



***Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church***  
**Grades K-5**  
**2011-2012 *Religious Education***  
***Parent Handbook***

Dear Parents,

September, 2011

Thank you for helping your children become closer to Jesus by signing them up for R.E. this year! The volunteers involved with your child will do their best to teach your child the Catholic-Christian faith by word and example. However, as you know, you are the primary religious educator of your child.

The best way you can support our volunteers at home is to pray with your children at dinner and bedtime, read them a Bible story, constantly remind your child that they are loved by Jesus, and attend Mass as a family on Sundays.

We would ask that you show an interest in the R.E. class, attend the Family Masses, your child's prayer service or meeting, the parent workshops, Christmas Sing-A-Long, and Songfest 2012. We also will appreciate your participation in the service projects.

Thank you in advance for your support and prayers. May our Lord Jesus be with you as you raise your gift from God to be a child of God.

In His Name,

Deacon Tim

## **Parish Mission Statement**

*Our Lady of Mercy Parish is a Catholic Community whose mission is to continue the ministry of Jesus to bring forth the Kingdom of God. We do this by striving to be and become a nurturing, celebrating, and serving community that is committed to hospitality and sacrificial giving, vibrant liturgies, quality Catholic religious education, holistic faith formation, and compassionate outreach.*

## **Religious Education Staff**

Deacon Tim Kueper

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**Website: [www.olmercy.com/Faith/K-5/K51.htm](http://www.olmercy.com/Faith/K-5/K51.htm)**

**Report absences before class begins:**

**630 - 851 - 3444, extension 201.**

## Emergency Closing Procedures

In the event of severe weather or emergency classes may be cancelled. To determine if classes are cancelled please check one of the following options after 12 noon:

1. Check your e-mail if you have signed up for [www.EmergencyClosings.com](http://www.EmergencyClosings.com) OR
2. Check the parish website ([www.olmercy.com](http://www.olmercy.com)) OR
3. Call 630-851-3444 ext.201 or ext. 222 and listen to the recorded message OR
4. Check the emergency closing information located on radio stations WGN 720 AM and WBBM 78 AM

Please check your yellow “R.E. refrigerator calendar” for a schedule of R.E. classes.

### **Family Masses this year are:**

Nov. 21st at 7p.m. for Monday classes

Jan. 24th at 7p.m. for Tuesday classes

March 14th at 7p.m. for Wednesday classes

# Traffic Safety Guidelines

*The Safety of our children is a most important concern for all who participate in the Religious Education Program. In order to ensure a safe and orderly procedure for leaving and picking up students, please read the following directions carefully.*

## **To drop off students:**

### **Grades 1—5**

Form a line in the back of the parking lot. When your car reaches the designated sidewalk area set off by cones, let your child out of the car and then pull away allowing for the next car to pull up. Parent traffic volunteers should be available to help let your children out of the car.

### **Grade K**

Kindergarten students need to be walked to the multi-purpose room by a parent.

## **To pick up students:**

Students need to be picked up in the multi-purpose room of the parish center by a parent unless there is special permission. Please go all the way into the multi-purpose room, greet the teacher and then walk your child to the car. We strongly advise parents to hold on to your children or have them hold on to you while walking through the parking lot.

- No one should ever walk through the drop-off line of cars.**
- Do not leave vehicles parked next to the sidewalk.**
- Vehicles may not be left running and unattended.**
- Please be courteous to fellow parents and volunteers**

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# Curriculum Guide / Service Projects

## **Kindergarten:**

This program introduces children to basic Christian beliefs: God creates the universe and, especially, creates each of us. Jesus is God's gift to us. As a beloved son or daughter of God, we are called to respond to others in love.

Service Project: Making Get Well cards for Copley Hospital patients.

## **Grade 1:**

Children explore the Sunday worship experience. They receive a basic orientation to liturgy and prayer, as well as a sense of community. They are introduced to God the Father, as presented by Jesus in the Gospels, and to God's love and mercy. They are introduced to both the Gift of the Eucharist and to Forgiveness.

Service Project: Making Get Well cards for OLM parishioners.

## **Grade 2:**

At Mass we listen to the Word of God and learn from the homily. The Mass is the celebration of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; we believe Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. Children who are in their second year of religious education receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in January and their First Communion in May.

Service Project: Making Welcoming Cards for new parishioners.

## Curriculum Guide (Cont.)

### Grade 3:

The Church is presented as a community that believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, believes in the grace we receive through the sacraments, and is committed to charity. As members of the Church we try to serve the needs of others.

Service Project: Making cards for Service men and women.

### Grade 4:

God is revealed through creation and the people of God in the Old and New Testaments of Scripture. Jesus continues to live among us as the Spirit who is our guide and source of strength. Our relationship with God is strengthened through the sacraments.

