

**ASSUMPTION PARISH
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
HANDBOOK
2016-2017**



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Pastor

Rev. Przemyslaw Nowak
Parochial Vicar

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Director

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Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

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Youth Minister

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WELCOME

One of the things we are most proud of at Assumption Parish is our Religious Education program. Part of the success of any program is that those involved work as a team sharing a common goal. The goal of the program for children and youth grades PreK through 8 that do not attend Assumption school and for high school youth who are preparing for the Rite of Confirmation is to support and enhance the efforts of parents and guardians who want to share their faith with their children. The religious ed team is comprised of parish administration, religious ed staff, volunteer catechists and parents. Keeping that in mind, we have adopted the slogan *Partnering With Parents*.

It is important to remember that the Church in celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism instructs the parents that “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor” (from the Rite of Baptism).

Parents always have been and will remain the primary religious educators for their children. They model the Christian life to their children by virtue of their prayer, worship and witness. As partners, we will assist parents in the task of laying a solid foundation, encourage spiritual growth, foster discipleship, and help their children develop a lasting relationship with God.

Please know that we are here for you and that we are available to discuss your questions, problems or any concerns that you might have as we journey together.

MISSION STATEMENT

*Jesus Christ is
our Way, our Truth and our Life.
The content of our faith
is the Risen Lord Jesus
living in us through
the in-dwelling Holy Spirit.*

*The mission of the church
is to follow Christ in establishing
the reign of God on earth.*

*“Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven”.*

*It is to this goal that all our prayers and efforts
are dedicated.*



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Assumption Religious Education
91 Maple Avenue 973-267-5638
Morristown, N.J. 07960 FAX 973-267-4223
e-mail: RelEd@assumptionparish.org
website: www.assumptionparish.org

Our offices are located in Assumption Ministry Center, 70 MacCulloch Avenue. Call for office hours. You may access the building by using the rear entrance. Please park in the church parking lot.

Registration

- You must be registered parishioners of Assumption Church. You may register by picking calling the parish office at (973) 539-2141, or visiting the parish website at www.assumptionparish.org.
- Then, please link to 'Religious Education' from the parish website.
- Please send us a copy of each child's Baptismal Certificate if they were not baptized at Assumption.

CLASS SCHEDULE & LOCATION

Our program provides weekly classes, retreats, service opportunities, family faith events, priest and deacon visits, and prayer services. In addition, we sponsor a yearly Pasta Supper & Basket Raffle Fundraiser.

Kindergarten-8th grade classes, as well as our Special Needs class, are held on Sundays, October through March, at Assumption School on MacCulloch Avenue. Grades kindergarten through five meet on Sunday mornings from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Grades 4-8 meet on Sunday evenings immediately following the 5:30 p.m. Youth Mass. Confirmation groups meet once, sometimes twice per month, on Sunday evenings September through May in the parish center and the ministry center following the 5:30 p.m. Youth Mass. Families with 6th through 12th graders are strongly encouraged to attend the weekly Youth Mass.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd sessions are held on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for an hour and a half, September through April in the ministry center for children as young as age three.

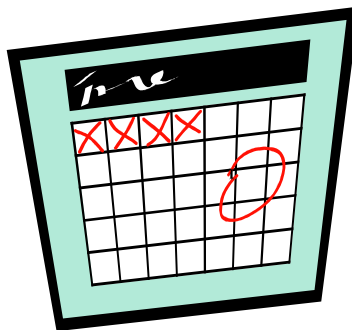
Our calendar is coordinated as closely as possible with the Morris School District calendar.

After School Groups meet at Assumption Ministry Center on a day other than Sundays for grades 3 through 8. Children who anticipate a repeated conflict on Sundays because of sports should register for an after-school group to ensure regular attendance.

