



# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PARENT HANDBOOK

GRADES 1 – 8 (ENGLISH)

*SACRAMENTAL PREP & RITE OF CHRISTIAN  
INITIATION OF CHILDREN (RCIC)*

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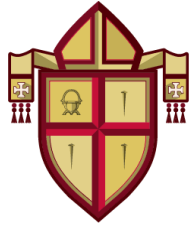
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## THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

### MESSAGE FROM THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

#### OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHETICAL MINISTRY HANDBOOK

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

“The early Church clearly understood that this missionary mandate of Jesus Christ gave the Church its reason for being. The Holy Spirit propelled those who knew Jesus to go out, to teach, to preach, to baptize, to make disciples; in short, to spread the Good News of Salvation to the ends of the known world.

The Church, today, continues to respond to this missionary call given in Matthew 28 and has reconfirmed, in many recent Church documents, that evangelization is the very heart of the Church’s mission.”

*“The task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (Pope Paul, VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14).*

“Evangelization is not the task of a few persons, called to a specific ministry of evangelization; it is the responsibility of the whole Church. The Second Vatican Council clearly states that:

*‘...the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God.’” (Ad Gentes, 35).*

“Catechesis for all levels and for all ages is a continuous process of being formed and informed by the Word of God, by the sacramental life of the Church, by the Church’s rich tradition and by the Catholic value system. It is ‘an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted...in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 5).”

## LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Parents,

On behalf of Holy Family Catholic Church, I want to welcome you and your children to our Religious Education Program!

Evangelization and faith formation is of the utmost importance, and I want to congratulate you on your commitment to your child's continued catechetical and faith formation. While enrolled in our Religious Education Program, the faith you have shared with your children will be expanded upon as they engage scriptures and prayer, learn about and prepare for the reception of the sacraments, and learn what it is to live a life as a Christian rooted in the Gospels.

In a world full of distractions and beliefs that are antithetical to the Catholic Church, faith formation of our children is evermore important as they continue to grow and impact culture. As the future of the Church, it is our duty to continue the evangelization started by the Apostles, and give our children the education and formation necessary to pursue God with a pure heart (Matthew 5:8). By God's grace, the instruction received in your home and here in our parish will prepare them as their faith matures, and give them the strength to live a Christian life, bound intimately with the Christ, His Church and Her sacraments.

I would also encourage you, as parents, to continue your faith formation and attend the various workshops, bible studies, or prayer groups available here at Holy Family. The example set by you will indeed have an impact on your children. To that end, the parish and Religious Education staff and volunteers are here to assist you and your family in your faith formation. Please take advantage of these wonderful opportunities!

Again, thank you for your commitment, prayers, support, and may the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, be our guiding example of a Christian family!

May God's peace and love be with all of you!

*Fr. Peter Vu Lam*

Fr. (Peter) Vu Lam, Pastor

*<sup>14</sup> but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Mt 19:14)*

## MESSAGE FROM THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

Dear Parents,

On behalf of the Religious Education staff and volunteers, I want to welcome you and your family to Holy Family Catholic Church's Religious Education Program. It is a great blessing and privilege to be a part of your child's faith formation and preparation for reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation and the Eucharist!

While the parish's role in evangelization and catechizing (teaching) is of the utmost importance, it is important to remember that as parents, you are the "first preachers of the faith" for your children (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). As such, the home is the "first school of Christian life," where children learn how to love, work, forgive, pray, and live a life of self-sacrifice, centered on Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1657). Your commitment to your faith, and the example you set, will leave a great impression on your children as they participate in the faith formation programs here at Holy Family. In other words, your participation in this process is essential!

The Religious Education Office is here to support and encourage your children in their lifelong encounter and pursuit of God, and it is our goal to provide you with the necessary resources to facilitate the faith formation of you and your families. Opportunities such as workshops and classes are offered during the Religious Education school year, to assist parents in their personal faith formation and growth, with the goal that parents are better equipped to assist their children outside the classroom. Also, regular attendance at mass, participation and reception of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and family prayer time will deepen and strengthen the religious education your children will receive here at Holy Family!

Our staff and volunteers are here to assist and answer any questions or concerns that you may have. It is a great honor and blessing to be of the religious education of your children, and may the Holy Family be a model for us all!

In Christ,

Holy Family Religious Education Staff & Volunteers

*'The future is in your hearts and in your hands. God is entrusting to you the task, at once difficult and uplifting, of working with Him in the building of the civilization of love.'* - St. John Paul the Great

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**HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**I. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

**REGISTRATION:**

Registration and remittance of fees is done solely through the Parish Office, during their normal business hours. Also, on select Sundays leading up to the beginning of the Religious Education school year, the Parish Office will be open to accept registrations and payments.

Registration, including the remittance of the registration fee, are necessary *prior* to your child attending his or her first class. Please make every effort to complete the registration process prior to the first day of class. If your child has been baptized, but not at Holy Family, please provide a copy of their baptismal certificate when registering.

