

St. Anne Catholic Church

Catechist Handbook

Introduction

At St. Anne Catholic Church, our formation program is grounded in the teachings of Christ and His Church. We strive to uphold our vision, mission, and values in our classrooms and day-to-day lives. Thank you for being here; thank you for serving our families; thank you for your witness; thank you for your sacrifice. May God bless you!

Vision - To be a haven of God's love, grace and hope where all people in our region discover Christ, follow Christ and share Christ.

Mission - We will foster a solid sacramental life and build a parish family where good teaching allows us to grow our community and be a place where all people can encounter Christ.

Values - The six values intended to help us live a life in Christ:

- ❖ Dig for Truth
- ❖ Know What's Right
- ❖ No Day without Prayer
- ❖ Live Sacramentally
- ❖ Speak Up, Speak Out
- ❖ Give to Others

I. Expectations

- A. **Calendar:** A hard copy and e-copy of the calendar will be given to you before Catechetical Sunday and may always be found on the St. Anne website www.saint-anne.org. Note that we teach the first three weeks of the month from October until Holy Week/Easter. Make your personal plans for the end of the month, please, so that no substitutes will be needed.

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- B. **Catechist Absences:** Catechists should make every effort to be present and prepared for each Faith Formation class. In the rare event of illness or other reason for absence, the catechist should 1.) notify Mary, and 2.) contact a substitute via email or phone from the list provided at the end of the Catechist Contact Information Sheet. You must receive a response before telling Mary whom your sub will be. Please communicate directly with your sub about lesson plans and materials, special needs and helpful hints.
- a. **Student Absences:** The parents of students should make every effort to get their children to every Faith Formation class. In the rare event of illness or other reason for absence, the parent should contact their child's catechist directly via email or phone. More than two absences in a row require a follow-up from either the catechist or DRE or both to be sure all is well. Catechists should communicate frequent absences of students to Mary. Please pray for those who are absent, on your own and with your students.
 - b. **Tardiness:** Not an option. Church doors will be open a half hour before class time. Please arrive at least 15 minutes early to set up a prayer space in your classroom and be ready to welcome and teach all of your students.
- C. **Dress Code:** One should always be modest, clean and well-groomed. We want to look our best and be our best for Jesus at every Mass. If you'll be attending Mass on a different day than the day you teach, feel free to dress comfortably for sitting on the floor with your students.
- D. **Mass Attendance:** Please participate in Mass every week. This feeds your soul, sets a good example, and strengthens the whole community. Mass is the highest form of prayer. The Lord deserves our worship every week and He desires to fill us with all the graces we need to fulfill our earthly duties in order to be united with Him in Heaven. Lead by following Him.

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- E. **Communication:** In order to ensure that we are collaborating and growing as a unified catechetical team, steady and honest communication is essential. Please email or call Mary with any questions, concerns, feedback, etc. Exchange lesson plan information with your co-catechist(s). Communication with parents is key to successful in-class behavior management, and it is important that you contact a child's parents as well as Mary in the case of poor, disruptive, or inappropriate student behavior. *Please send at least a brief bi-monthly email message to parents updating them on class topics and activities.*
- F. **Special Needs & Confidential Information:** Many children have special learning needs we try to meet. With some extra helping hands we can usually include and accommodate every family. As catechists, if you discover that you need help learning how to engage a child with special needs, please ask! Lean on Mary and on other catechists who are education professionals or certified in special education, and, of course, on the child's own parents who may be the best resource. Mary will inform each catechist of any student who has special needs which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. medical conditions, learning disabilities, custody issues, etc.). This information is to be kept strictly confidential and must be used with discretion.¹
- G. **Catechist Formation:** We come together for two formal training and formational sessions during the Faith Formation year. The first is a day-long catechist orientation. This year we will meet on Saturday, September 14th from 8:30 am - 3 pm. The second is our January JUMP-start (Jesus, Use Me, Please) scheduled for January 7th, 2020. This is a short retreat evening where we will spend time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in Eucharistic Adoration, engage in a brief adult formation activity, reflect on the year thus far, and exchange ideas and goals for the remainder of the year. Please make every effort to attend these formational events. As always, your time is greatly valued and appreciated!

