

# OLMC Religious Education Program Handbook



## Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish Chicago, Illinois

The purpose of this handbook is to provide parents/guardians an overview of Our Lady of Mount Carmel’s (OLMC) Religious Education Program and the details specific to making its students’ experience in the program most valuable.

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## **OLMC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY**

### **Parents are the first educators for their children in faith.**

They remain the most important ones, no matter how long a child goes to school. It is through their understanding and practice of their faith at home that allows the child to continue to learn as an extension of their religious education in class.

The curriculum and participation in each grade should be approached the same as the public school curriculum and the advancement from one grade to the next.

*“The family’s catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable...Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children’s tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel...Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.”*

- Pope John Paul II (1979 Catechesis in Our Time)

### **Parents and the Parish function as partners.**

With communication and cooperation, we create an environment in which children can grow in their faith. As participants in the religious education program, parents make a commitment to the religious formation of their children at home which includes:

- Learning prayers and Catholic practices
- Exploring the Scriptures together
- Sharing values and morals
- Making sure their children attend the sessions and make up any work that is missed

### **An essential part of this commitment is for families to worship with their children and the whole parish at Mass every week.**

This is particularly important as the children prepare to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. The role of the parish is to support parents. Throughout the religious education school year, students are taken to church to:

- Receive reconciliation (twice throughout the year)
- Attend a Teaching Mass to understand the parts of the Mass and its traditions
- For the confirmation preparation classes (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades), participate in Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction

Parents are encouraged to participate in these services which are outlined on the school year syllabus.

## **CURRICULUM**

The structure of the curriculum consists of three main sections:

1. First/Second Years – Reconciliation and First Communion preparation
2. Third/Fourth/Fifth Years – Solidification of the faith and application of Reconciliation and First Communion
3. Sixth/Seventh/Eighth Years – Confirmation preparation

Each section builds on the one prior in order to successfully guide and prepare the student to receive the sacraments. Omission of any of the eight years can significantly alter the student's faith journey. In all years, students will receive grade appropriate instruction to develop and deepen their understanding of the Mass.

To assist parents in understanding the purpose and expectation of their child's faith journey, the sections are detailed in the following pages. In addition, a "Parent's Resource Manual" accompanies this handbook and provides the prayers and other essential information to continue the student's religious education at home.

# Section 1

## **FIRST YEAR (RECONCILIATION AND FIRST COMMUNION ONE)**

***Theme:** God is our Creator and loves us as our Father. Jesus came to tell us about God the Father and how He saved us through his life, death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit shares the life of the risen Jesus Christ and forms the community of the Church. We know Jesus through personal prayer and by worshipping God together as a family and as a church community, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. We can thank Jesus for the gift of Himself and the Holy Spirit by obeying the Commandments, caring for one another and caring for the world.*

First Year Expectation: By the end of the first year, students will be expected to know the:

- Sign of the Cross
- Our Father (Lord's Prayer)
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be
- Prayers before and after meals
- Parts of the Mass

## **SECOND YEAR (RECONCILIATION AND FIRST COMMUNION TWO)**

***Theme:** God loves each of us and we are called to act on God's love for us by loving one another and by living as Jesus wants us to live. As we prepare for the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, we give special attention to our examination of conscience, how to make a meaningful confession and the importance of preparation before receiving Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.*

Second Year Expectation:

By the end of the second year, students will be expected to be familiar with the:

- Ten Commandments
- Act of Contrition
- Basic Responses during the Mass and a prayer to say after receiving Communion
- Parts of the Mass

## Section 2

### **THIRD YEAR**

**Theme:** *God creates us and calls us to live well in community. We emphasize the role of Jesus calling us to a new way of life – what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus and how close Jesus wants us to be with our Father. We learn how each of the sacraments deepens our relationship with God and how the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are the foundation for the moral choices we make as we grow to be more like Jesus.*

**Third Year Expectation:** By the end of the third year, students will be expected to know the:

- Apostles' Creed
- The roles in the church in terms of priest, deacon, bishop, pope and the basic structure (parish, archdiocese, Vatican) of the church.
- Parts of the Mass
- *Supplement: Focus on the Sacrament of Reconciliation*

### **FOURTH YEAR**

**Theme:** *God calls us to lead a moral life. He revealed the Ten Commandments to provide us with the parameters to live a life for God and others. Jesus taught us the Beatitudes and their relationship to living a Christian life. We give special attention to Sacraments of Reconciliation and Sacraments of Communion as part of the moral dimension of our faith.*

