



**ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA PARISH**  
CHURCHES OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

**Catechetical Ministry Family Handbook**  
**2017-2018**  
**(revised 08-24-17)**

1 Munn Street, Montclair, NJ 07042

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## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Parish Catechetical Ministry of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish is to support parish families in helping their children grow to love God with their whole heart, mind and soul, and to love their neighbor as themselves through learning and living the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church.

## **Brief Description of the Parish Catechetical Programs**

Our parish catechetical programs consist of two dimensions:

- Sacrament preparation for First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation
- Catholic religious instruction for children in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade

All parish families are invited and encouraged to participate. Please visit our parish website ([www.montclaircatholics.org](http://www.montclaircatholics.org)) for information or contact the Parish Catechetical Office (973-744-5650). We will be happy to assist you.



# ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA PARISH

CHURCHES OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

## **A Note to Parents and Guardians:**

Whether your child attends a Catholic school or the parish Religious Education Program, your role is vital and wondrously beautiful. No classroom or textbook can or should provide what you must provide in order help your child grow in faith.

*The General Directory for Catechesis* states:

*“Parents and other family members awaken in the child a sense of God. This religious awakening within the family is irreplaceable. A child’s first Christian experience frequently leaves decisive traces which last throughout life.”*

If your family is struggling with how to provide what your child needs to grow in faith, please contact a parish staff member; we will be happy to assist you.

## **Sacrament Preparation for School Aged Children**

At Baptism, parents accept the responsibility of training their children in the practice of the faith, teaching them to keep God's commandments as taught by Jesus, and to love God and neighbor.

### **First Reconciliation and First Communion**

A child's remote preparation for sacraments begins by observing his or her parents'/guardians' behavior and priorities, and by coming to Sunday Mass and experiencing time for prayer and a growing relationship with God. They learn by observing how the significant adults in their lives respond to their own Baptismal call. No classroom or textbook can provide this.

Parish families who wish to have their children continue their initiation into the Catholic Church may enroll their children in Sacrament Preparation. This includes parish children who attend Catholic school. It is expected that every family preparing their children for First Communion attend Mass regularly. Children generally receive immediate preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, after having completed two years of formal religious instruction.\*\*\*

Formal sacrament preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion begins generally in 1<sup>st</sup> grade with parents or guardians attending the Parent/Guardian Sacrament Meeting.

Parents/guardians whose children have not received First Communion in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade should make an appointment with Janet Natale, Parish Catechetical Leader, who will arrange for their children to prepare for the sacraments through a process modeled after the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) adapted for children.

## **Confirmation**

At our parish, specific preparation for Confirmation begins in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and continues through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Young people generally receive immediate preparation for Confirmation during 9<sup>th</sup> grade by attending faith formation sessions throughout the year, culminating with the celebration of Confirmation in Easter Season.

It is the expectation of the parish that each young person wishing to be confirmed has received ongoing religious instruction in grades 1 – 8 in a parish Religious Education Program or Catholic School. It is also expected that the young person attends Sunday Mass each week. \*\*\*

Parish families whose children desire to complete their initiation into the Catholic Church may enroll for Sacrament Preparation for Confirmation prior to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This includes parish children who attend Catholic schools. Parents who wish for their children to prepare for Confirmation will be contacted by email as to a meeting to the sacrament preparation process for Confirmation. Family discernment interviews will be scheduled with parish staff members, and service interest groups will begin to form. After completing the family interview, parents and children may complete and submit a Sacrament Preparation Enrollment Form, requesting that the child enter into formal sacrament preparation for Confirmation.

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*\*\*\*Regardless of grade level or years of instruction, families are welcomed and encouraged to contact the parish Catechetical Office to discuss having their children prepare for sacraments.*

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## **Religious Education for School-Aged Children**

Parish families are invited enroll their children in our Sunday morning Religious Education Program, or to contact the parish Catechetical Office to discuss participating in the Family-Based Religious Education Program.

### **Registration Information:**

- ❖ Families who are new to the parish...welcome! Please be sure to fill out a parish membership form, or indicate on your Religious Education Program Registration Form if you would like us to begin the process for you.
- ❖ All parish families should complete a program registration form. Please register online at the parish website or complete a hardcopy registration form which may be obtained at the Parish Center, 1 Munn Street. Online registration will close on **August 18<sup>th</sup>**.
- ❖ Please note that children are assigned to open classes on a first come / first served basis. **Classes will be limited (with a few exceptions) to 12 students per class. As those spaces are filled, children will be placed on a waiting list until a Catechist is found, or they will be placed in the Family Based Program.**
- ❖ Registration fee for 2017-2018 after June 30<sup>th</sup> is \$150 for one child, \$225 for two children, with a maximum of \$275 per family.

