

2019-2020
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM
FAMILY HANDBOOK



CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

110 Chiego Place

(located across the street from the rectory in the
Assumption School building.)

Roselle Park, NJ 07204

(908) 245-6572

Email: assumptionschool113@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/assumptionreligiouseducation

Families and students registered in the Religious Education Program of Church of the Assumption are responsible for knowing and following the policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook. We are here to serve the religious education needs of all children and their families. Should you have a question or concern, please contact the Religious Education Director. Confidentiality is always maintained in sensitive matters.

Office Hours

Monday – Thursday 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Sundays 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Other hours by appointment

Religious Education Staff

908-245-6572

Rev. Deacon David J. Farrell,
Parish Catechetical Leader

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Very Rev. Father James F. Spera, *Pastor*
Virginia Jediny, *Parish Secretary*

Mission & Goals of the Religious Education Program

The Religious Education Program at Church of the Assumption recognizes that the family is the primary source for the faith development of their children. Our mission is to assist families as they work to teach the faith to their children and to introduce them to the person of Jesus Christ.

We are dedicated to formation of the youth in our parish. Formation is essential to religious education. Formation enables your children to live their faith every day not just during religion class. This daily experience of formation allows our children to:

- know that God is ever present,
- see that daily prayer makes a difference,
- learn right from wrong, and
- experience forgiveness.

In addition, they will come to see themselves as part of the bigger Church and to find their place in the world according to God's will.

The Religious Education Program is an academic program of religious studies. Like any academic program, each year of study builds on the previous year's instruction. Students enrolled in the program are expected to attend classes from first grade until eighth grade.



Let the children be, and do not hinder them from coming to me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 19:14

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Families new to the parish must have their child registered by 5th grade in order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in 8th grade. Please contact the Religious Education Office.

Students must be enrolled in the Confirmation Preparation Program at the end of sixth grade. The candidate and a parent must attend an Information Meeting, generally held in May of sixth grade. Confirmation students must also complete a sponsor reflection, name reflection, service hours reflection, in addition to attending an all-day retreat and a Confirmation rehearsal prior to being confirmed. These additional requirements are mandatory.

Your Confirmation candidate will need your support as s/he studies and prepares for this sacrament. Emphasize that deciding to accept Confirmation is his/her choice, not yours. Review lessons with your child and help him/her with service projects. Demonstrate that Christian Service is a lifetime project, not just something to be accomplished to fulfill a requirement. Confirmation is not graduation but merely the beginning of one's Christian life.

Sacrament Program

*Participation in parent meetings, student retreat days, rehearsals, and other group activities included in the Parish Sacramental Preparation Program is mandatory. Parents of students receiving the Sacraments will be expected to attend **two** Adult Catechesis sessions. These sessions are designed to assist you in the faith formation of your children. The dates of these meetings will be made available in August.*

Students registered in the Religious Education Program who were not previously baptized will be prepared for **Baptism** on an individual basis.

We welcome family members who are not baptized or those who are not fully initiated in the Roman Catholic Rite to inquire with the Director regarding **RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.)**

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

Preparation for the sacrament begins when the child enters first grade religious education. Children usually receive the Sacraments of **Reconciliation** (Penance) and **Eucharist** (Communion) in the spring of second grade. Detailed program requirements are explained during a parent meeting, generally held in January of the second grade. The Sacrament of Reconciliation precedes the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Children in the First Communion Class and their parents also attend a Retreat Day. A Reconciliation/Eucharist Preparation fee of \$25.00, due at registration for the second grade, defrays the cost of materials and a retreat.

Confirmation

Confirmation at the Church of the Assumption normally takes place in the fall of the Eighth grade. A Confirmation preparation fee of \$50.00, due at registration for eighth grade Confirmation Preparation process, defrays the cost of materials and a retreat. A candidate must have experienced ongoing religious education in Grades 1 through 8, either in a Catholic school or parish religious education program. If formal religious education has lapsed, the student must demonstrate adequate knowledge of the grade level topics for the missed grades.

