Our Lady of Lourdes – Religious Education

233 N. Main Street

Milltown, NJ 08850

732 786-4411

Dear Parents and Guardians:

WELCOME to OUR LADY OF LOURDES RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM! You have already taken the first steps, through their baptism, by making them adopted children of God and by the example of living your life as Catholic Christians. We are happy that you have chosen us to partner with you to continue their faith journey, which will be enriched with the graces they will receive through the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation and beyond.

As partners in your child’s faith, we ask that you continue to be a living example of our faith to your child/children, because without you and your example, the Christian message falls on deaf ears. We urge you to bring your child/children to Sunday/Saturday night Eucharist (mass) each week. Pray with your child/children daily and talk about our Catholic faith as often as possible. Our Catholic faith has a rich history with many rituals and celebrations which needs to be shared.

Please read this handbook carefully so that you are familiar with our policies and expectations. Please feel free to call us at any time if you have questions or if you need assistance.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Young Father Edward Czarcinski

Parish Catechetical Leader Pastor Our Lady of Lourdes



# MISSION STATEMENT & GOALS

**Our Lady of Lourdes Parish** is a Community of the Roman Catholic Tradition in the Diocese of Metuchen.

Our mission is to work with the children and parents/guardians, of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, with the help of the Holy Spirit and through the intercessions of Our Lady of Lourdes; to develop a lifelong relationship with God, to know, love and serve God and their neighbors in their parish, in the community and beyond, to love one another as Jesus loves us, and to reach out to all people especially those who are in need.

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1. To partner with parents/guardians and expound on what has already been taught in the home about our faith.
2. To foster an environment in which each child can build a unique relationship with Jesus.

3). To present the Catholic faith in a manner children will understand at all age levels.

4). To recognize and understand the Grace received from the Sacraments and to develop an ongoing relationship with God throughout their lives.

5). To give children faith tools to fall back on in hard times throughout their life.

6). To increase their knowledge in a loving, living and merciful God.

7). To foster an understanding and the need for the Holy Mass and the Holy Eucharist through worship and prayer.

We ask you to be our faith partners in delivering the Christian message by example, knowledge and spirituality. Therefore we, Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education Program, and the parish community look to the family, the “**domestic church”**,as the most important Christian influence since it is in the home that the child learns that faith. Religious formation reinforces the traditions of faith and each child’s individual Roman Catholic identity while the parish supports the child in learning to celebrate that faith in community. We work in close collaboration with each family and the parish community to fulfill its purpose and goals.

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

**ARRIVAL:**

The door will be open 5 minutes before classes begin. Classes begin with opening prayer promptly on the half hour (Tues 6:30 Wed 5:30). Please arrive before classes begin, as late arrivals disrupt a prayerful attitude.

**DEPARTURE:**

The door will be open 5 minutes before classes end (Tues 7:55 & Wed 6:45). All children in grades 1 to 5 will be released by grade to a parent/guardian or authorized person in the school parking lot. For children in grades 6, 7, & 8, PCL or representative from the Religious Ed Program will accompany students to the parking lot**. All parents must park in the school parking lot and wait for their child. Do not drop off or tell your child you will pick them up anywhere other than in the school parking lot.**  If your child is leaving with someone other than you or an authorized adult on the registration form, you must send in a letter stating that you give your permission for your child to leave with said adult each time they leave with said adult. Children will not be allowed to leave with another child’s parent without You (the Parent) contacting the PCL. This is for your protection as well as your child’s.

**PARKING LOT ETIQUETTE**

1. **Drive Slowly:** Stick to 5-10 miles per hour.
2. **Enter:** Enter the parking lot to the driver’s right, continue going right to a parking space.
3. **Exit:** Exit the parking lot to the driver’s right.
4. **Dropping Off:** Children must be dropped off from the Passengers side of the vehicle **ONLY.**
5. **Do not:** Drive straight up to the school entrance/exit
6. **Stay Alert:** Keep an eye out for children, especially near the school entrances/exit.
7. **Use Your Signals:** Indicate your intentions to other drivers to avoid misunderstandings.
8. **Park Responsibly:** Parking in designated spaces and be mindful of cars around you.
9. **Be Patient:** During busy times, it’s easy to get frustrated. Patience can prevent accidents and keep everyone safe.

## POLICIES

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Children **“learn”** religion through experience; particularly by watching and imitating those they love best, their parents. Faith is something that is **“caught”** rather than **“taught”**.Classroom learning informs, gives data, and reinforces what the children should be experiencing outside of the classroom in the home.

