

*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin
Mary Parish
Religious Education Program*

Parent Handbook

(Revised 5-22-19 and Subject to Change)

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish

Dear Parents,

Welcome and thank you for choosing to send your child to our Parish Religious Education Program! Your decision to enroll your child, reflects your ongoing commitment to the Catholic Faith, which you first publicly professed, at your child's Baptism. It is the parent's primary responsibility to raise faith-filled children. Your parish is most willing to assist you in your vocation as Catholic Parents!

As Catholic Christians, we truly believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. In thanksgiving and in love, we wish to share The Good News with everyone, like the Apostles' did! Religious Education is two-fold: learning our faith, but most importantly having a relationship with our Savior and Our King, Jesus Christ. This is evidenced in personal and communal prayer life: Holy Mass and other liturgies. Liturgy is "the work of the people" and refreshes us with God's Own Self! During the years of faith formation, children mature in their awareness of Jesus, and in their faithful participation in His saving works. The Sacraments, the visible signs of God's Presence among us, are opportunities to journey ever closer with The Lord who established their use in Scripture. So, while the sacraments are always God's free gift to us, they require on the part of the recipient, that he/she be aware of, and open to, the gift being given, and be seriously committed to a life completely dedicated to Jesus Christ.

The Religious Education Program at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, teaches The Fullness of the Faith. This is delineated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a must for your Catholic home library.

*Children learn what they live. Our school is a school of learning and love. We all make mistakes, but reverence for God is paramount and the First Commandment.

*Our Archdiocese of Philadelphia requires that Liturgy be part of Religious Education. This is participative. The children love to try out the church roles of Lector, Altar-Server, Music Minister and learn how to faithfully assist during liturgies through prayer and song from the pew.

*Course content presents the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, via Scripture and Tradition, at age-appropriate levels. This is according to the Archdiocese.

*We will challenge our students to live the fullness of Christian life. Our Handbook has guidelines for the best possible outcomes and our expectations of participating families.

Teresa Leszczynski

Coordinator of Religious Education

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church

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A People called to know Jesus, to love Jesus, to serve Jesus

School Year 2019-2020

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION

To the Parents, Faculty and Staff of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School and
Catholic Youth Faith Formation (CCD),

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School has developed and maintains an Asbestos Inspection and Management Plan as required by the Asbestos Emergency Response Act of 1986 (AHERA). A copy of the plan is available for your inspection at our administrative office during regular office hours.

For additional information, please contact the Assumption BVM Parish Office.

Sincerely,

Rev. Scott Brockson

Pastor

Philosophy and Mission

PHILOSOPHY

Our mission is to complete a child's education with religious instruction. The Catechists and Aides in this program are facilitators in your child's religious journey, educating them in the Life of Christ and faith-sharing with them.

Since your child's Baptism, you promised to make it your constant care, to bring your child up in the practice of their faith. The light of Christ was entrusted to you, to be kept burning brightly. Participation in a dynamic religious education program assists you in your pledge.

OUR MISSION

To strive alongside our Program Parents, to make the students' experience of living as a Catholic, full and authentic. We are obliged to convey the rubrics of Catholicism, which would include at the foremost of importance, attendance at Holy Mass every Sunday, and the *6 Holy Days of Obligation*:

January 1st ~ Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

Moveable Date ~ Ascension Thursday, approximately 40 days after Easter Sunday

August 15th ~ Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

November 1st ~ Feast of All Saints

December 8th ~ Immaculate Conception

December 25th ~ Christmas Day

Prayer at school and home, promotes a Catholic Way of Life for your family. Religious Education and the practice of the faith, are an effective way of leading children to a joy and respect-filled life, via a closer walk with Jesus and His Bride, The Church.

Parent/Guardians

INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents and guardians must weigh seriously their obligation to educate their children in an atmosphere of love and respect for God and others. The home is the first school of the social virtues and is essential to any well-ordered society. Active cooperation of parents and guardians is expected and required as follows:

~Please do not drop your child off, more than 10 minutes prior to start of class. There are not enough adults on site, prior to that time. Also, please arrive in time, as it really affects our schedule! Students arriving more than 5 minutes late, will have trouble getting into the locked school as we will have begun our activities.

~ Please assist your child to be prepared for class, regarding materials needed, as well as having their personal needs especially snacks, drinks and bathroom trips attended to, prior to drop-off. There are numerous food allergies, some of which are life-threatening. Additionally, we share the space with day students and do not wish to expose them to undue discomfort. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia recommends that a classroom is a "Snack Free Zones" at all times. For a special celebration, which includes special foods, the event shall be held in the Parish Center, if arrangements are made with the school ahead of time. A parent or guardian of a student with a food allergy must be present at such gatherings or provide a snack for his/her child(ren).

