

Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church  
**Religious Education Parent Handbook**  
2011 – 2012



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Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2011-2012 Religious Education academic year! Thank you for entrusting your children to us to complement your family Faith Formation!



The Religious Education staff at Our Lady of Hope is looking forward to a new year of sharing the Faith in Christ Jesus with your children. The Church teaches that parents are the primary religious educators of their children (CCC 1653). We are here to support you in this mission, for “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” (*Catechesis In Our Time*). With the help of the Holy Spirit, catechists will pass on our Catholic faith to your children by reinforcing what you are already teaching them at home. The Religious Education Program at Our Lady of Hope is here to support the catechesis in your home, for “family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith (CCC 2226).

The Christian home is the place where the children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason, the family home is rightly called “The Domestic Church,” a home centered on prayer, virtues and Christian charity. God ordained the family as the place where life in Christ takes root in the human heart, blossoms and spreads outward to embrace the world.

All Christian education finds its source within the sacramental life of the church. It is of utmost importance that the children participate in the sacramental life of the Church, through an opportunity for frequent participation in the Sacrament of Penance and weekly Sunday Attendance at Holy Mass, for “the Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church’s life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church” (CCC 1407). Please ensure that your child is able to participate in the life of the Church by attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and if possible Holy Hour on Thursday nights.

Please feel free to contact us at the Religious Education Office with any concerns you might have. Let us continue to pray for Christ's blessings on our Catechetical efforts. May God Bless you and your families as you strive to imitate the Holy Family.

In Christ's Love,

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## **Our Lady of Hope Religious Education Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement of Our Lady of Hope Religious Education is to look 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, 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. With these we seek to cultivate the hearts, minds and souls of our students to their fullest potential.

- 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.
- 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 important for growth in spiritual life: the Rosary, personal prayer, the Mass, etc.

## **A Parent's Prayer**

Most loving Father, the example of parenthood, you have entrusted our children to us to bring them up for You and prepare them for everlasting life. Assist us with your grace, that we may fulfill this sacred duty with competence and love. Teach us what to give and what to withhold. Show us when to reprove, when to praise and when to be silent. Make us gentle and considerate, yet firm and watchful. Keep us from the weakness of indulgence and the excess of severity.

Give us the courage to be disliked sometimes by our children, when we must do necessary things which are displeasing in their eyes. Give us the imagination to enter their world in order to understand and guide them. Grant us all the virtues we need to lead them by word and example in the ways of wisdom and piety. One day, with them, may we enter into the joys of our true and everlasting home with You in Heaven. Amen!

## Role of Parents

*Parents are the primary religious educators of their children (CCC 1653).* The home is where a child first experiences the Catholic faith. You teach primarily by the example you set. It is extremely important for children to experience the love of God in their homes. The Religious Education (RE) Program aims to work in partnership with parents in order to assist them in living their vocation as educators of their children. Please learn your child's catechist name and introduce yourself to the catechist and classroom aides working with your children the first month. The Religious Education Program should merely complement, not replace, the catechesis that your children should receive in the home.

The RE Program assists parents in their God-given role as educators of the Faith by:

- Providing weekly religious education classes for children in a classroom setting with three formal evaluations (report cards)
- Providing the opportunity for Eucharistic Adoration by attending Children's Holy Hour.
- Providing three opportunities to receive the sacrament of Confession
- Providing quarterly opportunities to help the poor and needy
- Providing one faith community building activity per semester
- And by providing the truth of the Roman Catholic Faith as handed down by Jesus Christ through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church, and the Church Fathers.

All Christian education finds its source within the sacramental life of the Church. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that children are given the opportunity for frequent participation in the Sacrament of penance and weekly Sunday attendance at Holy Mass. Knowledge of the Catholic faith that is not upheld by the practice of the sacramental life is empty knowledge. Please ensure that your children are able to participate in the life of the Church by attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. The Parish also offers a Holy Hour on Thursday evenings with Eucharistic Adoration and Confession.

Finally, please make every effort to have your child arrive on time for class. This is particularly important because classes are held only once a week. Students should arrive no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of class.

We remind you that the role of a Religious Education program can only be secondary to you, the parent. We encourage you to do all you can, and we promise to do the best we can to aide and guide the sacramental preparation of your child. We offer these tips for preparing your child for the Sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion:

- Attend Sunday Mass together, failure to attend Sunday Mass is a grave sin.
- Help your child to fully participate in the Mass. Remember if you don't sing or recite the responses, neither will your child.
- Pray with your children, you are their first example of the faith.