Homework and quizzes are meaningful activities that supplement or reinforce the classroom experience. There will be time during the year when your child’s Faith Formation Catechist will assign supplemental work that will need your supervision. In addition, parents/guardians of children in all grades, are asked to teach their children the prayers assigned to each level (see *“Curriculum”*). At the discretion of the Faith Formation Catechist and Administration, a student may not be allowed to continue to the next level if he/she has not completed assigned work and memorized prayers.

### ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

Each faith experience at each grade level is done sequentially. Frequent absence or tardiness makes it impossible for your child to grasp concepts or faith experiences. Perhaps more importantly - a child who only comes occasionally will not have a sense of *“belonging”.* Developing a sense of community and an identity with the parish are vital aspects of our overall program. Likewise, if a child is habitually tardy, leaves early or misses more than 3 classes in a row, important concepts and classroom experiences are missed.

Students are expected to bring all materials, books, and folders weekly. We supply a small backpack for students to put all their work in.

Students are expected to be present for each session unless illness or other serious reasons prevents attendance.

Please email us if your child/children are going to be absent. If we do not hear from you your child will be marked with an Unexcused Absence.

 If your child becomes ill, you will be notified and asked to pick up your child in the Faith Formation Office. **Children are not allowed to call a parent to come pick them up if they do not feel well.** They must come to the Faith Formation Office so we can contact you.

**The Diocese of Metuchen allows only 3 absences per year.** If a student misses 3 or more sessions the child may be asked to complete summer home study under the guidance of a parent/guardian before advancing to the next level.

**If your child is absent, the missed lesson will be posted on the bulletin board inside the back porch of the rectory for you to pick up and complete with your child at home. The lesson must be signed by parent and returned at the next class.** **Completion of the lesson includes all questions as well as any activity in the lesson.** Lesson will be posted inside the back porch of the rectory no later than Thursday afternoon.

There may be times when a class may meet in-seat one week and at-home the following week, in this instance the at-home lesson will be sent home during the in-seat class. It is your responsibility to complete the lesson with your child, which includes all questions and activities in the lesson. The lesson must be signed by parent and returned at the next in-seat class. Failure to do so will be marked as an unexcused absence.

**Please do not schedule Doctor/Dentist appointments during class times. Please keep sport activities, gymnastics, dance, and any other activities to a minimum during class time. Too many late arrivals, early departures and missed classes could result in your child not advancing to the next grade.**

###  CELL PHONES

Students **are not permitted** to use cell phones during Faith Formation sessions, beginning with the time they enter the building and upon leaving the building. **Cel**l **phones must be turned OFF and kept out of sight for the entire duration of all Faith Formation classes and activities. Violation of these rules will result in the cell phone being confiscated and will only be returned to a parent/guardian.** **Second offense, student will be asked to withdraw from the program.**

**BEHAVIOR**

Jesus has asked us to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. As we all strive to follow Jesus, we ask that everyone show respect and courtesy to each other. **Parents/Guardians**, your encouragement and cooperation are expected in helping your children to live God’s law of love in the classroom. For students who have a problem with classroom behavior, home instruction may be a solution. This would require the parent to work with the child at home.

**Any student who is unwilling to cooperate with the “Student Code of Behavior” will be asked to withdraw from the Faith Formation Program. Parents/Guardians are expected to sign a contract on the registration form each year promising to follow the Handbook and Student Code of Behavior.**

## STUDENT CODE OF BEHAVIOR

 **Students are expected to show respect for all people in words and actions.**

 **Students must conform to the attendance policy stated in the handbook.**

 **Students should comply with the classroom rules set out by their Faith Formation Catechist in the interest of providing a good learning environment and experience for all students.**

 **Students must not do anything that could cause any physical harm to themselves or to another.**

 **Students must not destroy, deface, or remove property from the building.**

 **Students are responsible for completing all in-class and homework assignments to the best of their ability and according to the time schedule provided.**

 **Students who exhibit any inappropriate behavior, in judgement of the Administration, will be asked to withdraw from the program.**

### CALENDARS

Each family will receive a calendar, via email, of the year’s schedule, which includes when we do not have class as well as important activities. Please post the calendar in a prominent place at home and review it periodically.

If dates change you will receive an updated calendar via email. The same calendar will be posted on the Faith Formation (CCD) page on the parish website.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBERS (home and/or cell), EMAIL ADDRESSES

Please notify the Faith Formation Office immediately if you have changed your address, home telephone, cell phone or email address. It is vital to keep our records up to date in case of an emergency.

### CHILD ABUSE POLICY

New Jersey State Statures require that the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) be notified immediately if a Faith Formation Catechist and/or Parish Catechetical Leader suspects that a child has been abused.