~Please assist your child's spiritual and moral development, through careful attention to his/her progress report cards, supervision of home study, and cooperation with the catechist in matters of academic activities, appropriate behavior, and attendance at weekly Mass. Gospels and other Mass content is discussed during both class and prayer services. Students feel disconnected and even anxious, when they cannot understand or contribute to these topics central to the faith life.

~Take note of your child's special interests and talents, so that they may be developed to their fullest! We also give them the opportunity to read at the ambo or lectern, sing, and/or perform some altar-server duties to encourage them to assist this way at Mass when in Level 4. Altar-servers are boys or girls.

~Please send a written explanation each time their child is absent from class. Additionally, communicating via email to the Catechist and Coordinator is most helpful.

~Please set a good example, by personally refraining from any activity that would violate Catholic teachings and/or good standing in the Church.

~ Take an active role in the Parish and enjoy the fruits of it!

COMMUNICATION

Regular forms of communication include this handbook, the program website, the church bulletin, emails from the Religious Education office and progress report cards. Parents are asked to check book bags and folders regularly for additional communications. Any communications, forms, checks made to ABVM etc. that are brought to class are forwarded to the Program Office through the catechist and then to Parish Office.

~Please let us know if there is a change in any of your contact information or anything pertinent to our mission, at any time necessary.

~Please provide any legal or custody issues and documentation that we need to be aware of, to be compliant with the law, safety and to support your child.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

~Tuesday and Wednesday Sessions arrive and dismiss from Main School Entrance. 4:40-6pm Sunday Students may arrive at Parish Center Doors, so to enter the Parish Center for The Prayer Service, then dismiss from the School Main Doors only, as during the week. 11:10-12:30pm.

~Doors to the building are always locked. They are opened during arrival and after the final bell by the Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE). During inclement weather, please wait in your cars until the bell is rung. There will be **no early dismissals** excepting emergencies as per Pastor.

~Children are dismissed from their classroom by their catechists at the end of the class session. In accordance with Archdiocese Safe Environment Policies, children can only be released to the contacts listed on the Registration Form. Authorized pick up contacts must be 18 years of age or older. Children will not be released to siblings that are not driving them home from class.

~Children attending CYO sports in the parish facilities will be dismissed after all other students have been picked up from their classroom, unless the Coach comes to take responsibility for them. The child's coach should be listed on the Registration form. For safety reasons, students will not be permitted to walk to other facilities or the Parish Center without supervision.

~Catechists are not able to approve early dismissals, please review matter with CRE.

ACCIDENTS/ILLNESSES

~Accidents or unusual illness occurring during class time are reported immediately to the Program Coordinator. When a student becomes ill or meets with an accident, the parent or guardian is contacted. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called. No medicine of any kind may be given to the student. Only basic first aid may be administered.

Program Volunteers

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers make up the teaching and office support team in our program and are placed according to program need and family preference. They are supervised by the Coordinator of Religious Education.

The Archdiocesan Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries for Priests, Deacons, Religious, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff and Volunteers explicitly state that all Church Personnel who have regular contact with children in the course of their work (defined as contact with children at least one time per week on a routine and repeated basis) are required to complete the following:

~ Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check

~ Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History Clearance. All volunteers residing outside of Pennsylvania or who have moved from outside Pennsylvania within the last ten years immediately preceding the date of request to volunteer or for application for employment for the Archdiocese, are also required to undergo an FBI fingerprint check.

~ New background checks must be updated for volunteers, every five years from the date of the last background checks. For volunteers who have had a break in service for a year or more, new background checks as required must be obtained.

~Please submit the original documents to the Religious Education office, to be filed at the Parish Office.

~Each volunteer **MUST** read the Archdiocesan Standards for Ministerial Behavior and sign. Each volunteer **MUST** attend the Diocesan mandated presentation on Safe Environment including the general SAFE environment training (Virtus program) and Mandated reporter training.

A parent cleared to volunteer as a Catechist, will be reimbursed at the end of the school year after reading and signing, [“The Tuition and Course Reimbursement for Catechist Sheet”](#). (click on Sheet title to follow link). Further details describing this policy and procedure, can be found within this document specifically regarding the requirement of good record of attendance, and the completion of one Archdiocese Certificate Course.

Students

ATTENDANCE

The Archdiocese sets, and requires, a minimum attendance, to assure that our students have the education they deserve, and have registered for. Currently, based on the hours of the overall program per year, we cannot matriculate a student, who has exceeded four absences. Options are to make up the material and experience, in space and time, at another offered program session day. Under four absences, we appreciate parents covering the course content, prior to the next session or as recommended by their catechist. Please keep the syllabus and schedule for the year's activities on hand for reference. Days of program are Tuesday and Wednesday 4:40 to 6pm and Sunday 11:10 to 12:30. Please communicate with both primary catechist and the coordinator to set up a make-up date so the second catechist can expect and welcome your child. Absences are eradicated when attendance is noted on the make-up attendance sheet, then the regular one. A student who has been absent from class is required to present a written note to their catechist. A doctor's certificate may be required for absence of an extended nature (more than 2 class sessions). You are welcome to make up even one absence if you like!