Fridays Faith and Family is a family catechetical program for those with children that are entering 1st through 8th grade. All members of the family are invited to come together one Friday evening per month September-May from 5:00 to 7:30pm. We begin with a light supper followed by large/small group faith sharing/formation, connecting scripture and doctrine. It is expected that grade level textbook assignments will be completed at home, month to month. Space is limited to the first 30 families that register and will make the commitment to attend every session in its entirety. In addition, if you have a 2nd grader preparing for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, you will need to attend six Parent/Child sessions on Sunday mornings. If you have a Confirmation candidate, he/she is welcome but not expected, to attend FFF.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CALENDAR

Please visit the parish website at www.assumptionparish.org, link to 'Religious Education', and view a complete Religious Education calendar including all dates for Kindergarten-8th grade classes, After-School Groups, *Fridays, Faith and Family*, Confirmation and for *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*.



No Previous Instruction

If your child is older than first grade and has not had any formal religious education, he/she will need to make-up the work missed. We will look at each situation separately and find a way to best serve you and your child.



SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

First Eucharist and First Reconciliation

Although you are encouraged to start your children in formal religious education classes in Level I (age 3) of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, PreK (age 4) or Kindergarten, preparation for the first reception of Eucharist and Reconciliation does not take place until 1st and 2nd grade. Students preparing for these sacraments must be baptized. Following two years of instruction, the children receive these sacraments in the spring of 2nd grade. Parents and children are invited to participate and learn together for a number of classes during 2nd grade. Children receive First Reconciliation prior to First Eucharist.

Those who have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation are encouraged to continue to receive the sacrament regularly. Confessions are heard on Saturdays from 4:15 to 5:00 p.m. or by appointment.

Confirmation

The Sacrament of Confirmation completes the rites of initiation. In the Diocese of Paterson, Confirmation is typically celebrated in sophomore year of high school. The two year prep takes place in freshman and sophomore year at the home parish regardless of where the youth attends high school, private or public. We hope that during this time, through study, prayer and service, our youth will grow in faith, hope and love, allowing them to make the commitment to follow Jesus, confirmed in Faith.



MASS ATTENDANCE

A vital part of each student's spiritual life and growth as a Catholic is regular participation in the sacraments of the Church. All students are expected to attend Mass and participate in the liturgy each Sunday as well as on holy days of obligation. Mass times at Assumption are: 5:30 p.m. on Saturday evening; 7, 8:30 and 10 a.m., and 12:15 p.m. on Sundays. In addition, we offer a Youth & Family Mass at 5:30 p.m. each Sunday, September through May. Service of the Word for children takes place at the 5:30 p.m. Mass on Saturday as well as the 10 a.m. Mass on Sunday.

Families with 6th through 12th graders are strongly encouraged to attend the weekly Youth Mass.



COMMUNICATION

Parents will be kept informed of activities and events by way of frequent emails from the Religious Education office and the parish bulletin. We welcome your comments and suggestions at any time. Please feel free to communicate your questions or concerns with your child's catechist or contact the religious education office.

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is of serious concern. Consistent with diocesan policy and local legal codes, parish catechetical staff has a moral and legal duty to comply with the law to ensure the welfare of a child. Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse. As mandated by the US Catholic Conference of Catholic Bishops, all employees and volunteers working with children must complete a criminal background check and attend the Virtus seminar, *Protecting God's Children*.

TEACHING TOUCHING SAFETY

Teaching Touching Safety is part of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The job of ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education, and training about the nature and scope of the problem. We must also give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm. The Teaching Touching Safety program is designed to assist parents and teachers in this important task.

To that end, Teaching Touching Safety will be presented to all first and fourth grade Religious Education students. The exact date will be indicated on the Calendar of Lessons which is sent home on the first day of class.

CURRICULUM

Parents need to understand that the entire body of Catholic doctrine is not conveyed in any single year but that each year of religious education builds on those that preceded and lead to what follows. Our publisher selection is based on established goals and objectives that are to be followed in all religious education programs. Copies of our texts are available for parental review in the Ministry Center.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd program is based on Montessori principles and uses a prepared environment, the Atrium, for its sessions. The Atrium is not a classroom, but resembles a small church where many activities take place dealing with various topics, such as, practical life, geography, the infancy narratives, the Good Shepherd, the kingdom parables, baptism, and gestures of Eucharist.