### CUSTODY

In cases where the custody of a child/children has been restricted by the courts, a copy of the court document **MUST BE ON FILE IN OUR OFFICE.** Likewise, in case of divorce and/or separation we need a copy of the court document regarding custody arrangements for our files even though you may have designated said person as an Authorized Adult to pick up your child/children. If custody arrangements change we need a copy of the current court document.

Our Lady of Lourdes abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment. Thus, non-custodial parents will be given access to academic records and to information regarding the academic progress of their child/children, **unless there is a court order specifically stating that the non-custodial parent is denied access to such information.**

### DISMISSAL

Dismissal will be grade by grade. **PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST MEET THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN IN THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT ONLY. Children are not permitted to meet their parents/guardians on the street outside of the school parking lot roaming around looking for their ride home.** **CHILDREN ARE NOT ALLOWED TO WALK HOME ALONE. PARENT OR AUTHORIZED ADULT MUST ACCOMPANY A CHILD TO WALK HOME.**

**If for some urgent reason, a child needs to be excused early, a note must be given in advance to the Office, or**

**their Catechist with the reason for early dismissal.** Before dismissal, parents/guardians must come to the Faith Formation Office to sign their child/children out. Do Not call your child and expect them to leave the classroom when you arrive. The PCL will bring your child to the door to meet you. **TWO EARLY DISMISSALS EQUAL ONE ABSENCE.**

### FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills may be conducted during the year to ensure the safety of our students. In case of a real emergency, children will be taken to a prearranged evacuation area and parents will be notified via telephone.

**EMERGENCY CLOSING.**

In case of inclement weather, announcements of closing will be made on the Parish Facebook page no later than noon that day. **Please check** **the parish Facebook page (Our Lady of Lourdes, Milltown). PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE RECTORY. If Milltown schools are closed or Milltown school have an early dismissal or Milltown afterschool activities are cancelled, Faith Formation class will be cancelled. There may be times when other emergencies arise. In those instances, Milltown schools will be notified of any emergency closings before parents are notified. If your child attends school outside of Milltown we will try to contact you directly. We ask that parents/ guardians please check the parish Facebook page (Our Lady of Lourdes, Milltown). We will make every effort to contact parents/guardians in case of non-snow related emergencies before classes begin when possible.**

### FOOD ALLERGIES

Because there are several children with severe and potentially life-threatening allergies to peanuts, tree nuts and gluten, our policy is that **NO food or drink is to be brought in by any student.** It is the parent’s/guardian’s responsibility to inform the Faith Formation staff of your child’s allergy condition on the registration form.

Parents **must** provide our office with a written list of “safe foods” for special classroom celebrations. We do allow students to bring in water in non-breakable containers.

 **LATENESS/TARDINESS**

Lateness, being tardy, interferes greatly with a child’s progress and is disruptive to both the catechist as well as the entire class. Young children become disoriented and upset when they arrive late. Classmates become disoriented, which disrupts the flow of the experience and lesson. Late students may have difficulty grasping the entire lesson being taught. We understand that some students come from outside activities that may cause your child to be tardy, and it is difficult to arrive at the specified start of class; therefore, we **ask that parents/guardians make every effort to arrive no later than TEN minutes after the posted start of class. Students who arrive more than TEN minutes late, more than two times will incur one absence each time they are late!**

### PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress reports may be distributed in mid-January. It is a good policy to discuss the report with your child.

**Please be sure to sign the progress report promptly and return it the following week to your child’s Catechist.**

You may request a transcript if you are moving out of the parish.

###  SERVICE

ALL of our Faith Formation Catechists and Aides are volunteers. We are most grateful for their dedication and the amount of time and preparation they give to this ministry. Our parish program serves approximately 75 children yearly. Please consider volunteering as a Faith Formation Catechist, Substitute or Classroom Aide. **If you are interested in volunteering please contact the Faith Formation Office at 732 786-4411.**

**Please note: As in the public school system, the Dioceses of Metuchen require fingerprinting and background checks of all those over age 18 who regularly come in contact with minors. Fees are refunded by the parish.**

## CURRICULUM

### WORSHIP

**Family worship at Mass is the most important part of our curriculum.** As the primary and principal educators of your children, it is important that you are faithful to the Church. Worship with your children at a weekend Liturgy. Let them see young and old alike at Mass in communal prayer and celebration. Remember that in most cases (due to age or distance) they cannot bring themselves, so you, who are their greatest influence, must show them the way. **Stations of the Cross is not an optional part of our program. Each child must attend at least once during Lent. Attendance is marked on their permanent record.**