- Take your child to Church to visit Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament. Explain how Jesus is waiting in the Tabernacle for us to come to Him, how He loves us to come and just be with Him.

### **Role of Students**

Students are expected to be punctual and prepared for class. Students should arrive no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of class. *Each week, students should bring their textbooks, writing utensils, with two pencils already sharpened and completed homework assignments.* Students are to arrive early enough so they can use the rest rooms before class. Students should conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to a classroom environment.

- Students are reminded that all property and possessions found in the classroom are to be left untouched.
- No food, drink, or gum is permitted in the building!
- All students must enter and exit through the main school lobby. The side doors are to be used in emergencies only.

Every student has the right and privilege to learn in a classroom where students are well behaved. Similarly, every teacher and assistant has the right to teach in such an environment. In the event that a student finds it difficult to exhibit proper behavior, the teacher will call upon the Religious Education staff for assistance. Every attempt will be made to integrate the child into the classroom prior to contacting his/ her parents; if unsuccessful, the Religious Education staff will enlist the support of the parents to rectify the situation. If this process fails, a parent **MUST** accompany the student to class and sit with him/her until the student demonstrates that he/she is able to behave in a manner suitable for classroom instruction.

### **Curriculum**

*The Image of God* Series (Ignatius Press) is used for and Kindergarten, and the *Faith and Life Series* (Ignatius Press) for First through Eighth grades. The Sacramental Preparation Class for Older Children (SPOC) uses the *One Faith, One Lord* (Sadlier) supplemented by the St. Joseph First Communion Catechism.

The questions and answers at the end of each chapter in the student text should be understood and committed to memory for each grade. For a brief outline of the goals and themes by grade level, go to [www.ignatiuspress.com](http://www.ignatiuspress.com) and click on Catechism Series.

### **Academic Calendar**

The school year calendar for the Religious Education Program is available on the parish website at [www.ourladyofhope.net](http://www.ourladyofhope.net). The calendar parallels closely, but not exactly, the Loudoun County Public Schools calendar. Please check it periodically so you will know when class is not meeting as well as to check dates for the Sacramental Preparation Meetings for second, seventh and eighth grade students and their parents for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and special programs such as the Festival of Lessons and Carols and the May Crowning.

### **Classroom Visitations by Parish Priests**

Father Saunders and Father Fimian will be visiting class sessions. Ideally, each class will be visited by a priest once per semester. Students are encouraged to ask the priests any questions that they may have at this time.

<b>Prayers to be Learned</b>
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Each class will begin and end with a prayer. The Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines assign basic prayers to be learned for each grade level. These prayers are to be reviewed, explained and memorized by the students. A life of prayer begins in the home. We strongly urge you to reinforce a life of prayer at home by praying the prayers found in the chart below with your child. It is crucial for students to learn these prayers in order to more fully participate in the liturgical life of the church. Each grade will review the prayers of the preceding grade.

Grade	Prayers to be Learned
<b>Kindergarten:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genuflection</li> <li>• Grace before Meals</li> <li>• Hail Mary</li> <li>• Sign of the Cross</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 1:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glory be to the Father</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 2:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guardian Angel Prayer</li> <li>• Act of Contrition</li> <li>• Act of Faith (simple form)</li> <li>• Act of Hope (simple form)</li> <li>• Morning Offering</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 3:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apostles' Creed</li> <li>• Rosary</li> <li>• All Mysteries of the Rosary</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 4:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts of Faith, Hope &amp; Love</li> <li>• Rosary</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 5:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divine Praises</li> <li>• Hail Holy Queen</li> <li>• Memorare</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 6:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stations of the Cross</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 7:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prayer to the Holy Spirit</li> <li>• The Angelus</li> <li>• The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi</li> <li>• The Regina Coeli</li> </ul>
<b>Grade 8:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write personal petitions for liturgical use</li> <li>• See Psalms as prayers that express our needs</li> </ul>

## Homework Assignments

Grades 1 through 8 will primarily use the *Faith and Life Activity Book* as homework as assigned by the catechist. However, from time to time, special projects are assigned relevant to the curriculum. These books will go home with your child each week for you and your child to work on together. The assignments are to be completed for the following week. Assigned homework will help you to be directly and consistently involved with the formation of your child's religious education. Please take this opportunity to share your faith with your child.

