

# OLIH CATECHIST & SUPPORT STAFF HANDBOOK



PRE-KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 12  
including SPECIAL NEEDS



And these words...  
shall be in thine heart:  
And thou shalt teach  
them diligently  
unto thy children



*Catechists/Volunteers Handbook*  
*OLIH/Diocese of Des Moines*

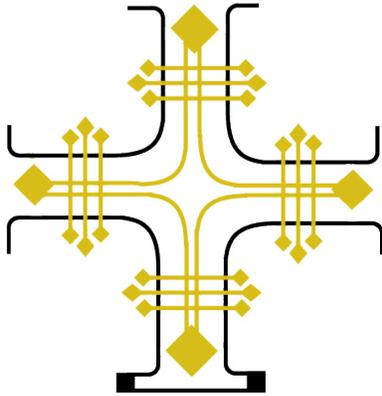
I agree that it is my responsibility to read the OLIH Catechist/Volunteer Handbook.  
I agree to abide by and follow the policies and procedures contained therein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print

Return by the first day of class.

# Table of Contents



## OUR LADY'S IMMACULATE HEART CHURCH

510 EAST FIRST STREET

ANKENY, IA 50021

515-964-3545

[www.olih.org/general-information-2](http://www.olih.org/general-information-2)

Welcome Page 2

Statement of Philosophy Page 3

Ethics Page 4

Qualifications & Expectations Page 6

Responsibilities Page 7

Discipline Page 10

Conclusion Page 11



**Catechism**



Thank you  
for saying  
'Yes!'

*On behalf of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish and the Faith Formation Staff, we thank you for accepting God's Call to the ministry of catechesis. As a Catechist or Support Staff Volunteer you are vital to our mission of supporting and partnering with OLIH families in providing quality Life-long Faith Formation. Your faithfulness in accepting God's call to serve allows the OLIH Faith Formation Program to run smoothly and our statement of philosophy to be implemented fully. Thank you!*

The ministry of Catechist is a vital part of the faith life of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish. Catechists of this parish deserve the respect, gratitude and support of the parish.

As part of that support, Catechists have the right to expect continuing training, in-service, as well as the materials they need to perform their ministry.

Catechists and **ALL** Support Staff Volunteers have the opportunity to pre-register their own children for classes and to have the registration fee waived.

**The Faith Formation staff, on behalf of the parish, would like to express their appreciation for the dedicated and conscientious service of the people who volunteer as Catechists & Support Staff Volunteers.**

A yearly appreciation dinner is held in the spring for everyone involved in the faith formation efforts of the parish. Invitations will be sent with an RSVP due. Please check the Faith Formation Calendar for the date.



Good discipline is an important aspect of creating a positive learning environment.

Catechists have the right to expect respect from the children in their classrooms. The procedures for handling discipline problems are as follows:

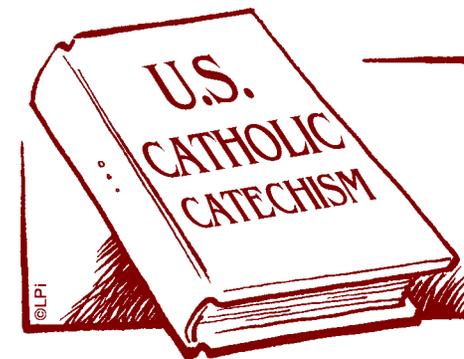
1. Seek help and suggestions from the Director as to techniques and ideas for handling discipline problems.
2. If a student consistently presents a discipline problem that student is to be escorted to the office by a Catechist. The Hall Monitor is to be asked to supervise the classroom, while the Catechist explains the situation to the director.
3. Corporal punishment of any kind is not allowed.
4. Abusive verbal punishment of any kind is not allowed.
5. **Catechists should not contact parents regarding disciplinary problems.** One of the Directors will contact parents on behalf of the catechist.

The Youth Faith Formation (FF) Program at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish supports parents in forming themselves and their youth in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Faith. The FF Program partners with parents—who are the primary catechists of their youth—to implement the six tasks of catechesis, which form adults and youth in:

- Knowledge of the Catholic/Christian faith
- Sacrament and Liturgical (worship) life of the Church
- Moral teaching and Conscious formation
- Models & Practice of Prayer
- Community Life
- Mission & Service Outreach to all

The Program utilizes methods and materials in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are theologically sound, and educationally & developmentally age appropriate.

The Catechist handbook is designed to outline the specifics of the commitment you have generously made. The information, regulation and directives in this handbook pertain to all volunteers in the Faith Formation program of this parish. Please read the handbook carefully. It can be an aide to help you have a successful experience in your ministry.



The Standard of Behavior for Catechists to strive for is the example of the Great Teacher—Jesus and the Gospel Message.

Catechists' demeanor and language should always reflect that they understand their role as examples of Christian Behavior.