If the registration fee is a financial hardship for your family, please contact Janet Natale at [Janet@montclaircatholics.org](mailto:Janet@montclaircatholics.org) or 973-744-5650 x 118. Your information will be held in strictest confidence.

- ❖ Each child must have a Baptismal Certificate on file if not baptized at Immaculate Conception Church or Our Lady of

Mount Carmel Church. Please submit a copy of your child's certificate if necessary.

- ❖ Choose the program option you prefer (Sunday Classroom, Tuesday Classroom, or Family-Based). See below for detailed information on each. Please note that registration for the Family-Based program option requires an interview with the Parish Catechetical Leader.
- ❖ For Sunday or Tuesday Classroom option, indicate on your form your choice of pick-up for your child, if applicable. Please note that children in Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade *must* be picked up at their classrooms by a parent or guardian.
- ❖ Every family is expected to volunteer in some capacity in our program. The list of opportunities may be found on the Religious Education registration form. Your support is essential to the operation of the Religious Education Program, Sacrament Preparation Programs, and Parish Mission Work. Your involvement is welcome and needed!
- ❖ Questions? Please contact the Parish Office 973-744-5650(x118) to speak to Janet Natale or via email: [Janet@MontclairCatholics.org](mailto:Janet@MontclairCatholics.org) Please call ahead to the Parish Center to verify hours if you'd like to register in person.

### **Family-Based Religious Education Program Option:**

Recognizing that the family is the foundation for all faith formation, our parish offers a program for any family who believes their child's religious education will be served best by working at home. Parents and guardians are expected to proclaim the Gospel message through lifestyle as well as instruction, and place a priority on helping their child nurture a personal relationship with God.

Families who are interested in taking this option should contact the parish Catechetical Office to arrange for an interview with the Parish Catechetical Leader to discuss the possibility.

#### *General Requirements:*

- Weekly Mass Attendance
- Parent will uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church
- Timely completion of textbook chapter material
- Attendance at large group gatherings during the upcoming year
- Parent commitment to ongoing personal faith development
- Family commitment to participating in family-based gatherings and events
- Complete registration requirements, including parent volunteer section of the registration form, as explained on the previous page

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## **Sunday Morning Classroom Program Information:**

- Offered for 5 year-olds through 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Runs from September through late April/early May
- Sunday mornings; **9:00 – 10:15am (please note revision)**
- Conducted in Tegakwitha Hall (parish school building at 17 Munn St.), Immaculate Conception High School (33 Cottage Place) and at the Parish Center (1 Munn Street)
- Grades K and 7 use Pflaum Gospel Weeklies, Grades 1 – 6 use RCL Benziger's, *Be My Disciples* textbooks; and 8<sup>th</sup> grade uses Ascension Press, *Chosen*.
- All families are needed to help with hall monitoring 2-3 times per year. We will coordinate this effort through the Catechetical Office you will be contacted via email for your assignment.
- We offer many volunteer opportunities that support the parish community and faith formation of our children. Please be sure you have completed and submitted your preference with your registration materials, indicating how you would like to help.

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## **Tuesday Afternoon Classroom Program Information:**

- Offered for 8<sup>th</sup> grade (as of 4/24/17)
- Runs from September through late April/early May
- Tuesday Afternoons 4:30 – 6:00 pm
- **Conducted in Parish Center (1 Munn Street)** The 8<sup>th</sup> grade text is “Chosen” by Ascension Press.
- As catechists become available, more classes will be offered on Tuesdays.
- We offer many volunteer opportunities that support the parish community and faith formation of our children. Please be sure you have completed and submitted your preference with your registration materials, indicating how you would like to help.

## **Administrative Policies and Procedures**

### **Child Abuse Policy**

Consistent with the Archdiocesan policy and legal code of the State of New Jersey, all parish staff members and volunteers have a moral and legal obligation to report any suspected child abuse to authorities to ensure the welfare of a child.

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

- Complete a standard archdiocesan application
- Acknowledge receipt of and compliance with the *Archdiocesan Policy Regarding Conduct with Minors*
- Complete a criminal background check
- Complete the *Protecting God's Children* workshop training program.

### **Catechists**

Our catechists are volunteers who dedicate themselves and their time to serving the children of the parish. Students are expected to respect the presence and authority of their catechists.

All catechists are required to complete the Archdiocesan Child Safety requirements listed above.

Catechists are not permitted to administer medication.

Catechists are not permitted to drive children to or from our Sunday or Tuesday Classroom Program.

### **Communication**

Most communication from the parish Catechetical Office will be sent via email. Please inform us immediately if you realize you are not receiving emails from us, or if your email address changes.

### **Emergency Closings**

In the event of inclement weather, please go to the parish website to check for a Snow Closing Announcement or call the parish Catechetical Office at 973-744-5650 x 118 to listen to the recording. Information will be posted or recorded by 8:00am.