We currently offer Level I for those 3, 4 and 5 year olds, Level II for 6, 7, and 8 year olds, and Level III for 9, 10 and 11 year olds. Only those who have done at least two years of Level I can participate in Level II. This is an option for those who might otherwise attend the traditional religious education program on Sunday mornings.

People who lead an Atrium must be certified by the International Good Shepherd Organization. We are very fortunate to have personnel to cover seven separate groups of Good Shepherd which meet on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in the Ministry Center. For further information, please contact Tara at (973)267-5638 or Tara.Speer@assumptionparish.org.

Kindergarten

Stories of God's Love – Kindergarten is a wonderful time to celebrate simple rituals and the traditions of the Church. It is a time to introduce children to a brimming faith vocabulary and provide a readiness for future catechesis in the faith of the Catholic Church.

Grade One

Be My Disciples – On a journey of faith, first graders are active learners who want a sense of consistency and ritual. They learn through discovery, movement, and active involvement.

Grade Two

Be My Disciples - Children and parents gather to learn and celebrate their relationship to Jesus as they prepare for First Communion, First Reconciliation, and a life of closeness to God and the Church.

Grade Three

Be My Disciples – Third graders enjoy hearing about the heroes of the Bible and the stories of the people of God. They value the attitudes and habits of important adults in their lives.

Grade Four

Be My Disciples – Learning about virtues and moral habits is critical at this stage of faith formation. They begin to realize that true happiness comes from knowing and loving God.

Grade Five

Be My Disciples – Fifth graders want to belong and relationships are important to them. They are growing spiritually in their prayer lives, their sense of right and wrong, and their ability for deep religious feelings.

Grade Six

Blest Are We – The sixth graders learn about the Old Testament and Jewish customs and rituals so they can better understand Jesus. Connections are made to New Testament realities. Sixth graders are presented with a Catholic Youth Bible that has been donated by a parishioner. They are also introduced to “God’s Own Making,” a program that develops positive values about God’s gift of human sexuality.



Grade Seven

Jesus in the New Testament – The life and message of Jesus are explored in the four Gospels with emphasis on understanding and praying the Scriptures. Seventh graders are also introduced to Saint Paul, his other New Testament Letters and the Book of Revelation. We continue to use “God’s Own Making” with a focus on the moral and religious dimensions of human sexuality.

Grade Eight

Morality: Life in Christ – Morality provides two units of study: “Life in Christ” and “The Ten Commandments.” In Jesus Christ, we find the model for moral life combining love of God and neighbor in a life that balances prayer with action for the kingdom of God. Eighth graders once again work with “God’s Own Making” as they learn to cherish the relationships in their lives and understand the Church’s teaching about Catholic values of human sexuality.

Confirmation Year One

Teens will continue on their faith journey during their freshman year as they begin the preparation period for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Youth meet once a month September through May in a small group consisting of a catechist, two youth peer ministers and other candidates. During this period, the content is focused on the actual life experience of the young candidates and methods that are enjoyable and geared toward the building of community. In addition, we will use a variety of strategies intended to deepen the candidates' understanding of Jesus, His message, the nature of the Christian church and of the implications of a personal commitment to all these realities. Included in the year one program is a retreat experience and a service component.

Confirmation Year Two

The preparation period continues during the candidates' sophomore year. Groups will meet anywhere from one to two times a month depending on the actual date of the Rite of Confirmation. The youth will continue their formation period which began during year one. In addition, the candidates will prepare in a more personal, intense, and prayerful way for the celebration of the Rite of Confirmation. Candidates will be required to participate in a full day retreat experience and to complete the 25 hour service component.

Fridays, Faith & Family

This family catechetical experience can be selected instead of the traditional Sunday format by those with children that are entering 1st through 8th grade. All members of the family (30 family limit) are invited to come together one Friday evening per month for nine months from 5 -7:30pm. We begin with a light supper followed by large/small group faith sharing/formation, connecting scripture & doctrine based on the Sunday readings. If you have a 2nd grader preparing for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, you will need to attend additional parent/child sessions as noted on our calendar. If you have a Confirmation candidate, he/she is welcome, but not expected, to attend FFF sessions. Supplemental materials are provided and are expected to be completed at home for the weeks we do not meet.