MEDICATIONS

It is recommended that prescription medicines be given to the student before and/or after CYFF class sessions in accordance with the physician's directions.

Students may have in their possession, if necessary and with the knowledge of the office, an inhaler or an epi-pen. No other medications may be placed in the student's possession to self-administer.

VACATION POLICY/SYLLABUS/SCHEDULE

Our program follows the holidays of the Avon Grove School District. There are some occasions that classes will be held during Teacher in Service Days or other public school holidays (for example, Election Day). The calendar for the program year is given to students on the first day of class and will be placed on the ABVM web site.

Following the Avon Grove School District Policy, the planning of family vacations is strongly discouraged during the program year.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Please support your child in being prepared for class: the provided textbook, schoolbag and folder in addition to a sharpened pencil and eraser from home would help! We provide art and craft supplies.

Children in the program that damage ABVM school material, will be required to replace or compensate the school through the Religious Education office.

It is the intent of our program to provide a Christian educational environment, free from all forms of improper threats, intimidation, hostility or offensive and inappropriate behavior. Such improper conduct may take the form of unwanted verbal or physical conduct, written, or electronic, derogatory or discriminatory statements, and behavior not otherwise conducive to the educational and religious mission of the Parish. Unacceptable conduct, either by a student, parent/guardian or program volunteer - includes, but is not limited to, the following:

~ Disrespectful speech or behavior of any kind, toward or about, any catechist, aide, student, volunteer or parent. Lack of cooperation with authority figures.

~Vandalism of day student desk, or any in any part of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School. Stealing.

~Fighting, bomb or other scares, triggering alarms or intimidation, harassments or threats.

~Cheating, plagiarism

~ Use, possession or selling of drugs or alcohol, no smoking

~Possession of any weapons or any item which can be used as a weapon

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The Program Coordinator will determine if behavior is inappropriate and document it. This policy applies both in and out of the classroom.

SUSPENSION/DISMISSAL

Our Program is to serve and protect the learning community. Suspensions may be required to support this ideal. The Program Coordinator will inform the parents/guardians of the seriousness of suspension and seek their immediate cooperation in a corrective program, designed to resolve the student's inappropriate behavior, if possible. Only in extreme cases will suspensions lead to dismissal.

HARRASMENT

The Program follows the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Policy prohibiting harassment, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome sexual attention, sexual advances, request for sexual favors or other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated. Any student or parent/guardian who is determined to have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal of the student.

DRESS CODE

The CYFF Program will follow the dress code that has been instituted by the Avon Grove Public Schools. What is acceptable to wear to school during the day, will be acceptable to wear during the Religion Program.

There are cases where wording on clothing worn to school is not appropriate for church. Clothing that has sayings and wording that is derogatory or with sexual inference is not acceptable. Children are not permitted to wear flip flops, slides or athletic cleats in the church or the school building.

Children will be walking between the School and Main Church at times. Please have your child dressed appropriately, including considerations that they may be visiting The Lord's House.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Beezers, **cell phones**, pagers, **handheld electronic games**, personal CD players, walkie-talkies and other items that, in the view of the class, may be distracting or disruptive to the learning environment are **not permitted in the classroom during class sessions**. Electronic items out and visible during class time will be taken by the catechist or aide and returned to the parent at pick up. If your child carries a cell phone for parental contact, the phone must be turned off and not visible during program sessions.

The Process

REGISTRATION

We are only accepting payment for Registration online ([click here](#)) We ask for you to print out a copy of your RECEIPT and staple it to [The Registration Form](#). Please mail to 290 State Road, West Grove, PA 19390, attn. Teresa Leszczynski, CRE. We cannot print out your receipt at school and must receive both documents simultaneously for the Registration to be completed and class space reserved.

Students will be placed according to their previous religious education. Students moving into our parish need documentation of the Religious Education and Sacraments they have received to date. Students wishing to attend Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (ABVM) Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) or receive a Sacrament there-in, require a note from their pastor granting permission.

Class size closes at 20 students. Students are placed according to level of prior religious training and according to catechist and aide availability. Students may make up a class, but a change in overall day of attendance needs to be assessed by Coordinator due to administrative concerns. Late Registrants may not receive their first or even second choice, due to staffing needs that must be completed by August.