In the event of a non-weather related closing, you will receive a phone call/text message from your child's catechist or a parish

staff person. Please be sure that we have the correct phone number on file to reach you in such a situation.

### **Arrival/Dismissal Procedures for Classroom Program**

Your child should arrive to class on time. Excessive or repetitive lateness is to be avoided as it is detrimental to your child's learning and also disruptive to the instruction of his/her entire class.

Please park in one of the designated parking lots on Cottage Place or Munn Street. Please do not Double Park on any street as this leads to dangerous situations for your child as well as others.

For safety, the Munn Street Entrance only should be used to enter and exit the primary school building, and the Cottage Place Entrance for the high school building except in the case of fire drills or emergency situations. For the safety of all children, the doors will be closed ten minutes after class begins, and will be reopened five minutes before dismissal. Should you need to enter the building in between these times, please knock on the door.

*Children in K through grade 2 **must** be dropped off and picked up at their classrooms by a parent or guardian. Parents and guardians for children in grades 3 – 8 should indicate and sign on their registration forms whether their children may leave their classrooms unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.*

Please do not ask that your child be dismissed early from class unless it is an emergency. This is very disruptive to classroom instruction. In the event your child absolutely must leave early, parents must come into the building to sign him/her out in the log book, indicating the reason for leaving; a catechetical staff person will retrieve your child from class.

If you know that your child will have a continuing conflict with the class schedule on Sunday mornings, please speak with the Parish Catechetical Leader about using our Family-Based option. This might be a better option than pulling your child out of class early each week.

## **Attendance Requirements for Classroom Program**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. If your child has an unavoidable absence, please contact the parish Catechetical Office to inform us, and then follow-up with his or her catechist right away to make up class work. **Any student who misses more than three class sessions without serious cause and without making up class work will be required to complete an end-of-year assessment before moving to the next grade.**

In grades 1 – 6, beside his/her text book, each student will be given a link to an e-book, so that if material is missed in class, it may be completed at home. The link to the e-book will be forwarded to each family after the registration is reviewed and registration fees processed. Instructions will be given at the September parent meeting. The Pflaum Gospel weeklies, which are used in Kindergarten and 7<sup>th</sup> grade, are distributed in class weekly. 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Students especially are responsible for completing all lessons. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum is a video/small group discussion Confirmation preparation program. All lessons must be completed before advancing to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade immediate preparation for Confirmation. Log-in information will be forwarded to all 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents when registration is reviewed, and registration fees processed. 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students will follow the class program and special events as detailed in the Year I Confirmation Preparation Calendar given at the Parent Meeting at the end of 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and on the Religious Education page of the parish website.

## **Behavior/Discipline Policy**

All students are expected to treat themselves and others with respect, and to share whole heartedly and cooperatively in the learning experiences offered by their catechists.

In the event a student's behavior disrupts the learning process for himself/herself or others, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) The catechist will issue a verbal warning to the student
- 2) If the behavior stops, the catechist will speak with the student after class about the behavior
- 3) If the behavior continues, the catechist will fill out a Behavior Report Form and send the student, accompanied by a hall monitor, down to the Main Hall desk where a staff member will call his/her parent to retrieve the student and to discuss the situation.
- 4) If the disruptive behavior continues in subsequent weeks, the student will not be permitted to return to class, and parents will be required to work at home with him/her on the grade level textbook material.

## **EpiPen Policy**

Realizing the absolutely necessity to the child's health to receive the injection quickly and properly should it become necessary, our policy is:

- If a child is old enough to administer his/her own EpiPen injection, the parent must submit a written statement with the registration form (or at another point in the year) informing us that the child has permission and is capable of taking this responsibility.
- If a child is not old enough or capable enough to self-administer the EpiPen, a parent must remain in the classroom during Religious Education class time in order to assist his/her child with administering the injection should it become necessary.
- Catechists and staff may not administer EpiPen injections. This policy is meant to ensure the utmost safety of each child. If you have any questions, please contact Janet Natale.

## **Harassment**

It is the policy of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish Religious Education Program to maintain a learning environment that is free from any type of harassment. No student associated with our program shall be subjected to any type of harassment.

It shall be a violation of this policy for any student to harass another student or volunteer in our program through the conduct as defined below. Administrators and catechists shall be responsible for promoting a learning environment free from harassment within his or her classroom or office.

### **Definition of Harassment:**

The verbal or physical conduct that demeans, shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability or any other physical feature.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping or threatening, intimidating or hostile acts that relate to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability or any other physical feature; and
2. written or graphic material that demeans, shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability or any other physical feature and that is circulated within the classroom or elsewhere on the premises.

Violations of this policy will be treated as a significant disciplinary matter and will be reported to the Parish Catechetical Leader and to the Pastor.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Saint Teresa of Calcutta Religious Education Program admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges and programs made available to students who register for this program.