**Fourth Year Expectation:** By the end of the fourth year, students will be expected to list the:

- Ten Commandments
- Beatitudes
- Precepts of the church
- Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy
- Parts of the Mass

### **FIFTH YEAR**

**Theme:** *Strengthened in the sacramental life of the Church, we are better able to live like Jesus in making choices for God and others. We enter into a new way of life when we celebrate the sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation). Through the sacraments, we live more fully in the Holy Spirit as members of the Church, united in diversity.*

**Fifth Year Expectation:** By the end of the fifth year, students will be expected to:

- List, describe and define each Sacrament
- Understand and list the basic parts of the mass
- Describe the Liturgical year (Advent, Ordinary time, Lent etc) and the Holy Days of Obligation
- Recite the Seven Sacraments and the Nicene Creed
- Parts of the Mass
- *Supplement: Seven Sacraments / Prayer*

## Section 3

## **SIXTH, SEVENTH AND EIGHTH YEAR (CONFIRMATION ONE, TWO AND THREE)**

### **Themes:**

*The **sixth** year explores the history of salvation – from Creation through the Old Testament; to its fulfillment in Jesus as we share stories of our ancestors in faith: Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon. Ensure recognition of the importance of the prophets as witnesses for God and their relevance to our own time. As followers of Jesus, we explore the meaning of the Psalms as the prayers of Jesus and the themes of the Wisdom literature books that teach practical ways of living for God in everyday life. We find our connection to Christian worship from its roots in the Old Testament and we learn of the special connection between the celebration of Passover and the celebration of the Eucharist.*

*The **seventh** year is the second of three required years of study leading to Confirmation. The goal of the seventh year consists of two modules: Christian morality and Jesus and discipleship. The first module will help lay the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and will give students information about the Church's guidance in moral decision-making.*

*The second module will give a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told in the Gospels and also pose the challenge of discipleship to the students.*

*The **eighth** year is the third of three required years of study leading to Confirmation. The goal of the eighth year consists of three modules: Scripture and Creed, a review of Catholic teaching and sacraments and immediate preparation for Confirmation.*

**Expectations:** By the end of the eighth year, students will be expected to:

- Identify and describe in chronological order the major events in the Old Testament
- Know the major events in the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Participate in group activities outside of the scheduled classroom sessions in order to prepare for Confirmation
- Understand the parts of the Mass
- *Supplement: Major characters in the Pascal Mystery (Jesus in the Gospels)*
- Know the Prayer to the Holy Spirit
- Know the Theological Virtues, Cardinal Virtues, the Spiritual Works of Mercy and the Corporal Works of Mercy
- Know the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Understand the parts of the Mass
- *Supplement: Biblical walkthrough of the Mass*
- *Supplement: Review of the Seven Sacraments and the Teaching of the Church*
- Be fully prepared to be Confirmed

## **ATTENDANCE**

As every session is important to their faith journey, all students are expected to attend all sessions and be ready to begin class at 6:30 p.m. Attendance will be taken at each session by the teacher and maintained on file by the Director of Religious Education. If a student has to be absent, notice should be given to the office of the Director of Religious Education as soon as possible so the teacher can be made aware and can prepare to provide the lesson content to the parent for making up the work at home.

For purposes of preparation for Sacraments, more than three absences in the school year can mean that the student may have to attend make-up sessions or complete make-up class work.

## **REINFORCEMENT AT HOME**

The total in-person class time that students experience consists of 28 one-hour sessions with at least one week between classes. Since this time is limited, reinforcement at home is essential to ensure that students totally absorb the objectives of their spiritual learning. To assist parents in reinforcing their child's religious education at home, an outline of each session's objectives will be distributed at the first class of the year outlining the entire school year. Any associated material(s) will be sent home with the students after each class.

In addition, teachers will be available before or after each class to answer any questions parents have about the material, or parents can contact the Director of Religious Education directly.

One of my favorite passages from Scripture is from Deuteronomy 6. As the Israelites prepare to cross into the Promised Land, they read from the Covenant, The Ten Commandments. Then they are told to pass this on to their children.

*Take these words to your heart. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and when you are away, whether you are at busy or at rest. Deuteronomy 6:6-7*

## **SAFETY AND CONDUCT**

All catechists and other volunteers and employees who have contact with children have undergone both a security and a background check. In addition, each one must actively participate in *Virtus* training, an initiative of the Archdiocese which is in compliance with "Protecting God's Children" to educate those who work with children about preventing child abuse.