Service Project: "Senior Friend Project" with OLM Seniors.

### Grade 5:

We review the sacraments of the Church: Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

Service Project: "Alden Service Project" This project involves the fifth grade students (parents can also attend) meeting as a group at Alden of Waterford playing games with the Senior residents and then having a short social. This is from 6:30 to 7:30pm.

Tues. 4:30 session on Tues. Oct. 18th

Wed. 4:30 session on Wed. Nov. 9th

Tues. 6:30 session on Tues. Dec. 6th

Wed. 6:30 session on Wed. Jan. 25th

Mon. 4:30 session on Mon. Feb. 13th

### **R.C.I.C (Sacrament Class)**

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (Sacrament Class) is available for any young person who has not been baptized. This class is also for baptized children who have not received the sacraments of First Communion and Reconciliation and are in third grade thru eighth grades. Classes prepare the children and family for sacraments and the young person is received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil Mass.

Preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Reconciliation are joint efforts of the parents, the students and the parish community. Parents should be involved in the child's preparation through their home prayer life, regular attendance at weekend Mass, and attendance at parent meetings for each sacrament.

### **Parent Workshops and Early Dismissal:**

October 24th, 25th, and 26th

February 6th, 7th, and 8th

### **Family Masses 7:00pm in the Church**

Nov. 21st for Monday Classes

Jan.24th for Tuesday Classes

March 14th for Wednesday classes

# Family Sacramental & Enrichment Events

## **Kindergarten**

Prayer Service, Saturday, March 24th from 9:00 –9:45am..

## **First Grade**

Prayer Service, Thursday, Dec. 15th from 7:00-7:45 pm.

## **Second Grade:**

First Communion Parent Meeting Oct. 20th or Oct. 27th from 7:00 to 8:00pm. in the Church

First Reconciliation Meeting and Speaker for parents and children  
Thursday, Jan.12th from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

First Reconciliation Celebrations – Sat. Jan.21st  
from 9:00 to 10:30am and 11:00 am. to 12:30pm.

## **Third Grade:**

Prayer Service, Thursday, Nov.10th from 7to 7:45pm.

## **Fourth Grade:**

Prayer Service, Thursday, Feb. 9th from 7 to 7:45pm.

## **Fifth Grade:**

Prayer Service, Thursday, March 1st from 7 to 7:45 pm.

## **Sacrament Classes: (3-8)**

Parent Meeting on Nov. 9th during the regular class time

**Family Mass Schedule is on p. 7 and Safe Environment p. 9.  
Parent Workshops and Early Dismissal schedule is on p. 7.**

# Safe Environment Program for Students

The Bishops of the United States, in response to the tragedy of sexual abuse of children and teens, have mandated the following program to provide a safe environment for students who are involved in parish programs.

All parish staff members and any volunteer who is in contact with children/youth undergo a police background check.

All parish staff members and volunteers who are in contact with children/youth attend a 3 hour educational program on “Protecting God’s Children”.

The Joliet Diocese has mandated an educational program for all children/youth involved in parish religious education programs. We will offer these presentations again this year.

The goal of the program is to provide a way for your child to learn to recognize and respond appropriately and assertively to improper sexual touch and invasion of personal boundaries.

## **Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade (including Sacrament Classes)**

Saturday, November 19th, Room 217 or the Multi-Purpose Room

- 9:00 to 9:30 a.m. for kindergarten and first graders
- 9:45 to 10:15 a.m. for second and third graders
- 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. for fourth and fifth graders

Every parish is required to provide this educational program. Your participation, and that of your children is **optional**. A parent should have signed a form stating your intention to go with your child to the presentation or choosing not to participate at placement time. At least one parent must accompany children to K – Grade 5 presentations. Each presentation is age appropriate to the specific group.

# Policies and Procedures

## **Attendance**

We believe that attending RE class is important for the following reasons:

Children learn about their faith, first from their parents, but also from other adults, such as the catechists in the RE program. The class focuses not only on the facts of the Catholic faith, but also on developing one's relationship to Jesus and to other people.

The RE class gives students a chance to develop an awareness of the Church community; class provides a place to share and discuss one's faith with other students. This is most effective if the student attends class on a consistent basis.

With this in mind we hope that students attend all classes unless they are ill, or an emergency occurs in the family. In our opinion, a sports activity does not constitute an emergency. Students are expected to be punctual out of respect to the teachers and fellow students. In the event of illness or a family emergency, it is the responsibility of the parents to call the RE office before class begins.