¹ *Catechist Handbook*, Archdiocese of New York

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- H. **Social Media:** Please be mindful and use prudence when posting content and engaging in conversations on social media platforms. As lay ministerial leaders in our parish community, it is our responsibility to speak and act with integrity within all facets of our lives and to uphold the moral teachings of our Catholic Faith. This means refraining from sharing or promoting ideologies via social media that contradict the Gospel of Christ and the teachings of Holy Mother Church.
- I. **Safe Environment Education (S.E.E., Safeguarding, or VIRTUS):** As per the Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and guidelines from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, all staff and volunteers who work with children must attend a Safe Environment Education (S.E.E.) awareness session, sign a document allowing a background check, read and sign-off on The Code of Ethical Standards and Mandatory Reporting Responsibilities, and teach an age-appropriate abuse-prevention Safeguarding All of God's Children lesson. Compliance is mandatory. The goal, of course, is to teach adults and children to recognize, resist and report abuse, and to love as Jesus loves.
<https://www.archmil.org/archmil/Offices/Safe-Environment.htm>
- J. **Dismissal of a Catechist:** Allegations of child abuse or molestation result in *immediate suspension*. Any allegations of child abuse or molestation must be reported to Mary who will inform the Pastor and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Safe Environment Program Manager Suzanne Nickolai. Some reasons for considering the dismissal of a catechist are:
- a. Consistent failure to follow the Archdiocesan Guidelines or the designated curriculum.
 - b. Consistent resistance to the leadership, directives and guidance of the Director.
 - c. Excessive absence or tardiness.
 - d. Behavior that fosters divisiveness and a spirit of negativity among the other catechists and staff.
 - e. A lifestyle that seriously and obviously violates Catholic morality.

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If improper behavior/performance occurs, the catechist is warned in writing that a failure to change the behavior or improve the performance may result in dismissal. If the behavior/performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the Director will be responsible for dismissing the catechist.²

II. Curriculum, Lessons Plans, & Classroom Management

- A. **Curriculum:** At St. Anne's, we use the Archdiocese of Milwaukee [Grade-Specific Religious Education Curriculum](#) as an outline for our program's topics and objectives. This comprehensive document also provides insights into the developmental characteristics of each grade level.
- a. **Kindergarten:** Our Sunday Visitor's *Allelu!* program offers over twenty lessons that speak to the curious heart of a child, instill a sense of wonder, and encourage an understanding of God's great love for them. The curriculum is centered "on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ through liturgical catechesis, Sacred Scripture and Tradition, moral formation, prayer and ritual, and Church and community life" (*Allelu!* Teacher Manual pg. 4) A family formation sheet accompanies every lesson and is sent home with each child.
 - b. **Elementary Grades:** Our Sunday Visitor's *Alive in Christ* series is a strong, faith-based curriculum centered on primary teachings of the Church, Scripture, the Sacramental life prayer, and service to others. This program for 1st through 5th graders, in addition to providing theologically solid and inviting textbooks, has excellent parish, parent, and family resources. The publisher supports an excellent website that contains a wealth of activities, lessons, games, and reviews related to the curriculum. Parents and catechists are invited to use this website, select the grade and chapter related to a child, and find home activities, quizzes, and suggestions to enrich the learning experience.

² Adapted from *Catechist Handbook*, Archdiocese of New York

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- c. **Middle School:** *The Catholic Connections Handbook* (2nd Ed.) by Saint Mary's Press is our middle school curriculum. Based on the four pillars of our Faith, the curriculum is divided into four parts: The Creed, Liturgy and Sacraments, Christian morality and justice, and prayer. Each chapter features a person of Faith, liturgical connections, and practical suggestions for how to live the Catholic Faith.
 - d. **High School:** Dynamic Catholic's *Decision Point* is our High School Discipleship and Confirmation curriculum. Split into twelve sessions over three years, the adaptive content allows catechists ample opportunities to encourage youth to engage in personal reflection, prayer, and active pursuit of the Sacramental life. During their freshman year, youth will spend half the year learning more about the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass through the *Altaration* program.
- B. **Lesson Plans:** Follow the lesson plan in your teacher's manual and you will have an excellent hour together learning all that the bishops agree is important for the children to know at a particular grade level. Prayerfully invite the Holy Spirit to inspire you with an idea for an activity or discussion questions that may deepen the children's/youths' understanding of the prescribed material. That said, it is not permissible to go rogue and follow your own agenda, but creativity is allowed and encouraged! Jesus Himself is the Master Teacher; we are His instruments.
- a. **Tips for Lesson Planning:**
 1. **Look ahead.** The lesson you are planning is only part of a larger plan for the whole year. You need to get a picture of the whole program calendar year and see how much time you have to accomplish your goals. Get a good feel for how this lesson can build off the previous one and lay the foundation for the next.
 2. **Get to know your primary teaching resources.** (See "Curriculum")
 3. **Visualize yourself teaching the lesson.** Visualization is the practice of using your imagination to experience specific situations in hopes of learning behaviors that can be incorporated into real life circumstances. Good lesson planning involves visualizing yourself teaching the class.

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4. **Know your goals and objectives.**
5. **Get your materials ready.** Give yourself plenty of time to gather all the materials needed to complete the lesson properly.
6. **Have a plan “B” ready.** Consider the possibility that what you are hoping to accomplish may not work. Always have an option ready in case something falls flat or just is not working the way you had hoped.