ACRE

All Catholic schools and parish Religious Education programs in the Diocese of Paterson began administering the ACRE Assessment on an annual basis in 2012- 2013. ACRE stands for Assessment of Catechesis Religious Education. This assessment is administered to all 5th, 8th, and 10th graders of the parish and is intended to evaluate their knowledge of faith and the attitudes of our youth.

ATTENDANCE

Children are expected to attend each and every session. Four or more absences is considered a hindrance to effectively covering the curriculum for grades one through eight and will require make-up classes or a meeting with parents to make sure that all work is completed and understood by the child. We appreciate your attention to regular on-time attendance for all of our programs.

BECOMING A CATECHIST

We are always looking for parishioners eager to share our faith with children and youth. Please contact us if you would like further information. With more than 750 children in need of instruction and formation, and our commitment to keep classes small while meeting an increased variety of needs, we are seeking adults willing to be trained. **Please contact Linda, Sharon, Lisa or Tara at (973) 267-5638 if you can help.**



PRACTICAL MATTERS

Absences:

Please call us if your children will not be at class. On Sunday mornings after 9 a.m. and evenings after 6 p.m., you need to call 973-538-0590, which is the phone number of Assumption School where we hold Kindergarten - 8th grade classes. For CGS, call 973-267-5638; Confirmation, call 973-267-8519.

Classroom Guests:

If your child brings a friend or relative to class with him/her, please fill out a "guest form" at the front desk before entering class at Assumption School.

Calendar of Lessons:

Each child will be given a Calendar of Lessons at the first class indicating what lessons will be covered, the focus of each lesson and the homework to be completed. If your child is absent, please cover the missed lessons before the next class.

Inclement Weather:



In the case of bad weather and the need to cancel class, you will receive an email from the Rel Ed office. When timing allows, we will also make an announcement at the 5:30 p.m. Saturday evening Mass and at the Masses on Sunday. You can also check the message on the office phone (973) 267-5638. Please do not assume that canceling the morning classes means the evening classes will be canceled as well. We will look at each situation separately. Canceled classes will be made up and added on to the calendar.

Dismissal:

Please make sure your children know who is taking them home, particularly if you are involved in a car pool and where to meet the car pool. Kindergarten, first, and second graders must be met in the classroom at dismissal by an adult or an older sibling. Third through 8th graders may leave the classroom at dismissal to meet their ride, unless otherwise instructed by you. Please communicate your dismissal wishes to each catechist.

Early Dismissal/Late Arrival:

We strongly discourage early dismissal or late arrivals. It is disruptive to the class and to the catechist.

Access to the Building:

On Sunday mornings, all doors are unlocked at 9:40 a.m. and locked at 10:10 a.m. All doors are again unlocked at 11:20 a.m. to allow parents to enter the building to meet their Kindergarten, first or 2nd grader at their classroom door. On Sunday evenings, the only access to the building will be the front door at all times. You may, of course, exit all doors at all times.

Contacting Us During Class Hours:

If you need to get a message to your child while we are in session at Assumption School, please call (973) 538-0590.

Special Requests:

If you would like your child placed in a specific class, we will do our best to honor that request if it is made at the time of registration.

EXPECTATIONS

For Parents:

- Ensure that their children attend classes regularly and on time.
- Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect their child within the classroom.
- Be an active part of their children's learning and be involved with the program as much as possible.
- Assure that assigned homework is completed and reviewed.
- To attend Mass on Sundays and holidays with your family.