**Report absences before class begins: 630 - 851 - 3444, extension 201.**

If no call is received and the student is absent, parents will be contacted by office volunteers in compliance with diocesan policy. Three absences will usually indicate the need for a call to the parents by the Catechist or Deacon Tim. Students may incur no more than five absences over the course of the year (which is over 20% of the classes), unless there are extenuating circumstances. After five absences parents will be contacted by Deacon Tim to evaluate future attendance in the R.E. program.

## **Policies and Procedures (Cont.)**

### **Early Dismissal**

No child will be dismissed without a written note from a parent or guardian which is brought to the RE office before class. Only the RE staff may give permission for early dismissal. Your child will be called to the RE office upon arrival of the parent/guardian. No student will be allowed to leave the parish center unescorted. The person who is picking up the student for early dismissal must come to the RE office to sign the student out.. Please inform the RE office in writing when a person other than a parent is designated to retrieve your child from class.

### **Discipline**

In order for each member of a class to learn and grow in their faith, students will:

- be respectful of both teachers and fellow students
- be respectful of the property of other students
- listen to the instructions of the teacher or aide

Parents are asked to cooperate with catechists regarding appropriate behavior in class. If disciplinary problems arise with a student the teacher will inform the parents. If the student is sent to the RE office to speak with the staff person in charge, parents will be informed. If a problem continues, Deacon Tim will call the parents to discuss the situation and a behavior plan may be set up.

### **Health and Safety**

Please inform the RE staff of any special needs your child may have. This includes learning needs, allergies or medical situations that we need to be aware of to better care for your child. Medication may not be dispensed by the catechists or office staff. If students need medication, parents must make the necessary arrangements for this situation. 11

## Diocese of Joliet

### Parent Guide: Understanding & Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Diocese of Joliet is committed to promoting an environment that will help ensure the safety of children and young people. If you have participated in a *Protecting God's Children* session, you have already received much information.

This brochure is the next step in our efforts to help keep children safe. You are the primary educators of your children, so it is important that you talk with them personally about their safety. The material in this brochure is designed to give you background information about sexual abuse, to inform you about other ways to keep your children safe, and to provide you with tips for talking to your children.

Staff members at the Religious Education Office (815-727-6411) and at the Catholic Schools Office (815-838-2181) are available to help you. Please call them if you have any questions about the material contained in this brochure or if you need more information.

Sincerely,  
Sister Judith A. Davies, OSF

#### **SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

##### **What Is Child Sexual Abuse?**

Child sexual abuse is the use of a child for sexual purposes by an adult or an older, more powerful person, including an older child. *It is a crime in all 50 states.* Sexual abuse is called incest when it happens between family members.

##### **Who Are the Offenders?**

- Most sexual abuse is committed by a person the child knows and trusts.
- Offenders come from all walks of life and from all social and ethnic groups.
- Offenders actively work to develop trusting relationships with children.

##### **Who Is At Risk?**

- Sexual abuse happens to boys and girls from all social and ethnic groups from infancy to 18 years.
- Young children are especially at risk.

##### **Why Don't Children Tell?**

Some reasons children do not tell are:

- They have been taught to obey adults.
- They promised or have been bribed to keep the abuse secret.
- They have been threatened by the offender and are afraid to tell.
- They feel guilty because they believe that the abuse is their fault and are ashamed to tell.
- They are confused because the offender is someone whom they know and trust.
- They have been convinced that the abuse is normal or okay.
- They are too young to know the touching is not appropriate, especially if someone they know and trust does it.
- They don't know the words to tell about the abuse.

##### **Do Children Lie About Abuse?**

Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. More often, they are afraid to tell.

#### **PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN**

Here are some things you can do:

- Educate yourself about sexual abuse.
- Learn and practice specific guidelines for protecting children from sexual abuse.
- Talk to your children about touching safety.  
(See *Teaching Personal Safety Skills*.)
- Teach your children personal safety rules before they reach school age.
- Allow your children to participate in personal safety instruction.

### **Safety with Babysitters**

- Ask babysitters for references and check them.
- Interview babysitters in person. Ask how they discipline children. Ask *what if* questions to find out how they would cope with tricky situations.
- Inform them about your family safety rules, including touching safety rules.
- Set other rules for the sitter. (TV, phone use, and friends)
- Make surprise visits to check on them.
- Ask your children what happens when a babysitter is there and whether they like him or her. If they don't like the babysitter, ask for reasons.

*Follow these guidelines even if the babysitter is a family member.*

### **Guidelines for Single Parents**

If you are a single parent and are dating, this brings unfamiliar adults into your home.

- Let your new friend know your family's safety rules, especially about touching.
- Tell him or her that your children have been taught to tell if any of these rules are broken.
- Don't leave your children alone with a new friend until you know him or her well.
- Ask your children if they like the new person and why or why not.
- Watch your children's reactions for clues to how they feel.