Late-registration is allowed, up through the annual Fall Festival, held the first weekend of October. After the Fall Festival, registration is closed.

**AGES/GRADES:**

Religious Education classes are offered to children who are in first through eighth grade. For those children who are in high school, Religious Education classes and Confirmation preparation is provided by the Youth Group (contact information for Youth Group Coordinator is above).

**IF YOUR CHILD IS BAPTIZED IN THE CATHOLIC FAITH OR OTHER CHRISTIAN TRADITION:**

For those children baptized in another Christian tradition (e.g. Lutheran, etc.), they do not require baptism, as a valid baptism can only be administered and received once. These children will participate in a two-year formation process and receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

**IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT BAPTIZED (CATECHUMENS - RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN - RCIC):**

For those children who have not been baptized, and are beyond the age of discretion as identified by the Church (seven-years and older), they will receive instruction and prepare (two-year time-period) for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, the Eucharist and Confirmation) at the Easter Vigil. They will attend the same classes as their peers who have already been baptized.

## **TWO YEAR STRUCTURE:**

**YEAR A:** First-year students who receive general instruction regarding the Bible, the Catholic Church, the Sacraments, Prayers and the Christian life rooted in the Gospels.

**YEAR B:** Second-year students build upon their Year A curriculum and receive instruction focused on their preparation for receiving the sacraments of Baptism/Confirmation (if receiving at Easter Vigil), Reconciliation, and the Eucharist.

**YEAR C:** Students who have already received the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and the Eucharist, but who are too young to join the Youth Group and begin Confirmation preparation classes. These students participate in our Religious Education Program by attending classes and continuing to grow and learn about their faith and the Church.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE AND TIMES:**

Class times are 8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m., each Sunday from September through May. The holiday schedule mirrors that of the traditional holidays recognized by the various school systems in the region (e.g. Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.). Calendar and class schedules are provided to parents on the first class day of the year, at the first parents' meeting, and are available online ([onehollyfamily.org](http://onehollyfamily.org)) and upon request.

## **SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT POLICY:**

When arriving for class and when picked up, children must be signed-in *and* signed out by a parent or guardian (18-years and older). Older siblings who are not 18-years or older are not authorized to sign your child in or out. This requirement is necessary to ensure that your child is accounted for each Sunday, and assists the Religious Education staff in facilitating a safe environment for your children. Also, the Sign-in/Sign-out sheets are the primary method of tracking attendance. Your cooperation with this requirement is much appreciated.

Also, prompt pickup of your children is required (whether they are attending Mass or not). Catechists and assistants are all volunteers and require departure upon the completion of class and/or Mass.

## **EMERGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

In the instance of emergencies such as earthquakes, fires, or other unforeseen situations requiring the evacuation of the school, please refer to the Religious Education Evacuation Plan, available online ([onehollyfamily.org](http://onehollyfamily.org)), in the parish office, and in the parish



office. The Evacuation Plan will also be available upon request, and copies available during class times.

#### **SAFE-ENVIRONMENT TRAINING:**

All parish staff and volunteers are required to submit to a background check and complete diocesan training focused on creating and maintaining a safe-environment for all children, volunteers and staff. If issues arise with a child, volunteer or staff member, please inform the Director of Religious Education and/or the Pastor immediately. Safety and proper reporting of all issues are of the utmost importance and we appreciate your cooperation as we strive to maintain an environment that is safe conducive to prayer and learning about our faith.

#### **PARENT/RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM COMMUNICATIONS:**

The preferred communication between Religious Education staff and parents/guardians is by email. Understanding that not everyone has access to email, it is important that *all* parents attend the published Parents' Meetings, which are essential in sharing information regarding upcoming events. Furthermore, Parents Meetings are an opportunity for the parents to receive updates on the progress of their children, and receive their own catechetical refreshers, which are helpful in assisting their children at home.

Announcements and other information will also be posted in common areas in the school, and Religious Education staff and volunteers are always available to answer or direct questions to persons who will be able to appropriately answer.

#### **IMPORTANT DATES/EVENTS:**

All important dates are published in the Religious Education calendar, which is provided upon registration, is available on class days, and online ([oneholysfamily.org](http://oneholysfamily.org)). Please refer to the calendar for exact dates and times. For any conflicts that arise that prevent you and your child from mandatory dates, please let the Religious Education Director know once the conflict arises. With enough notice, conflicts can be overcome, but it is essential that parents communicate with the Religious Education staff in a timely manner.

#### **WEEKLY MASS ATTENDANCE:**

Attending Mass is the primary way in which children *and* adults learn about their faith. During Mass, we hear the word of God proclaimed, and participate in the heavenly banquet that is the Eucharist. Furthermore, in receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord, we strengthen our bonds as members of the Body of Christ and receive God's grace to live our lives in love, hope and charity. Children enrolled in Religious Education classes are given the opportunity to attend the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Mass collectively as a group. We encourage all children to take advantage of this opportunity and encourage their families to also attend

the same mass. For those children who attend the 10:00 a.m. Mass, their parents will need to sign their children out upon the completion of Mass in the church.