For Students:



- Hand-held electronic devices, including, but not limited to cell phones, iPods, iPads, etc. must be turned off and are not to be used during any part of the program unless directed to do so by the catechist. When visible the item will be collected by the catechist or program director and, upon request, returned to a parent.
- Avoid bringing food, drink, or gum to class.
- There will be zero tolerance for substance abuse of any kind, including, but not limited to drugs, inhalants, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Be punctual and prepared for class.
- Follow arrival and dismissal procedures given by the catechist.
- Show respect for themselves, catechists, other students and program personnel.
- Be courteous and considerate of others.
- Use language and actions expressive of Christian behavior.
- Obey safety rules at all times.
- Be present only in areas of the building for which they have permission at a specific time.
- Be cooperative and participate in all sessions and activities to the best of their ability.
- Treat parish/school property and that of fellow students with respect.
- Help clean up their work area upon request.
- Complete homework as assigned.

For Catechists:

- Provide a loving, Christian atmosphere within the learning environment so that children will be able to grow in their faith.
- Prepare and teach designated curriculum.
- Be a Christian role model.
- Communicate regularly with and involve parents in the faith development of their children.

DISCIPLINE

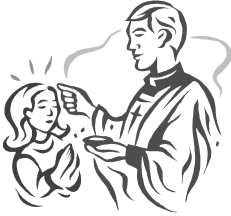
All students are expected to share in the faith learning experiences of the parish program. If a child's behavior disrupts the learning process for him/herself or for others, the following steps will help to ensure that class participation may continue.

1. All efforts will be made to correct the behavior at the first incident. The catechist will speak to the young person directly.
2. If the behavior continues or another arises then the student will be sent to the front lobby at which time the director or coordinator will pursue the following steps:
 - a. Discuss the issue and appropriate behavior with the student.
 - b. The student will be asked to call his/her parent/guardian to inform them.
 - c. A parent/guardian will be asked to come to the building for the remainder of the session to sit with the student.
 - d. At the end of the session the catechist, parent, student and director/coordinator will meet to discuss the next appropriate steps.
3. If the child's behavior continues to disrupt learning it may be necessary to no longer allow the student to return to class. Arrangements must then be made regarding the continued faith formation of the student.

VOLUNTEERS

Parent/guardian and volunteer participation is welcomed and needed in various areas of the religious education program. Please indicate your area of interest, such as, clerical and office help, babysitting, catechists' aides, hall monitors, substitute catechist, room parent, assisting with the Pasta Supper, leader for Service of the Word, etc., when registering online or contact us at RelEd@assumptionparish.org or 973-267-5638 to share your time and talents.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



Ash Wednesday Prayer Service:

is a family prayer service designed with children in mind. It attempts to explain the significance of the ashes and how children can participate in the season of Lent. The service begins at 4 p.m. and lasts about 40 minutes.

Community Service Hours:

are an integral part of the middle school and Confirmation programs. Each 6th, 7th, and 8th grader is required to perform ten hours of community service each year. Confirmation candidates are asked to acquire a total of 25 hours during a two year period.

Suggestions and opportunities for service will be sent home via email from the Rel Ed office and by the catechists throughout the year. Students are responsible for submitting documentation of acquired hours to their catechist.



Faith Based Sexuality Program:

“God’s Own Making” is a part of our middle school curriculum. Research has shown that youth are experimenting with sex at a young age. Much of this can be attributed to societal influences, such as, TV, movies, music, magazines, and peer pressure. As a result, we believe it is necessary to teach our youth what the Catholic Church has to say about sexuality.

Family Faith Events:

are scheduled twice each year for the opportunity to build a family of faith within the parish community. Families gather for this time of prayer, reflection, activity and social. Each theme coincides with the life of the Church or the liturgical calendar. These can take the form of Family Days/Nights per grade level or large multi-grade gatherings.



First Communion Orientation:

is for parents of 2nd graders who will be receiving First Communion in the spring. This meeting will provide you with important dates and information regarding First Communion and First Reconciliation. This meeting will take place in the school cafeteria at 10:00 a.m. on **October 23, 2016** while the children are in class.



Middle School Youth Ministry:

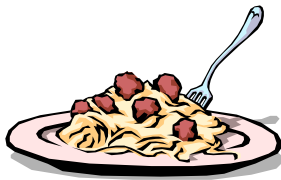
for all 6th, 7th and 8th graders of our Parish Community. These events such as Popcorn Theology and open game night will take place on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night. This is a great opportunity for our middle school youth to get together. Look for more information to come about specific events throughout the year.