### **TEACHING PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS**

Talking openly and honestly sets a tone that helps children feel safe and allows them to talk to you about anything. *Talk with them about touching and private body parts.* Here are some tips:

- Make touching safety a part of your family's safety rules.
- Take advantage of everyday teachable moments: bath time, physical play situations, when a child expresses curiosity about his body or sexuality, and before a child goes out without you.
- Read a book or view a video on touching safety together with your child.
- Revisit the conversation. Don't just talk about this important matter once!

### **Teach Your Children These Rules**

- It is not okay for someone to touch your private body parts.
- It is not okay for someone to touch his or her own private body parts in front of you or to ask you to touch them.
- It is not okay for someone to ask you to take your clothes off or to take photos or videos of you with your clothes off.
- It is not okay for someone to show you photos or videos of people without their clothes on.

### **Types of Touches**

Teach your children the names of their private body parts. Help them understand that they are the *boss* of their own body. Explain that there are three kinds of touches:

- **Safe touches.** These are touches that keep children safe and are good for their bodies. Safe touches include hugging, holding hands, pats on the back, and an arm around the shoulder. Safe touches can also include touches that might hurt, such as removing a splinter.
- **Unsafe touches.** These are touches that hurt children's bodies, feelings, or spirits, for example, hitting, pushing, pinching, and kicking. This also includes the sexual touches described in the previous section. Teach children that these kinds of touches are not okay.
- **Unwanted touches.** These are touches that might be safe but a child doesn't want. These include the sexual touches discussed earlier. It is okay for a child to say *no* to an unwanted touch, even if it is from a familiar person.

### **For Young Children**

Young children remember better how to protect themselves from sexual abuse when they learn and practice a few simple steps so they don't have to wonder what to do, or have to stop and think. Children can be taught to follow these three steps when someone breaks the touching rules.

- Say *no* or words that mean *no*.
- Get away.
- Tell a grown-up.

Expand your child's understanding of the third step by teaching the following:

- Never keep secrets about touching.
- Always tell about a touching problem even if it has gone on for a long time.
- Keep telling until someone believes you.

### **Teach Assertiveness Skills**

Children who are assertive are better able to use the safety steps effectively and resist unsafe situations. Assertive behavior includes standing up straight, looking directly at the person and using a strong, clear voice.

### **Safety on the Internet**

It is important for parents to educate children about Internet risks and monitor use of the Internet. Some rules:

- Never give out personal information or use a credit card online without your parent's permission.
- Never share passwords with anyone.
- Never arrange to meet someone in person you have met online unless parents go along with you.
- Never reply to uncomfortable messages. Always tell parents about them.

### **For Teens or Pre-Teens**

Honest, open discussions about sexual values/limits, healthy relationships, and personal safety can make a difference. Teens should:

- Recall that human sexuality is a graced gift from God. Intimate touching and sexual intercourse are morally appropriate only within marriage.
- Know their own wishes, limits and values, and clearly communicate them to their dates. They should listen to their date's limits and respect them.
- Notice if their date is not respecting their limits and wishes or if their date's behavior doesn't seem right.
- Trust their feelings and intuition. If they are feeling pressured into sex, they have the right to say *no*.
- Be assertive and act immediately if their limits are reached, even if it means making a scene.
- Understand that it is never too late to say *no* and never too late to hear *no*.

### **More Safety Tips for Teens**

- Avoid drugs or alcohol, which reduce one's ability to think clearly and manage one's behavior.
- Always pour your own beverages at a party and keep them in sight. Date-rape drugs can be put in drinks and are often undetectable.
- Go to parties with a buddy and look after each other. Always have a safe way home.
- Meet a date in a public place or stay around others.
- Tell someone about the date, where it will take place, and what time it will end.
- Take a cell phone along if possible.

### **The Bottom Line**

- *No* means *no* whenever a person feels pressured about anything and it should be respected!
- If a person says *no* and the other person continues to touch or to force touch it is abusive behavior.
- If a person forces another person to have sexual intercourse, it is rape, a criminal offense.

### **Safe Families**

Being a parent is one of life's greatest challenges. However, if you have a strong relationship built on a foundation of trust, and your children have skills in self-management, relationship-building, and problem-solving, they are more likely to make safe choices and set personal safety boundaries.

*For more tips for parents, please visit <http://www.cfchildren.org/parents/parenttips/>*

***If someone has been abused, contact the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services at 1-800-25ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). The content of this document is adapted from "Keeping Children Safe from Abuse: Tips for Parents and Caregivers" © 2004 Committee for Children www.cfchildren.org With permission from Committee for children and from the Diocese of Springfield, IL.***