If your child will thrive better with yourself in the classroom, due to specific considerations needed, we encourage you to obtain your Clearances, in order to be able to be on school grounds. This is preferred

to “home-based catechesis”, where there will be a natural disconnect from the social, liturgical and developmental benefits, of being on site with their peers.

HOME-BASED CATECHESIS

Please see above. The fee for Home-Based Catechesis is the same as in-house instruction due to the level of mentoring required by the Coordinator and materials provided. If a family does choose home study, they must be **completely responsible** for communicating with the Religious Education Office, completion of course content, and attending with or without their child as indicated, any liturgical event that is part of their faith journey and posted meetings. Additionally, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, recommends intermittent attendance to complete the testing component of course work and required prayers per Level. The testing visits to school would be at least 2 times to determine if the student is maintaining the Level of study.

Family attendance at parish liturgies, most especially weekly Mass, is required secondary to Church Teaching and to satisfy the liturgical portion they would miss if not attending PREP.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Families who desire to move forward with Reception of Sacraments, presuppose a practicing Catholic lifestyle, including Mass attendance, and participation in parish life. This is the same concept that was introduced at Baptism, which is supported, if children are to be raised in the faith.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish confers the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion upon students at the completion of Level 2 of faith formation, 2 years of study.

Confirmation is conferred on students in the Fall of 7th grade, post the prior 6 years of Religious Education.

HOMEWORK

Homework assignments for all levels are assigned by Catechist. Children may be expected to complete a review sheet of the week’s lesson. This homework is returned the following week. It is used to help parents positively reinforce a concept presented in class. Catechists may also assign other homework that could include written, reading or study assignments. It is encouraged that parents work with their child to complete the assignments. The objective is to extend the learning experience into their lives.

Homework will be graded and will be included as part of the student’s progress in class. In the event of absence, all homework and missed assignments are to be made up. The catechists should be contacted for the work assigned.

Catechist/Parent communication is the key to your child’s success. Each catechist’s method of communication will differ. Please contact the CRE, if you do not feel you are getting adequate communications on at least a monthly basis, from the catechist regarding current study and schedules.

PROGRESS REPORT CARDS

These are issued twice a year to students in each level. A student's progress will be determined on criteria relevant to each level such as, attendance, behavior, preparation for class, attitude toward content of material, homework, prayers and testing. Testing includes the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Assessments. Please sign and return the Progress Report the following week to be used for your child's final grades. You will receive this to keep at the end of the school year.

Each level learns the appropriate age and stage level prayers that build over the course of the program. This is required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, setting our Program's curriculum, versus the textbook's publisher.

RETENTION OR PROMOTION

Student progress is monitored throughout the instructional year. In January, the parent/guardian is informed of the student's progress. At any time thereafter, the catechist will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student who continues to experience difficulty, to discuss optimizing successful progress. Children and families still experiencing difficulty will be referred to the pastor.

All students must score above 70% on the combination of progress measurements in order to complete their current course level and move on to the next level. The success of your child in the program is a joint effort between the student, parent, catechist and the coordinator who is concerned for each child.

Classroom instruction and prayers need to be reviewed and emphasized at home.

Families of students in danger of not being promoted due to low attendance or inconsistent performance on tests, will be contacted by the CRE to design ways to promote success for the student.

SAFETY REGULATIONS

The following regulations have been established to insure the safety of our students and must be adhered to by each student:

~Running is not permitted at any time within the school building or in moving from one place to another on the school premises.

~Entry is not permitted into the school building before or after session times (including forgotten supplies or homework), unless a volunteer of the program gives explicit permission to do so. Students are not permitted to enter a classroom if a catechist is not present. No student may leave the school premises at any time without permission. Every student must stay within the established boundaries when outdoors for any reason.

~ No visitors will be permitted in the building during sessions unless prearranged. Students may not open the door for anyone as per safety policy.

~The school grounds are supervised during program hours, from arrival time until dismissal time, when class is in session. The Religious Education Program, ABVM School and ABVM Parish have no responsibility for students or parents/guardians on the premises during unsupervised times.

~A fire safety plan and an armed intruder plan has been established and shared with the catechists. Students will be instructed at the beginning of the instructional year on how and where to exit the building in case of an emergency. The students will be instructed to leave the building quickly and in silence when the alarm rings according to directions posted in each classroom.

~In the case of inclement weather, classes may be cancelled. The determination for class cancellation is up to the discretion of the Program Coordinator and the Pastor. Every effort will be made to make this decision prior to children being released from the public schools.

~Generally, if ABVM School and Avon Grove school district are closed, Religious Education would follow. If there are early dismissals at the above schools due to weather, Religious Education will be canceled. If public school had a late opening, this would not affect us.

~If classes are cancelled, parents are notified via e-mail.