Due to the limited number of 8th Grade Confirmation classes, no absences are permitted.

THE CATECHETICAL PROGRAM

Church of the Assumption parish provides religious instruction for children in first through eighth grade. Our religious formation includes sacrament preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist in second grade. Our Confirmation Preparation Program begins at the end of sixth grade, and Confirmation is celebrated in the fall of eighth grade. (Details found on pages 15 & 16)

Students are expected to attend religious education classes in **grades one through eight** in order to receive a rounded foundation in the faith and to be prepared to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation. Because Mass is the highest form of worship and is central to who we are as Catholic Christians, weekly Mass attendance is expected for all families.

Schedule of Classes

The School Year Session runs from September-May. Classes during the school year meet for 1.25 hours a week for 28 weeks, for a minimum total of 35 hours of instruction in compliance with Archdiocesan guidelines. Students (in a non-sacrament preparation year) have a choice of days, based on availability; or Home Schooling.

<u>Sunday Morning:</u>	Grades 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6	9:00 –10:15 a.m.
	Grades 2, 7, 8 & Catch Up Catechesis	9:00–11:30 a.m. (includes 10:30 a.m. Mass.)*

***Grades 2, 7, & 8 are sacrament preparation years and classes are only held on Sunday mornings. Mass is mandatory and the students will sit together as a class during Mass.**

Tuesday Afternoon: Grades 1, 3, 4, 5, & 6 3:45 – 5:00 p.m.

The Calendar for the School Year, including the name of your child's catechist and room location, will be distributed in late August. Families will also receive a schedule of lessons and prayers for each child's grade level during the first week of classes.

Catechists

Our catechists are volunteers who use their time, talent, and treasure to help pass on our faith to the children of the parish. They vary widely in age and experience. Every catechist completes a background check and receives training from the Archdiocese to help assure the safety of our children.

Are you called to share our faith with the children? For more information about becoming a catechist, substitute, or a classroom aide, please see the Religious Education Volunteer Form or contact the Religious Education Office.

Registration Information

The registration process begins in February/March of each year, with a late fee of \$50.00 incurred after June 14. Registration packets are mailed to families of current students. All class placements are on a first-come basis.

Requirements for Returning Families

- Registered as parishioners of the Church of the Assumption contributing to the Parish Support Program.
- The registration form is due by June 14, 2019. A \$50.00 late fee will be incurred after this date.
- A baptismal certificate for siblings new to the program required at the time of registration.

Requirements for New Families

- Register as parishioners of the Church of the Assumption.
- Commitment to contribute to the Parish Support Program.
- Religious Education Program registration form.
- A Baptismal Certificate for each child (due at the time of registration), and certificates for reception of other sacraments, if applicable.
- A letter, or a copy of a record file, indicating the grades your children completed in their previous Religious Education Program or Catholic school.

HOME-SCHOOL INSTRUCTION

Some parents may choose to assume the formal responsibility for the education and Christian formation of their children. This added responsibility, which they may choose to take up for any number of valid reasons, is a personal choice which the Church supports. (*Catechetical Administrative Manual, Archdiocese of Newark, 920.0.*) Parents choosing this option should possess a strong and authentic foundation in the Catholic faith and/or recognize within themselves a strong desire to grow in faith through catechetical study with their children, and thereby proclaiming the Gospel message through their lifestyle.

When choosing the Home-School Program option, the parent commits to the role of instructor, motivator and living example of faith in relationship with God. They recognize that worship at Mass is the center of their lives. As such, they ensure their child participates in the life of the parish as members of the Body of Christ.

Home-School study is not an option during sacramental years in grades 2, 7, & 8 due to the community activity which takes place in the classroom, and the additional required preparation. Please contact the Director of Religious Education should you have any questions.

Families who wish to participate in home-school instruction should register their children in the Religious Education Program and indicate on the form that they have chosen home-schooling. In September, they will receive the textbook and class schedule used for each child's grade level.