New Family Orientation:

One parent/guardian from each family that is new to our Kindergarten through 5th grade program must attend this orientation session to be held on **September 25, 2016** at 11:15 a.m. in the school cafeteria. You will learn how we intend to “partner with parents” throughout your child’s formal religious education.

Parent/Child First Communion Sessions:

are scheduled during regular class time. These sessions are for at least one parent/guardian and the first communicant. Through story, song, prayer, video, discussion and activities, these sessions will help parents nurture the formation of gratitude before God as well as provide the children with an age-appropriate understanding of the gift they are preparing to receive.



Pasta Supper & Basket Raffle:

is our one major fund raiser for the year. Make plans to join us on Saturday, **March 4, 2017** with seatings at 5 and 7 p.m. in the school cafeteria. Dedicated parishioners coordinate the event with the help of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders who help prepare, serve, and clean-up. All Religious Education families are asked to contribute gift items for a Basket Raffle that takes place the night of the supper.

Youth Ministry:

Under the direction of Assumption’s Youth Minister, Lisa Sullivan, all high school youth of the parish will be given the opportunity to participate in both social and community service throughout the year. Lisa can be contacted at (973) 267-8519 or sullivanlisa@optonline.net.

PROGRAM FEES

It costs approximately \$285 per child per year for Religious Ed. Program costs include salaries for one-full-time and four part-time employees, books, materials, office supplies, catechist training, retreats etc.

Fair Share is \$175 per child. Those who pay this greatly assist us in meeting program costs. If you are unable to pay *fair share*, we ask you to pay a tuition fee according to the following family discounted scale:

\$175 for one child,
\$225 for two
\$275 for three or more.

The remainder of the cost to effectively run the program is covered by general parish funds.

If you have difficulty paying or need to pay a partial tuition or pay in installments, please call us at (973) 267-5638. No one has been or ever will be denied religious education because of an inability to pay.

Please Note: The fee for Confirmation is \$100 per child. This covers the cost of the retreat, guest speakers and program supplies.

There is an additional \$25 First Communion fee for each First Communicant to cover the cost of additional supplies, such as, the banner kit, goblet, and bread party.

HELPFUL PARISH INFORMATION
Visit our parish website – www.assumptionparish.org
Email: RelEd@assumptionparish.org

MASS SCHEDULE

Sunday: 7:00, 8:30 & 10:00 a.m., 12:15 & 5:30 p.m. (Sept-May)
Saturday: 8:00 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.
Weekdays: 7:00 a.m. & 12:05 p.m.
Holy Days: 5:30 p.m. Eve before, 7:00 a.m., 12:05 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.
National Holidays: 9:00 a.m.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Saturday: 4:15 – 5:00 p.m., or by appointment

PARISH OFFICE: 973-539-2141, FAX 973-984-0632

Comptroller: Robyn Morris
Office Hours: Monday – Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

DEACONS: Brian Beyerl, John Brandi, Michael Hanly, Elliott Stein

MUSIC MINISTRY: 973-539-2141 EXT. 19

Director: Claudia Nardi Organist: Karen Chiappini

HOLY ROOD CEMETERY OFFICE: 973-539-7501

Cemetery Director: Diana Loughman

Parish Sexton: Doug Reisch

A PARENT'S PRAYER

**Loving God,
You are the giver of all we possess,
the source of all of our blessings.
We thank and praise you.
Thank you for the gift of our children.**

**Help us to understand and patiently listen to them, and to learn from our mistakes.
Give us the patience and wisdom to be honorable guides for them.**

**Help us to set boundaries for them,
and yet encourage them to explore.
Give us the strength and courage to treat
each day as a fresh start.**

**May our children come to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you
have sent.**

**May your Holy Spirit help them to grow
in faith, hope, and love,
so they may know peace, truth, and goodness.**

**May their ears hear your voice.
May their eyes see your presence in all things.
May their lips proclaim your word.
May their hearts be your dwelling place.
May their hands do works of charity.
May their feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord.
Amen.**

**A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR...
ABOUT ATTENDING MASS...**

Dear Parents,

On April 6, 2013, in response to Pope Benedict XVI's call for the Year of Faith, our diocese held its first Diocesan Catechetical Convention in 40 years. Portions of this writing come from the reflection offered by Bishop Serratelli on that day. The full text titled, *Catechesis and Liturgy: An Unbreakable Bond*, was made available in the April 11, 2013 edition of the Beacon, our diocesan newspaper.