## Diocesan Formation in Christian Chastity Program

The Diocese of Arlington has implemented a new program as part of their Child Protection Policy called "Formation in Christian Chastity." The Diocese has mandated that grades second through fourth be taught at home; grades first and fifth through eighth are to be implemented in all Catholic schools and Religious Education Programs.

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. The parent handouts available will include "Know the Rules" and questions from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children on Child Safety. There are two lesson plans for each grade, first, and fifth through eighth. Some of the topics that will be covered are love of God and neighbor, chastity, the key to holiness, vocations, love and responsibility, and the sacrament of marriage. There will be no discussion of human anatomy in the classroom. Parents can review any of the material that will be taught in the classroom at the Diocesan website, [http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection/form\\_christianchastity.php](http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection/form_christianchastity.php).

## Children's Holy Hour

An integral part of our Religious Education Program will be the Children's Holy Hour, which will usually be held the first class of each month, during the last half of each 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. Participants will include grades second through eighth. Proper manners in God's house should be stressed and reviewed for a short time prior to the monthly Holy Hour. Parents and family members are encouraged to attend. All students will return afterward to the classroom for dismissal.

## The Sacrament of Confession

Confessions will be offered three times during the school year: near the beginning of the new school year, during Advent and during Lent. All students in grades third through eighth participate. **All students are expected to know the Act of Contrition by heart and the proper procedures for the sacrament. The students will learn this in class, but parents should review these procedures and the Act of Contrition with their child.** These opportunities for

Confession should merely complement the families' frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **Eucharistic Adoration**

Eucharistic Adoration will be offered during Confessions to encourage the children to pray to our Lord who is really and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament.

### **May Crowning**

This Marian celebration is an important devotion; therefore, each class session will have its own May Crowning during the first week of May. Each child will present a flower to a statue of our Blessed Mother. Families are invited to attend.

### **Report Cards**

Catechists & Aides will provide a standard written evaluation of a student's progress to the parents three times during the school year (November, March, and May). 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. Parents are required to sign and return the first two report cards to the catechist.

### **Learning Disabilities / Health Related Problems**

If your child has a learning disability or health-related problem, this information should be annotated on the child's registration card. All information will remain confidential, but this information will be passed on to the catechist, which will be helpful in teaching your child. 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, particularly as they apply to preparation for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, which includes passing a comprehensive exam. Please call the Religious Education Office for further information.

### **Attendance / Absentee Policy**

The Catechists will record attendance at the beginning of each class. *We ask that you notify your child's teacher if your child will be absent not the Religious Education Office..* Regular attendance is essential to the ongoing formation of your child. For those children preparing for the reception of the Sacraments, no more than five total absences will be allowed for eighth grade students and three for students preparing for First Penance and First Holy Communion.

There are only thirty-one class sessions so please make every effort to get your child there on time.

### **Cancellations**

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. Also make sure to check the front doors of the school building for a notice that classes are canceled.

### **Dress Code**

All students are to dress modestly. Shorts worn by students in the middle school grades (grades 6, 7 and 8) must be “Bermuda length,” just above the knee or longer. Articles of clothing which depict drugs, alcohol, profanity, weapons, and sexual innuendo are forbidden.

Halter tops, tank tops, shirts showing the midriff, spaghetti straps or any style that may be considered immodest should not be worn. Boys must remove hats upon entering the building. *Anyone not fulfilling the dress code will need to call their parents and ask them to bring a change of clothing.*

### **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 or aide 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
- 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.
- If this does not work, the parent **MUST** accompany the student to class until the student's behavior is acceptable for the classroom environment.

## Drop-Off and Dismissal Policy

The following safety regulations have been formulated to ensure the safety of each student and will be strictly enforced. For the safety of all the children, no child will be dismissed early from class, unless the parent comes in to pick up the child.

### Parking Directions

- Catechists, Aides, and Other Volunteers are to park in the upper parking lot closest to the school building.
- Parent Parking: Parents may park in any area in the church parking lot that is available.