Adherence to the schedule is beneficial to completing the textbook by the required end date of May 30th. The link for each chapter test will be sent, via email, on a weekly basis. *All chapter work and successful submission of the chapter tests must be completed in order for your child to move to the next grade level.*

We invite, and strongly encourage, all home-school children to participate in the scheduled spiritual activity days listed on the class schedule.

Protecting God's Children/Child Abuse Policy

All staff, catechists, and regular volunteers are required to:

- Complete a Volunteer application.
- Acknowledge reception of and compliance with the *Archdiocesan Policies on Professional and Ministerial Conduct, Including the Archdiocesan Code of Ethics*.
- Provide satisfactory results of a criminal background check.
- Participate in the "Protecting God's Children" training program.

Consistent with Archdiocesan policy and local legal code, the Religious Education Office staff and volunteers have a moral and legal obligation to report any suspected child abuse to authorities to ensure the welfare of a child.

Tuition and the Parish Support Program

Registered families of the Church of the Assumption who participate in the life of the Parish will be able to enroll their children in our tuition free Religious Education Program. A \$25.00 per student Book/Activities fee is due at the time the registration form is submitted.

A family is considered participating in the life of the Parish through their attendance at Mass and financial support of the Parish. The annual minimum offering anticipated from each registered family is \$300 (\$6 per week). This annual offering will be calculated from January 1 until December 31 of each year. The Parish Support Program provides envelopes for each family to utilize. In order to receive appropriate credit, the parish envelope must be used and must include on the outside your name and address, your envelope number, and the dollar amount enclosed in the envelope. Families are always encouraged to go beyond the minimum weekly offering if they are able. The policies stated include those who "home school."

We understand that at times families may encounter financial hardships. We have a list of our church's volunteer projects where you can show your support (a 20 hour requirement for anyone receiving financial assistance) in lieu of the weekly envelope. To apply for family assistance, please contact Anthony Giordano, President of the St. Vincent de Paul Society @ giordanoanthony@hotmail.com. **No family will be refused Religious Education because they have an inability to contribute financially to the Parish.**

Curriculum

The curriculum materials used in our program are designed to provide a rich, authentic, and complete presentation of our Catholic faith for children and adolescents. The textbooks for each grade are approved by the Archdiocese of Newark and are in conformity with the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**. All catechists are required to teach the curriculum found in the textbook according to the class schedule that is developed by the Religious Education Office.

All students are given a textbook at the beginning of the year and they are expected to bring their books with them to every class.

A fee of \$20 will be charged for replacement textbooks.

Reinforcing the Weekly Lessons at Home

Parents are encouraged to help their child review the lessons weekly.

First and foremost, it is parents who are the primary catechists and first heralds of Christian faith. Parents of children in grades 1 through 6, using the Alive in Christ textbook, are asked to read and initial the **Family + Faith page** and have their child complete the **chapter review** found at the end of each chapter. These requirements are part of your child's mid-year and year-end assessment and completion of such are included in your child's progress report.

Prayer

Prayer is talking to and listening to God. Quiet time just spent in God's presence along with learning classic prayers are important in developing a relationship with God. Prayer is an essential part of our classes, but we do ask that you please **set aside times each week for your family to pray**. Typical family prayer times are at meals and in the evening. Praying formal prayers aloud with your child on a regular basis is a great way to memorize them. Prayers can be found in the back of your child's textbook. We also provide a list of prayers for your child's grade in their student folder and on our website (www.assumptionrp.com).

Of course, Mass attendance on Sundays and holy days of obligations is an important part of being a Catholic. Although we teach about the Mass on every grade level, it is meaningless if these lessons are not reinforced by Mass attendance.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Communication with Parents and Guardians

The Religious Education Program's purpose is to assist the families in their faith formation. Please do not hesitate to call or meet with us whenever a question or a need arises.