#### **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES:**

Regular attendance is necessary to ensure that your child receives the fullness of the faith formation that is offered in the Religious Education program. Furthermore, consistent classroom instruction is needed to ensure that your child is obtaining the necessary knowledge to properly grow in their faith and receive the sacraments. Much like attendance in elementary/middle school, absences can have an adverse effect on your child's growth. Therefore, if your child is absent more than four times during the Religious Education year, a meeting may be necessary in order to facilitate an effort to get your child caught up with his or her classmates.

If early dismissal is necessary, notification shall be given to your child's catechist and or the Religious Education Director. Sign-in/Sign-out procedures still need to be adhered to if your child leaves early (for any reason).

If your child is ill, or otherwise unable to attend class, please inform your child's catechist and/or the Religious Education Director. If an extended absence is required due to a family emergency, or other unforeseen circumstances, please contact the Religious Education Director and arrangements may be made on a case-by-case basis.

#### **BOOKS AND SUPPLIES:**

Textbooks are provided to your children at no cost. However, textbooks are available for purchase if you prefer that your child have their own. Please contact the Religious Education Director for further information. Other classroom supplies are provided, and your child need not bring their own.

#### **FEES AND REFUNDS:**

Information regarding fees and policies regarding refunds are available in the Religious Education Registration forms, and upon request, at the Parish Office. If financial arrangements need to be made, they are considered on a case-by-case basis and an appointment with Fr. Peter and/or the Religious Education Director is required in order to discuss the options available.

#### **GODPARENTS:**

For children who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil, Godparents will need to be identified no later than January 1<sup>st</sup> of *Year B*. Godparents are also required to complete a Godparent Eligibility Certificate prior to January 1<sup>st</sup> and attend a Godparent's workshop. The Godparent workshop will be offered during the Religious Education school year at a date and time to be specified. When considering Godparents for your children, it is

important to select those who are “firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized – child or adult – on the road of Christian life.” (CCC 1255)

Godparent Eligibility Certificates are available in Spanish and English, and will be provided to those parents whose children will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. Certificates are also available online ([oneholyfamily.org](http://oneholyfamily.org)) and in the Parish Office.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN:**

All children are welcome to attend Religious Education classes, learn about their faith, and prepare for the reception of the sacraments. Our Religious Education staff and volunteers are happy to discuss any accommodations for those children with special needs and implement individual religious education plans, with the focus and goal of providing the optimal learning environment for all the children in our parish.

### **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:**

The Religious Education Program fosters a learning environment that is welcoming to all. Respect for students, catechists, assistants, staff and other volunteers is essential to maintaining a learning environment that is aimed at the faith formation of the children. Students are encouraged to respect one another, and themselves, while participating in the Religious Education Program. Interacting with their peers and their catechists is an ideal place to put into action the lessons learned regarding living a life of love and respect for other people.

Students are also required to follow the rules and regulations discussed herein, as well as the rules set forth in their respective classrooms. Other than rare exceptions allowing cell phone use (see below), electronics are not allowed in class. Students should also maintain proper decorum when walking in the school building and remain good stewards of their classroom, bathroom, parking lot, church, and other common areas.

Cell phones are allowed, but must be turned off during class and Masses. Cell phones may be used in emergency situations only. If you need to share a message with your child, please contact the Religious Education Director, who will ensure your message reaches your child.

### **STUDENT REGULATIONS:**

- Appropriate dress is encouraged.
- Students should respect one another and all catechists and assistants.
- No food or drink are allowed in the classrooms.
- No chewing gum.
- No toys or games.

- Students may not write on white boards unless a part of classroom instruction/activity.
- Student may not enter a classroom without a catechist, assistant, or other Religious Education staff member or volunteer present.
- Cell phone usage is discouraged and they must be off while in class.
- Holy Family is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones or other electronics.

**DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR:**

- First Step: Child’s behavior is addressed in class by catechist.
- Second Step: Parent(s) will be called and notified of the situation and request that parent address behavior with their child.
- Third Step: Parent and child will meet with the Director of Religious Education in order to address the behavior and resolve the situation.
- Fourth Step: Parent will be required to attend class with their children until the behavior is amended.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBERS:**

Please be sure to keep your contact information up to date with the Religious Education Office. Religious Education staff needs to be able to contact you in the event of an illness or other events that warrant your immediate attention.

**VOLUNTEERS:**

Most of the catechists in the Religious Education Program are volunteers who have received, or in the process of, receiving training and certifications from the Diocese of San Diego. This ministry is indeed challenging, but, as most catechists will state, it is as rewarding a calling and ministry as there is. If anyone wishes to become a catechist or classroom assistant, please contact the Religious Education Director who will be able to further discuss the opportunities and areas of need in our parish’s Religious Education Program.