Students are expected to contribute to a positive learning experience by cooperating with classroom rules which will be explained by the teacher. These rules are:

- Respect yourself, others and things around you
- Actively participate by attending and coming prepared for class

If a student does not adhere to the rules as set by the teacher, parents will be notified and possibly asked to attend classes with the student. For their safety, children will not be allowed free access to the building unsupervised by an adult. This is for both the child's safety and building security.

It is assumed that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorced or separated. Unless informed otherwise in writing and with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have qualified access to the child, the Religious Education Program will release the child to either parent.

Parents are welcome to visit the classroom. Advance notice to the office and the teacher of a visit would be appreciated.

## **SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS**

The requirements for reception of the Sacraments are as follows:

- The child must be a baptized Catholic and a copy of the baptismal certificate must be submitted to the Office of the Director of Religious Education
- Confirmation students will need to provide a copy of their Baptism and First Communion certificates.
- The student/family must have regular weekly attendance at Mass
- The student must have regular weekly attendance in the Religious Education Program
- Parents must be involved in the preparation to receive the Sacraments
- Parents must attend the preparatory meeting and participate at planned retreats
- All children must participate in all years of study OR provide proof of attendance at another parish

## **REGISTRATION AND TUITION**

All families in the Religious Education Program are expected to be registered members of Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish. Students must complete registration for each year they attend religious education classes.

Annual tuition rates for families are as follows:

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4 and Succeeding Years</u>
One Child	\$ 175	\$ 200	\$ 225	\$ 225
Each Additional Child	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100

Examples:

Year One: Three children in the program = \$375  
(\$175 + \$100 + \$100)

Year Two: Three children in the program = \$400  
(\$200 + \$100 + \$100)

Year Three: Three children in the program = \$425  
(\$225 + \$100 + \$100)

Additional Fees: Reconciliation and First Communion = \$50 per child  
Confirmation = \$60 per child

Tuition and fees pay only a portion of the cost of the program. The parish subsidizes the rest. Tuition is used for textbooks and materials. Financial need should NOT be a barrier to registering the student. Parents should consult with the Director of Religious Education to discuss payment options.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

All class sessions will be held on Thursday evenings from 6:30 pm until 7:30 pm. Parents should work with the Director of Religious Education to learn about alternative options with sister churches

Note: The office of the Director of Religious Education (DRE) partners with sister parishes to determine other potential scheduling options for OLMC students. Since this will change annually, please contact the DRE office directly for specific information. The list of sister parishes included is as follows:

- St. Andrew's - 3546 N. Paulina St.  
Ph: 773 – 525 – 3016
- St. Vincent de Paul - 1010 W. Webster Ave.  
Ph : 773 – 325 – 8610
- St. Josephat - 2311 N. Southport Ave.  
Ph: 773 – 327 – 8955
- St. Alphonsus - 1429 W. Wellington Ave.  
Ph: 773 – 525 – 0709
- St. Clement - 642 W. Deming Place.  
Ph: 773 – 281 – 0371

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

No child will be denied the right to participate in religious education classes due to race, color, national origin or ability to pay.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Students in need of special education have a right to catechesis and participation in the sacramental life of the Church. This will be accommodated for any students to the best of the school's ability. Please consult with the Director of Religious Education about any special need child. The Director will assist parents in finding resources that will meet their child's need. If the special need is addressed in school, the parents should meet with the Director of Religious Education to provide information regarding procedures and strategies used in those classes.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

Emergency contact information is required to be current and submitted to the Director of Religious Education at the start of each school year or as the information changes. The information required is as follows:

- Name and all telephone numbers of student's parents/guardians
- Name and telephone number of relative or friend to contact in case parents/guardians cannot be reached
- Name and telephone number of the student's doctor
- Any information regarding medication/physical conditions/allergies of the student

***Note: If your phone number, address or email address changes, please inform the office immediately.***

## **EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION**

In the event of inclement weather or other reason the school may be closed, there will be a calling tree system in place with the information provided by the parents. The catechists will be notified by the Director of Religious Education who will then notify the parents.

### **OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION**

In the case of an absence or if a parent has any questions, the Director of Religious Education can be reached at (773) 525-0453 – Extension 214. The email address is [olmcredu@aol.com](mailto:olmcredu@aol.com)

At the beginning of each school year, catechist contact information and religious education schedules will be provided to all parents for each grade.

### **ENRICHMENT SERIES FOR PARENTS**

There will be a spiritual enrichment series for the parents to support growth in their relationship with Jesus and help them aid their child(ren) in his/her spiritual journey. All parents are required to participate. Sessions will be scheduled and communicated once a month.