Most communication from the Religious Education Office is sent via email throughout the school year. Select information only will be mailed to the home. Please inform our office immediately if you have a change in your email address, mailing address or phone numbers. **All emergency and weather-related closings will be communicated via email and through a message on the office answering machine.**

Pick-up Procedures

- The catechist will accompany the children out of the building at dismissal. **Parents must up their children in front of the Assumption School building.**
- Students who are not picked up on time will be brought to the School Office (located in the Assumption School building, 110 Chiego Place) to wait.
- Students in grades 7 and 8 attending mass on Sundays will be dismissed directly out of the church for parents to pick them up.
- Students in 2nd grade and Catch Up Catechesis attending mass on Sundays will **remain in their pews** and wait for parents to pick them up from their pew.

Building Procedures

- For the safety of our children, students arriving and leaving at the beginning and end of each class will enter and exit through the following doors of the respective buildings:
 - ◆ Assumption School of Religion **Front door facing Chiego Place**
 - ◆ Upper Chiego **Side door facing West Clay Avenue**
- All catechists, volunteers, and visitors must sign the logbook in the Assumption School Office upon entering and exiting the building. This includes visitors from other parish ministry groups who find it essential to enter the building while the program is in session.

Bringing Friends to Class

For safety reasons, only those children enrolled in our Religious Education Program may be on the premises during class time. If you have any questions regarding the policy, please contact the Religious Education Office.

Emergency Closings

Our program follows the guidelines of the Roselle Park School District for emergency closings due to inclement weather. If Roselle Park Public Schools are closed for the day, then Religious Education classes are cancelled as well. All emergency and weather-related closings will be communicated via email. Updated information regarding emergency closings will also be available on the Religious Education Office voicemail by calling 908-245-6572.

Allergies and Epi-pens

Parents should notify the Religious Education Director of any food allergies or other physical problems that may be of concern in the classroom. All information is kept confidential. There is no one on the Religious Education Staff who is experienced in the use of epi-pens. We are prohibited by law to dispense medications.

Other Special Needs

The Church of the Assumption Religious Education Program exists to help in the religious education of all children. If your child has special learning needs, please speak with the Religious Education Director and the catechist to make them aware of ways to help your child learn. We do have some materials adapted for special needs learning. Perhaps your child's school teacher can offer tips that will make the Religious Education experience a positive one.

If you know of a child who is not receiving religious education due to special needs, encourage the parents to speak with the Religious Education Director.

SECURITY AND SAFETY

Parking and Drop-off/Pick-up Procedures

For the safety of our children, please be sure that anyone who drives your children to or from Religious Education classes is aware of the procedures outlined below. If you have a special situation that prevents you from following the drop-off/pick-up procedures, please contact the Director of Religious Education to make special arrangements. **Parents are urged to use caution when driving through the parking lot.**

Drop-off Procedures

- Students should not enter a classroom unless a teacher is present.
- Students should not run through or play in the parking lot.
- Any student arriving 10 minutes past the start of class, the parent must report to the school office to sign the student(s) in.

Please check the parish website, **www.assumptionrp.com**, for current information regarding all parish-wide communications, including information regarding the Religious Education Program. All required Religious Education information can be downloaded from our website.

Important information and updates will also be posted in the weekly parish bulletin.

Student Participation

Students are expected to be prepared for class each week, including completing the assigned homework. Textbooks, backpacks and folders will be distributed on the first day of class. Textbooks are always used during class and students must bring their backpacks with their textbooks and folders to each session.

Attendance and Make Up Work Procedures

Faithful attendance for all classes is expected. We do understand that students will be absent from school. For the student's safety, parents are asked to report a child's absence before class begins and attendance is taken. **No more than three (3) absences per semester will be allowed without a doctor's note.** The semester restarts after winter break. Please contact the Religious Education Office by calling 908-245-6572 or emailing assumptionschool113@gmail.com.

Due to the limited number of 8th Grade Confirmation classes, no absences are permitted.