**PRAYER**

In each grade level, parents are asked to teach and help their child/children memorize the following prayers:

**Grade One:** Sign of the Cross ~ Our Father ~ Hail Mary ~ Glory Be ~ Angel of God ~ Grace Before Meals ~ Act of

Contrition

**Grade Two and Three:** All above plus ~ Basic Ten Commandments ~ Examination of Conscience ~ Mass Responses

**Grade Four and Grade Five:** All above plus ~ Basis Prayers of the Rosary (Apostle Creed, Fatima Prayer, Hail Holy

Queen)

**Grade Six and Seven:** All above plus ~ Beatitudes ~ Mysteries of the Rosary ~ Nicene Creed ~ Order of the Mass ~ Gifts of the Holy Spirit

**Grade Eight:** All above plus ~ Spiritual and Corporal Virtues ~ All Prayers of the Mass and Responses

### Empowering God’s Children

The Diocese of Metuchen utilizes the Virtus program entitled “Empowering God’s Children” to comply with the ‘safe environment’ mandate found in Article 12 of the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” from the USCCB.

Each grade level is presented with two Empowering God’s Children lessons per year.

Safe Environment lessons will be taught by parents/guardians at home, the Parish Catechetical Leader will provide the appropriate Parent-Specific Lesson Plan Instructions (via email) to the parents along with the Parent Acknowledgment Form. Parent/guardian should print and return the signed Parent Acknowledgement Form to the Parish Catechetical Leader once the lessons have been completed.

If the parents/guardians choose to opt out their child from the Safe Environment program, the Parish Catechetical Leader will provide the Opt-out form to the parents/guardians. Parent/guardian will need to contact Parish Catechetical Leader for this form. This Opt-out form should be completed and returned to the Parish Catechetical Leader.

## COURSE OF STUDY

### Level I First Reconciliation/First Eucharist (children of all ages, typically Grade 1, or new to Catholic Faith Formation)

***Finding God: Our Response to God’s Gifts*** is rooted in Ignatian spirituality, a practical spirituality for daily life with a 500-year-old tradition. Named for [St. Ignatius of Loyola,](https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/saints/saints-stories-for-all-ages/saint-ignatius-of-loyola-1491-1556) the founder of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits. Ignatian spirituality is a pathway to a deep prayer life, good decision-making, and the lives of service to others.

The *Finding God* program guides children to engage in imaginative prayer, a traditional way to encounter God through the use of Scripture. It also engages the imagination through Exploring Faith through Art prints and recorded Scripture stories. In doing so, children begin to learn that God can speak to them through their imaginations, thoughts, and feelings, and that God desires a personal relationship with them, as he does for all of us.

### Level 2 First Reconciliation/First Eucharist (children of all ages who have completed Level 1 First Reconciliation/First Eucharist Faith Formation)

**Dynamic Catholic “Blessed First Reconciliation and Blessed First Eucharist”**captures children’s hearts and minds with ample active learning opportunities. Scripture and doctrine are foundational to the program, as is prayer, which is offered throughout each chapter and helps young learners develop a prayerful relationship with God.

Lessons are explored through reading, conversation, prayer, and fun-filled activities that appeal to all learning styles.

Each chapter follows a four-part structure—Engage, Explore, Reflect, and Respond which fully involves both the heart and the mind. Scripture stories and links to Scripture enrich the lesson and connect children to the Bible. Prayers fundamental features of this program are presented in multiple forms and with child-friendly text.

The sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated individually in January on a Saturday morning. Parents will attend with their child between 9:00am and 10:30am. The date will be noted on the Important Dates which can be found on the parish website.. As we get closer to the date, parents will be able to select their time slot for their child to come to the church to make their First Reconciliation privately.

There will be a First Holy Eucharist Retreat during the month of March. This is not an optional event and is to be attended by both a Parent/Guardian and child.

The sacrament of First Eucharist is typically celebrated on Saturday in April or May in the morning.

**Children who have completed Leve1 1 & Level 2 typically Grades 3, 4, & 5**

**The Pflaum Gospel Weeklies** are a liturgically based catechetical program that helps parents participate in their important role as the first educators of your children.

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies is a systematic liturgical catechetical program centered in Jesus Christ. The program interweaves the seasons and celebrations of the Liturgical Year with the unchanging authentic doctrine of the Catholic Church. Each of the program’s 32 lessons focuses on a unique doctrinal theme that connects the Sunday Gospel to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This guarantees that every year, Sacred Scripture, and Sacred Doctrine are introduced and reinforced at an appropriate age level.