### Drop off and Pick up of Students:

- Entrance and Exit: The entrance and exit on the cascade and Algonkian side of the property will be open for drop off and pick up of students
- Drop Off: Parents may drop off students in front of the school for grades 3 through 8. Parent that have Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and first grade students are asked to come in and bring their child into the class room. Students are required to remain in the hallway until either the catechist or aide is present in the classroom.
- **If you plan to share a carpool with other families, please notify the catechist so that the catechist knows who is eligible to pick up your child from class.**
- Pick Up: All parents and carpools are asked to come in and pick up the students in their classroom. Eighth grade students can be picked up in the school lobby. For the safety of every student, **no student will be dismissed to the parking lot by themselves.**

## Home-Schooled Students or Students Attending a Catholic School

For purposes of this handbook, Catholic home-schooled students are those students defined as being home-schooled in **all** academic subjects by their parents, not just religion. Home-schooling families are encouraged and welcomed to participate in our Religious Education Program. This is a wonderful opportunity to foster a sense of community with the parish and interact with other Catholic children in a controlled and caring environment.

Home-schooled students are not required to attend Religious Education classes as part of sacramental preparation; nevertheless, they must fulfill all the other sacramental requirements, and formally apply and register to be enrolled in the parish First Communion or Confirmation class. They must adhere to the same administrative deadlines. Parents and students must attend parent/student meetings. Please note that families will be obliged to pay the sacramental preparation fees but not the Religious Education class tuition. **Home schooling families are required to attend all First Communion and Confirmation parent meetings.** Sacramental preparation information and handouts are passed out at the meetings. *Please contact the Religious Education Office for a list of the sacramental requirements.*

Because of the importance of sacramental preparation a midterm exam will be given in January and a final exam in April for the following grades: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. All exams will be multiple

choice and based on the *Faith and Life* curriculum. The exam will be administered in the parish school; parents will be notified of the test date by mail.

Active participation in Youth Group is required by all home-schooled ninth-grade and Catholic school students enrolled in the Confirmation class prior to receiving the sacrament in the fall.

Home-schooled students must be enrolled in Religious Education classes to participate in CYO sports. Students attending Catholic schools are not required to attend the parish Religious Education Program to participate in the parish CYO sports program.

### **Introduction to Sacramental Preparation**

A central aspect of the Religious Education program is preparing children to receive the sacraments. Children are prepared for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation. The preparation involves both parents and students with mandatory parent meetings and student assignments. Students are required to attend Religious Education classes regularly for one year prior to the year of reception to give the child a firm foundation on which to base specific preparation for the sacraments. Students preparing to receive a sacrament may have no more than five total absences from class.

### **Sacramental Preparation for Older Children (SPOC)**

Those children in fourth through eighth grade who have not yet received the Sacraments of Baptism, Penance and/or First Holy Communion will attend the Sacramental Preparation for Older Children class (SPOC). Each student will need to complete homework assignments, memorize certain prayers, complete the weekly Mass Attendance sheets, and return them to the teacher on a monthly basis for record keeping.

### **Sacramental Preparation for High School Children**

On a need-by-need basis, a preparation class for all high school students in grades nine and ten who have not yet received the Sacraments of Baptism, Penance, First Holy Communion, and/or Confirmation could be scheduled. Call the Religious Education Office to register your child for this class. Often, however, high school students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve who have not received these sacraments will be enrolled in the Parish RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) class, which begins in October each year. Please call the Parish Office at 703-433-6561. to register for this class.

### **The Sacraments of Penance & Holy Communion**

Preparation for reception of the Most Holy Eucharist for the first time is a two year process. First and Second grade Religious Education classes together constitute this two year preparation. Students in second grade in the public school system who did not attend Religious Education classes or a Catholic school in the prior year will need to first complete the first grade Religious Education class. Then those students can participate in the second grade Religious Education

class during their third grade year at public school. After reception of the sacraments they will join their regular grade level. The sacrament of Penance is first received in February of the second grade year; a student receives his First Holy Communion during May of that same year. Details are provided to parents of rising second grade Religious Education students during the fall parents meeting of their second grade faith formation year.

### **The Sacrament of Confirmation**

Preparation for reception of the sacrament of Confirmation from the hands of the bishop is a two year process. Seventh and eighth grade Religious Education classes together constitute this two year preparation. Students in eighth grade in the public school system who did not attend Religious Education classes or a Catholic school in the prior year will need to first complete the seventh grade Religious Education class. Then those students can participate in the eighth grade Religious Education class during their ninth grade year at public school.