C. **Classroom Management:** Pray for yourself and your students! Expect the best of yourself and of each of them. Children often live up to our expectations of them. Sticking to a routine is quite helpful. Have a set way of determining attendance, passing out materials for crafts/activities, and cleaning up together. Kids who can count on a routine look forward to its implementation and help to make it happen flawlessly. Be clear about what your expectations are (for example: sit still, wait your turn, look at and listen to the speaker, etc.). Be clear about how much you love each child. Smile, use their name, ask questions about their lives, listen to their answers! Teach in a way that engages your students in meaningful content and they'll want to be still, listen and participate. If someone does misbehave, love them through it with gentleness, mercy and grace. Still expect compliance. Use your proximity to help; sometimes just your nearness to the child may help them settle down. Speaking with the child's parent is perfectly acceptable and encouraged. Calling on Mary for more practical ideas and assistance may also be necessary.

- a. **Class list:** A class list will be provided to you at the Catechist Orientation Day. An electronic copy will be emailed any time a change is made.
- b. **Photos:** Photo permission may or may not be granted by parents on the registration form; Mary will let you know which students have permission to be photographed. No photos may be published with the child's name without appropriate written permission. No names may accompany a child's picture on the internet at any time.
- c. **Snacks:** Snacks are unnecessary during our short FF time together and may use up valuable learning time. On occasion, food may be useful to deepen a child's understanding (for ex.: breaking bread together when

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studying the Eucharist, or fish crackers with the Gospel of the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, Christmas Candy Canes as a “J” for Jesus, etc.). Please be mindful of children in your class who have food allergies. Be sure to clean up very well. Crumbs attract church mice (and, yes, we do have them here!).

- d. **Cell Phone:** Please refrain from using your cell phone during classes. Be sure the ringer is off. Photos may be taken of those students whose parents have given photo permission.

III. Liturgical Seasons, Celebrations, & Prayer

A. Liturgical Seasons:

- a. **Advent:** In 2019, Advent begins December 1st. This season of preparation lasts four weeks and anticipates the season of Christmas. Please see “Advent Reminders” under Catechist Resources on the St. Anne website.
- b. **Christmas:** In 2019, we celebrate Christmas Day on Wednesday, December 25th. During this short, but joyful season we also celebrate the Solemnity of Mary on January 1st (Holy Day of Obligation). Begin the new year by attending Mass and honoring our Heavenly Mother!
- c. **Lent:** In 2020, the penitential season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (February 26th) and continues until the Holy Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday). Please see “Lent Reminders” under Catechist Resources on the St. Anne website.
- d. **Easter:** In 2020, Easter is celebrated on April 12th. The Church rejoices in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Paschal Mystery or Suffering, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven. Easter is the Church’s most important and longest celebration season

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B. Celebrations: Our Family Formation celebrations are designed to bring families together to prepare for a new liturgical season. Your assistance and service at these events is greatly appreciated!

- a. Advent Family Formation | Sunday, December 1st at 10:30 am
- b. Fat Tuesday Family Formation | Tuesday, February 25th at 6 pm

C. Prayer:

- a. Prayer is an essential part of being a Catholic Christian catechist. Please spend time in conversation with God each day. Teach your students many wonderful ways to pray throughout the year. Pray from the heart, sing, recite, write, draw, and read from the Bible, the saints, or other great sources; sit in silence, examine your conscience, meditate on the mysteries of Christ's life.
- b. **Corporal Works of Mercy:** The Corporal Works of Mercy are kind acts we are called to prayerfully do which help our neighbors with their material and physical needs.
 - i. Feed the hungry
 - ii. Shelter the homeless
 - iii. Clothe the naked
 - iv. Visit the sick and imprisoned
 - v. Bury the dead
 - vi. Give alms to the poor
- c. **Spiritual Works of Mercy:** The Spiritual Works of Mercy are prayerful acts of compassion, as listed below, by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs.
 - i. Counsel the doubtful
 - ii. Admonish the sinner (advise)
 - iii. Bear wrongs patiently
 - iv. Pray for the living and the dead
 - v. Instruct the ignorant
 - vi. Comfort the sorrowful
 - vii. Forgive