Grade Level Thematic Connections. The Gospel Weeklies method (liturgical catechesis) and format (weekly student lessons) differ from a traditional religion textbook.

The Gospel Weeklies coincide with each weeks Sunday Mass Gospel Reading. Weekly lessons give an insight into the Gospel Readings the week before what is proclaimed at the coming Sunday mass.

**Children who have completed Leve1 1 & Level 2 typically Grade 6**

***Finding God: Our Response to God’s Gifts*** is rooted in Ignatian spirituality, a practical spirituality for daily life with a 500-year-old tradition. Named for [St. Ignatius of Loyola,](https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/saints/saints-stories-for-all-ages/saint-ignatius-of-loyola-1491-1556) the founder of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits. Ignatian spirituality is a pathway to a deep prayer life, good decision-making, and the lives of service to others.

The *Finding God* program guides children to engage in imaginative prayer, a traditional way to encounter God through the use of Scripture. It also engages the imagination through Exploring Faith through Art prints and recorded Scripture stories. In doing so, children begin to learn that God can speak to them through their imaginations, thoughts, and feelings, and that God desires a personal relationship with them, as he does for all of us.

### Level I Confirmation (typically Grade 7)

Our Confirmation Program begins in Grade 7 with “Decision Point” by Dynamic Catholic.

“DECISION POINT” is the first Confirmation program specifically developed to engage young Catholics in a meaningful conversation about the genius of Catholicism. It teaches and inspires teens to respond to God’s grace, and it’s changing hundreds of thousands of young lives.

Students in Level 1 Confirmation will choose the name which they will take at Confirmation. At the same time each student, with the help of their parents, will choose a sponsor for Confirmation. The name for Confirmation and Sponsor must be chosen before the Covenant Signing, which takes place in January of Level 1 (Grade 7).

Students and their Sponsors, in Level 7, will attend the Covenant Signing beginning their Journey toward the Sacrament of Confirmation. In Level 7 and 8 there will be special Liturgical celebrations for Student and Sponsor to attend together to strengthen the student on their Journey toward Confirmation.

### Level 2 Confirmation (typically Grade 8)

In Level 2 Confirmation students will be exposed to two dynamic programs one by Ascension Press “Altaration” and “YOUCAT” distributed by Ignatius Press. “Altaration” gives the student an understanding of what we do during the mass. “YOUCAT” is the Catechism of the Catholic Church for adolescents and young people. The most important elements of the faith are summarized briefly and comprehensibly in a question-and-answer format. The YOUCAT was approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome and officially published by the Austrian Bishop’s Conference. With more than 5 million copies sold, it is one of the best-selling Catholic books in the world and can be used by adults as well. Level 2 Confirmation students will receive a Bible which will be used in conjunction with the **Altaration”** and **“YOUCAT”** programs.

In the fall of Level 2 (typically November) Candidates and their Sponsor attend a Mass and Movie together which gives them an opportunity to share their faith in a unique way.

All Confirmation students must attend a Retreat sometime in the spring before Confirmation (this is mandated by the Diocese of Metuchen) .

The Sacrament of Confirmation will take place at the end of Level 2 (typically students 8th grade) which may not be celebrated at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. We may need to join Our Lady of Peace in North Brunswick, due to low student numbers.

#### HOME SCHOOL CATECHESIS

Under certain circumstances, the Pastor will allow a student to be on Home School Instruction. To be placed on Home School Instruction, parent must call the Pastor, currently, Father Edward Czarcinski to be placed on home instruction. **Home School Catechesis is available for those in Grades 3, 4, & 5, only unless specified by Pastor.** All book fees apply. Parents are responsible for completing the lesson with their child to ensure that the child understands the content of each lesson. Parents will need to sign off that the child completed the lesson with them. All students on the Home School Catechesis Program will be aske**d** to and are expected to participate in special activities and all requirements regarding mass attendance as well as Stations of the Cross. Those on Home School Instruction will need to pick up material weekly. Lessons will be posted weekly inside the back porch of the rectory no later than Thursday afternoon. Each lesson will be checked by the Parish Catechetical Leader and posted on the bulletin board inside the back porch of the rectory. Completion of the lesson includes all questions as well as any activities in the lesson. Lessons must be completed by the date on the top of each lesson. Completed lesson must be placed in the basket in the back of the church during the Sunday /Saturday mass. If parents do not follow up with picking up and completing material weekly, student will be considered withdrawn from the program. The Parents will need to contact the Pastor to be reenrolled into the Religious Ed Program. Failing to do so, will result in the student being dropped from the program and will need to repeat the year which was incomplete.