php>. It is not required for catechists or aides to pursue certification; however, everyone is encouraged to do so. Various programs and classes are available to assist you in acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to communicate the Gospel message effectively. You may take advantage of these opportunities (and others) to work your way toward Catechist Certification:

- Notre Dame Graduate School Courses (for audit or credit)
- Master Catechist Training Program
- Catholic Education Center Online Courses ( no cost to the catechist)
- Diocesan Catechetical Conference
- Our Lady of Hope Catechist Workshops
- Catholic Distance University Online Courses
- Father Saunders' annual Inquiry Class which is scheduled each fall and continues up to Easter.

### The Diocesan Child Protection Policy

For the safety of the children in its care, the Diocese of Arlington requires all volunteers who have substantial association with children to adhere to its *Policy on the Protection of Children*. This includes all catechists and aides in the Religious Education Program. The requirements of this program are as follows:

- Complete the following policy forms: the Questionnaire, the Code of Conduct signature page, and the Acknowledgment of Receipt form (which is the last page in the policy).
- Complete the two Background Check forms, one of which must be notarized.
- Attend the "Protecting God's Children" *Virtus* Seminar. Anyone who has previously attended this seminar will not need to attend again. You must **pre-register online** to attend the seminar.

If you have any questions about this, please contact our Parish Coordinator of Child Protection, Ben Zumdahl, at 703-433-6570 or [bzumdahl@ourladyofhope.net](mailto:bzumdahl@ourladyofhope.net).