The work of catechizing our young can not be contained within a classroom. Knowing the faith and being formed as a Catholic cannot be realistically accomplished merely by sacramental preparation. Again and again during his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that the Christian life is not about a set of rules. Like the early Fathers of the Church, the pope made clear that the Christian life centers on the person of Christ and the need to conform to his image. A relationship, a friendship with Jesus, means not simply knowing about him, but truly knowing him. And, this takes time.

Our parish family of Assumption is delighted that you want your children to be Catholics. You have not neglected your duty to bring them for catechetical instruction. But, that's not enough. Being Catholic is never just learning about the teachings of the faith. It is also about living them. It means entering a personal relationship with Jesus within his Church. Catechesis is not simply the teaching of a set of truths and rules. Good catechesis is, ultimately, the communication of the living mystery of God. And, this mystery is lived and experienced in Liturgy, that is, the celebration of Mass.

The Mass and the celebration of sacraments is the source from which every Catholic drinks deeply of the Spirit of Christ. To attend programs to prepare for the sacraments, and then not participate in Sunday Mass is not to embrace the way of Christ. The Liturgy is the permanent catechesis of the Church.

The bulk of our classes meet on Sundays because families have told us that their children are involved in a myriad of after-school activities. We realize that this schedule adds an additional challenge to attending Mass on Sundays. But we are blessed here at Assumption to be able to offer not only options for Religious Education but also a number of Mass times for fulfilling your Sunday Mass obligation. Find what works for you and your family. For there can be no true formation and growth in the faith, no authentic catechesis, without devout participation in Sunday Mass.

Peace,

Linda Macios

**A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR...
ABOUT ORGANIZED SPORTS ON SUNDAYS**

Dear Parents,

While I appreciate and understand the desire for children to be involved in organized sports, I would like to call your attention to what seems to be the disproportionate amount of time spent on sports vs. Religious Education. Consider the number of hours that are devoted each week on practices and games vs. the number of hours spent each week on Religious instruction and Mass attendance. Which one needs to be nourished to last a lifetime? Consider this, do you bring them to sports practice but not let them play in the game? Why bring them to Religious Education but not attend Mass?

A few years back, an unusually large number of children left classes early one particular Sunday morning due to sporting events. The times varied...11 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 11:45 a.m. I've been told that part of the problem was that the rec soccer games were moved from Saturday to Sunday. Imagine the disruption to the class when, not just one, more than one student was pulled out of the same class but at different times. Why is it that they can leave class early but not arrive late to the field? What message is being sent to the child?

We spend only 30 hours per year with your child. Please do not bring them to class late or pull them out early. It is not fair to the catechist, the class, or your child! If you choose to miss class, it will count as an absence and I ask that you complete the missed lessons at home. Or, perhaps the after school group that is available for 3rd through 8th grade or *Fridays, Faith & Family* will be a better option to accommodate your schedule. If not, then I suggest you contact me to make arrangements for home schooling the material.

Yes, you are the primary educators who teach the faith by word and deed in your everyday lives; yes, we are here to partner with you by providing the formal component to Religious Education; but, we can only be so accommodating. Please consider your priorities; consider your responsibilities; consider your actions.

We seem to be allowing organized sports to organize our weekends! My family too, has been there/done that and, I might add, suffered some consequences. It may take only a grassroots movement to change things. And although it may sound like it, I am in no way judging anyone. In the end, you have to decide what is best. My intention is to offer this as food for thought and to maintain respect for the program, the catechists and the students.

Peace,

Linda Macios