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IV. Sacraments

- A. First Reconciliation:** This sacrament is required **BEFORE** First Communion. Parents of children at the age of reason (usually 2nd grade) are encouraged to register for Sacrament preparations online. First Reconciliation preparation consists of one parent/child retreat. First Reconciliation is scheduled for Wednesday, January 15th at 6 pm. Catechists welcome!
- B. First Communion:** First Communion preparation consists of two parent/child retreats. First Communion weekend is May 2nd/3rd. Catechists are encouraged to attend!
- C. Confirmation:** The Sacrament of Confirmation is administered to candidates who are 16 years old and have fulfilled the requirements proper to the Sacrament. A list of these requirements can be found on the St. Anne website under “Teen.” The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated at St. Elizabeth parish on Wednesday, May 27th, 2020 at 7 pm. Come celebrate with our confirmands and their families!
- D. Reconciliation:** Opportunities for receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation at St. Anne’s include every Saturday at about 9 am, Wednesdays at 12:30 pm, and by appointment with Fr. Bob. St. Peter’s parish also offers Reconciliation Monday through Saturday at 7:30 am and Saturdays at 3:30 pm. Please seek out God’s love and mercy in the healing Sacrament often!
- E. Anointing of the Sick:** If you know of any families who may have an ill or dying loved one, gently encourage them to schedule an anointing with Fr. Bob. Deacon Rich is also available to bring Communion to those who are home-bound or in the hospital.

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V. Resources

- A. Internet Access:** Log on as a guest (SA-guest) with your wireless device to see appropriate FF content only. The password is **guest9091**.
- B. Audio/visual equipment:** Three TVs are available for your use. Please let Mary know if you need assistance. You are welcome to use your cell phone/speaker to play appropriate music during FF classes.
- C. Copy Machine:** If you'd like copies made for you, please give the originals to Mary at least a week in advance and she will have them ready for you in your teaching space the day you need them. A note attached with the number you desire of each is extremely helpful. Although last minute copies can be made in the parish office, this is a risk and can be stressful. Please be prepared.
- D. Laminator:** A laminator is available for your use in the parish office. Please let Mary know if you would like to stop by for a brief tutorial and/or to laminate materials!
- E. Supplies:** Our supply room is located beyond the kitchen. You may borrow anything in the supply room. If you use something up, please tell Mary so that she can replace it. Please return items to their proper places and keep things neat and orderly. A list of supplies is contained within each grade level box. Thank you, in advance, for all the things you will purchase and donate for your classes!
- F. Library:** All of the children's books in the small classroom are for borrowing. In addition, Mary has many great books in her office to share! The Salzmann Library at the Seminary is another great resource and you all have access to it and every other library. Please ask if you need help locating a great book.

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G. Additional Resources:

- a. Laudete, iBreviary | Prayer apps
- b. USCCB (free version of the Catechism available here!) | Church Teachings, liturgical calendar
- c. Catechist's Journey | Content, inspiration
- d. Catholic Icing, The Religion Teacher, Pinterest | Activities
- e. FORMED.org | Formation, Sacramental prep, movies, books
- f. Ascension Presents | Videos, podcasts, articles

VI. Safety & Weather

- A. Band-Aids:** A box of Band-Aids and other first aid products is kept above the sink in the kitchen. Another is kept in the copy room of the parish office. Help yourself!
- B. Candles:** Candles are allowed. Use care when lighting them (adults only). Teach the children to use caution around candles especially with loose clothing and long hair. An adult must pay attention to the lit candle until it is extinguished.
- C. Field Trips:** A walking field trip must be pre-approved by Mary and a Field Trip Permission Form must be received from each parent. Catechists do not have permission from St. Anne to transport any children in their own cars. Parents may agree to meet you at a field trip location with their own children in tow.
- D. Fire:** Always know how many kids you have in your class and note how many are absent on any given day. Usher all the children to the nearest exit and stay with them far from the building until help arrives.
- E. Intruder:** Please be the first line of defense between the children and any threat. Yell if you need to. Dial 911 if you can.
- F. Phone:** In the event of an emergency, there is a phone located on the half-wall counter in the kitchen, on the desks in the parish office, on a little table near the restrooms, and in the conference room. There is no need to select a number for an outside line, just pick up and dial 911 for emergency services.

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- G. Snow Days:** St. Anne will likely close only if there is a “Snow Emergency” declared by the Village of Pleasant Prairie indicating that it is unsafe to be on the roads near our church home. Mary will make every effort to give you advance warning of a cancellation via email or phone. If St. Anne is closed for FF, you will receive an email saying so and may also find notice on WTMJ4. That said, it is always your call as a driver whether or not you feel safe enough to drive on the roads during inclement weather and we totally understand if parents opt out of FF class at such a time. When a catechist is absent, a sub is necessary.
- H. Tornado:** In the event of a real tornado (we do not do drills), everyone should move in an orderly fashion to the basement. The basement access door is located across from the parish office door, but is locked. A key may be found in Melissa’s desk drawer (top left), and keys to the office are with Mary Mowry, Rich Sosa, Fr. Bob and Deacon Rich. We will make every effort to speedily grant you access in the event of a tornado emergency! Proceed down the steps with caution using the handrail and make your way with your class to the furthest corner. It’ll be crowded, but we’ll fit down there. Maintain relative silence and await the all-clear or further directions.