

Guidelines



A Handbook for Parish Catechists

DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA
Department of Education
Office of Religious Education

July 2018

Table of Contents

Letter to Director/Coordinator of Religious Education..... 3

Categories to be Contained in Handbook 4

Appendix 15

 Letter to Catechists 16

 Prayer for Catechists..... 17

 Code of Christian Conduct for Students..... 18

 Setting the Stage for Students 19

 Enthronement of the Bible..... 20

Dear Parish Director/Coordinator of Religious Education:

The following guidelines are written to assist you in creating a comprehensive handbook for catechists. You may choose to do this with input from your catechists or from other knowledgeable persons at your parish. In any case, before sending the handbook to catechists, your Pastor/Administrator should read and approve the document.

The scope of the handbook should take into account all aspects of catechesis from the characteristics and responsibilities of a catechist to the procedure for reporting a student illness or accident.

The following pages delineate each of the categories which need to be contained in the handbook. After you have reviewed them all, you should write up the appropriate processes, procedures and/or specifications that apply to your parish relevant to each category.

Sincerely in Christ,



Ashley Fox
Director of Religious Education
Director of Safe Environment Awareness and Certification

Attendance at Religious Education Sessions

Outline the manner in which the catechist is to report an emergency absence from class and whether or not it is the catechist's responsibility to find a substitute.

Attendance at Sunday Liturgy

A statement should be included, along with a description of catechist responsibilities, regarding the expectation that catechists will attend Sunday Liturgy on a regular basis.

Attendance at Catechetical Events

Catechists are expected to attend Catechetical Day along with any other catechetical opportunities provided by the Diocese.

Bloodborne Pathogens

While the fear of bloodborne pathogens is real, they present social as well as medical problems and require sensitive and Christian responses. The following are guidelines for dealing with persons who suffer from HIV, AIDS, HBV, or for that matter, any physiological, mental, or emotional condition.

The director and the catechist teach the message of Jesus, and therefore are held to a higher standard of compassion in responding to persons with HIV, AIDS, or any other illness or disability.

Everyone, including people with HIV or AIDS, is protected against discrimination. Students with HIV or AIDS shall not be excluded by reason of the infection with HIV unless the following conditions are evident as determined by the student's physician and parents, together with the Director of Religious Education:

- a. the student is not toilet-trained or is incontinent;
- b. the student is unable to control drooling;
- c. the student is unusually physically aggressive, with a documented history of biting or harming others.

All medical information relating to HIV infection of students is confidential and only people with a legal right to know may be granted access to it. Catechetical programs must have a well-planned way of responding to injuries in order to safeguard the health of the helping-adult while caring for the injured child. This plan of action should be based on the assumption that any person could be a carrier of a bloodborne pathogen or other communicable disease.

Bloodborne Pathogens Instruction Sheet for Catechist

When a catechist or volunteer needs to intervene and implement "universal precautions," they do so from an informed, voluntary response under the "Good Samaritan Act" and use prudent public health protective procedures.

Bring your catechist kit with you to each catechetical session. Direct or help the individual involved with a blood/body fluid incident to care for him/herself with minimal contact to you. If an accident involving a blood spill occurs, encourage the individual to tend to his/her own injury, e.g. If a child has a bloody nose, hand the child the tissues and instruct him to pinch his nose. If a child has a cut, hand the child clean paper towels to hold over the cut.

When you need to intervene and provide assistance that requires contact, always place a barrier between yourself and the individual.

When providing assistance:

- a. wear disposable latex /vinyl gloves;
- b. use disposable towels/tissues for each injury;
- c. place any blood-stained materials in a sealable plastic bag;
- d. remove gloves following the proper procedures;
- e. wash hands thoroughly with anti-bacterial soap using proper handwashing procedures.

Keep other children away from the area of blood/body fluid spill. Cover it with paper towels. As soon as possible notify the Director/Coordinator who will call a custodial person for immediate clean-up. If no one comes to clean up, the 10% bleach solution in the Catechist Kit can be used temporarily as a disinfectant.