1. All forms of profanity and any suggestive sexual innuendoes are unacceptable.
2. Catechists need to use extreme care when touching a child. In general, a catechist should not touch a child below the shoulders.
3. Corporal Punishment, including slapping, shoving, shaking, spanking or any form of punitive touching is forbidden.
4. Catechists should be extremely prudent in any comments, written or oral, made about young people.
5. Communication about any child should be made only to those who have a legitimate right to know. Statements made should be measured by specific, behaviorally oriented, and verifiable standards. e.g.—It is appropriate to state that a child has spoken out of turn three times after having been told not to. It is inappropriate to say that child is a trouble maker.
6. In general, what is discussed by students in a classroom should be treated with utmost respect and should not be discussed outside the classroom. **If however, there is indication of any harm to any student from him/herself or from anyone else, that discussion or indication should be reported to the Director at once.**

## **Emergency Procedures**

Catechists need to become familiar with emergency procedures posted in each classroom and provided on the classroom clipboard.

Attendance is to be recorded by the **Catechist (s) only** on the clipboard along with the regular attendance folder. In emergency situations, catechists are to follow the directions of the Crisis Management Team (Parish Staff or EMT personnel). If the emergency requires evacuating the room and/or building you **MUST** bring:

1. Attendance clipboard in order to account for all students.
2. Red First Aid "Go Bag."

Accidents or illnesses involving students **MUST** be reported to the office immediately. An accident report **MUST** be completed as soon as possible in case of any personal injury. The Director will help the catechist complete this form and contact the parents.

## **Medication**

Catechists and Volunteers shall not administer medicine for a student.

Faith Formation Staff will only administer medicine if permission has been granted by the parent/guardian of the youth.

# Responsibility (CONTINUED)

## Supervision Responsibilities

Catechists are asked to help supervise children in the hallways and classrooms before and after class in order to provide a safe environment.

Catechists should never leave their class unattended. If a catechist must leave the classroom during class time he/she should ask another catechist to supervise the class.

***Catechist's children not enrolled in the class may not be in the room while class is in session. The nursery is available for catechist's children. (Exception: nursing infants under 6mo.)***



*With your fatherly blessing, Lord,  
strengthen these servants of yours  
in their resolve to dedicate  
themselves as catechists ...*

7. Disruptive student behavior should be reported to the Director. It is the responsibility of the Director to contact the parent(s). It is not the responsibility of the catechist to call parents regarding student behavior.
8. It is the policy of the Diocese of Des Moines that any suspected cases of child abuse be reported to the Department of Human Services. It is the responsibility of the Director to make the report.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Des Moines that, religious educators and youth ministers, while not certified by the State of Iowa and, therefore, not in the category of mandatory reporters of child abuse, **are required** when child abuse is suspected to make a report to the Department of Human Services as a permissive reporter.

The following information is needed for the report:

1. alleged abuse
2. child's name and address
3. parent's name and address
4. perpetrator's name and address (if known)

*Policy Adopted: November 23, 1992*



# QUALIFICATIONS & EXPECTATIONS

Catechists at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish are to be registered members who participate fully in the life of the faith community.

1. Students in Grades 6 –12 may help in the nursery during FF classes.
2. Students in 8-12 grade may serve as assistants in the Elementary Faith Formation Program or at the discretion of the DFF.
3. Confirmed High School Youth may serve as co-catechists with an experienced adult catechist for grades Pre-K thru 8.
4. 12th Graders who have previously served in the FF program will be considered a Catechist.

Catechists have the right to expect adequate preparation and support. In-service is provided on a regular basis. Online courses and face to face in-services and workshops are available to Catechists. The parish does provide financial support to Catechists who engage in continuing formation. Catechists are expected to further their faith formation by attending workshops and other faith formation opportunities throughout the formation year.

Part of the commitment that a catechist makes is the commitment to attend the regularly scheduled meetings, prepare for classes, arrive prior to session times and to follow the directions of the Faith Formation staff. **Catechists are expected to be present for each class time**, or work with the appropriate director to secure a substitute. (Catechists will be asked to communicate with parents in the class to see if a parent can fill in as a substitute.)

1. All Catechists are expected to attend and participate in Mass on a regular basis.
2. Catechists are required to follow the Diocesan Code of Conduct for Personnel.
3. All Catechists must have successfully completed a Background Screening Application prior to being in the classroom.
3. All Catechists must successfully complete the VIRTUS Safe Environment training prior to being in the classroom.
4. **Sign the form on the last page of this handbook and turn it in to a formation director after having read this handbook.**

# RESPONSIBILITIES

## **Preparation**

Catechists are expected to prepare for the class which they teach by:

1. Studying the lesson plan, text, and resources provided for the lesson.
2. Gathering and preparing any supplies/materials that might be not provided which will be needed to teach the class.
3. Taking time to pray and reflect on the message of the lesson, for the youth and families that are being served.

Catechists MUST arrive at class 10 minutes early, in order to have time to make sure all materials needed are available.

## **Classroom Responsibilities**

Catechists are expected to respect the placement of children in their classrooms. Under no circumstances should class rolls be changed without the explicit permission of the Director or Associate Directors.

**A student may not be dismissed early from class without a parent coming to the classroom and presenting a signed Early Dismissal Form.**

Catechists are expected to follow the lesson plans and calendar of lessons which are provided for their grade level, unless given permission by the director to substitute or change the schedule or plan.

Resources and teaching materials used in the classroom will be provided.

Catechists need to receive approval from the director to use supplementary resources, prior to their use.