It is the parent's responsibility, and part of the child's progress report, to ensure that their child complete the chapters that they missed. Upon returning to class, the student will show the catechist their work and the catechist will mark their make up as completed.

Please refer to your child's folder for the grade level **Class Schedule** to locate the necessary information. The class schedule can also be found on the parish website (www.assumptionrp.com) under the Religious Education tab.

Make-up work is as follows:

- 1) Students in grades 1,3,4, 5 & 6 will read the chapter and complete the **chapter review** at the end of the chapter.
- 2) Students in grade 2 will do the same for the weeks they are using the *Alive in Christ* textbook. For the weeks they are using either the *Reconciliation* or *Eucharist* book, they need to read the chapter and complete the **activity** at the end of the chapter on the **LIVE** page.
- 3) Students in grade 7 will read the chapter and complete the **Make it Happen and the Your Turn** at the end of the chapter.
- 4) Students in grade 8 will read the chapter and will choose to complete **3 of the 6 question options** found in the chapter (they may use a separate piece of paper if needed). The question options to answer are:
 - a) Any or all of the **Lifelink** questions
 - b) Any or all of the questions outside of the **Lifelink** box

If by the end of the year a student does not make up the work for 2 or more missed classes, they will be required to repeat their respective grade level the following year.

Please note that make-up work for missed classes due to school closings is required. All assignments should be taken very seriously and should be completed as per the catechist's instructions.

Arriving Late

It is important that all students arrive to sessions on time. Obviously, there are situations beyond your control that cause parents and children to be late. However, it should never be a continuing occurrence. The Religious Education Office should be notified when the parent knows that the student will arrive late. Students and parents must come to the school office to sign the student in. A student who arrives more than 30 minutes late misses a significant amount of the lesson. In this case, the student will not be marked absent but is required to complete the make-up work to ensure that a good grasp of the material is attained.

Leaving Early

If it is necessary for your child to leave at any time before the end of class, please notify the Religious Education Office as early as possible that day and send in a note with your child to give their catechist. Come to the Assumption School Office when it is time for your child to leave and a staff member/volunteer will be sent to the classroom to escort your child back to the office. You must sign your child out before leaving. A student who leaves more than 30 minutes early misses a significant amount of the lesson and is required to complete the make-up work to ensure that a good grasp of the material is attained.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

The use of cell phones and electronic devices for text messaging and photo taking are not permitted during sessions. This includes during the celebration of the Liturgy (Sunday Mass). Students will only be allowed to use cell phones during class time in order to complete assignments given by the catechist. Some examples may be to research saints, church doctrine, religious artwork, etc. Unless such an assignment is given, the cell phone should remain off and out of sight. Cell phones that are a distraction will be taken from the student, and the parent will need to see the catechist or director to retrieve it. In situations where you need to contact your child during the time your child is attending Religious Education class or Mass, please contact the office at 908-245-6572.

Behavior

Appropriate behavior and common courtesy are presumed and expected from our students at every grade level. Fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and love requires that students (and their parents) acknowledge that they have responsibilities to the learning environment. These responsibilities include attendance to all scheduled classes, respectful behavior, appropriate attire, and coming to class prepared to learn, including completing homework. Students are expected to behave in a cooperative and respectful manner towards their fellow classmates, their catechist, and all volunteers and/or parish staff. Minor offenses will be handled by the catechist. Persistent behavior situations will result in a warning by the catechist. If the student does not correct the behavior, the Director of Religious Education will intervene, the parent will be notified, and corrective measures will be determined.

Serious offenses will be brought to the attention of the DRE, who will notify the parents. Any student whose behavior makes it difficult for other students to learn will be removed from the classroom, and the parents will be notified. A student whose behavior frequently makes it difficult for others to learn will be asked to go on home school instruction.

The following are not permitted at any time: disruptive behavior, disrespectful words or actions, running, pushing, shoving, chewing gum, bringing food or drink (other than water) into the classroom, and damaging property.