Contents of Catechist Kit

disposable latex gloves band-aids
paper towels alcohol towelettes
plastic bags with ties 10% bleach solution
gauze pads these instructions

Calendar:

A calendar should be provided to catechists which include dates for religious education sessions, safe environment training for children, parish events, celebrations of Sacraments, catechist meetings, diocesan catechetical events.

Catechist Prayer:

A *Catechist Prayer* should be included in the handbook.

Child Abuse:

See Diocesan Safe Environment Policy handbook

Communication:

Procedures by which parents, Catechists and Director contact each other should be clearly described. Communications to the parents should be written and mailed (e-mailed) so they can be handed directly to the parent by a staff member.

Confidentiality:

Being a role model and trustworthy adult for children and youth is an important dimension of the catechist's responsibility. This may well result in a young person's seeking advice and counsel from the Catechist. The *Catechist Handbook* should outline the limits within which such confidentiality should take place, i.e. before any confidences are received, the catechist should tell the young person that he/she will respect the person's confidence except when there is a danger to life, health, or safety. The handbook makes clear that a catechist must reveal to the proper authorities any knowledge received which would result in harm to someone, even if a promise of confidentiality has been given.

The handbook also explains that the assignment of keeping a journal carries with it serious risks. If that assignment is given, the catechist must clearly state the same limits on confidentiality as given above. The catechist has the obligation to read all that is written in the journal, even those sections marked confidential or "not to be read." This should also be clearly stated in giving the assignment.

Copyrighted Materials:

The handbook makes clear that any printed materials that are copyrighted may not be duplicated without permission from the holder of the copyright. The following exceptions may be made:

- a Catechist may duplicate a single copy to use in preparing or in teaching her/his class;
- a Catechist may duplicate a short printed item for each of the students in the class, but the distribution must be limited to that particular class and time period, and the copies must include the notice of copyright.

Music for use in class or program liturgies may not be reproduced without securing the permission of the holder of the copyright. The Regional Catechetical Office has available the copyright policies for the major publishers of liturgical music.

Audio-visual materials, such as videotapes, are also protected by copyright laws and may not be copied for classroom use.

Custodial Rights of Parents:

The director should be informed by the custodial parent of the rights of the noncustodial parent as these pertain to the child's participation in the program as well as release from the program. The Director then informs the catechist.

Discipline:

The handbook gives basic instruction for maintaining good discipline and group management. It mandates that under no circumstances should physical contact be used as a form of discipline.

The handbook also stresses that humiliation must never be used as a form of discipline. If a catechist is allowed to keep a student after the session for reasons such as misbehavior, lateness, or additional instruction, this should be stated as program policy in the *Family Handbook*, along with the procedure for carrying this out.

This procedure should include the manner in which advance notice will be given to the parent. The Family Handbook states that the catechetical program reserves the right to remove a student from the group session:

- if it is believed that the student would benefit significantly from an individual or smaller group situation,
- if the student's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group,
- if temporary removal is used as a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior.

Such action should be preceded by a consultation involving the student, the family, the catechist and the director.

If, in an extreme case, the director finds it necessary to remove a student from the program entirely, the final decision must be approved by the Pastor. Student discipline records should never be placed in a student's cumulative folder, but should be retained in a separate file. Discipline records should be viewed as internal documents to which only parents and appropriate officials have access. They should not be sent when records are requested.

Dismissal:

Unscheduled early dismissals should never occur. The *Family Handbook* should state that at the end of the catechetical session children are dismissed to the care of the parent or parent substitute. This parent substitute must be someone designated in writing at registration on the student record. If someone other than the parent or parent substitute is to pick up the child, this change must be given in writing to the director prior to the session in question. Catechetical staff should not drive students home.

The recommended method of dismissal is to have the parent come to the classroom where the children are waiting under the care of the Catechist. The *Family Handbook* stipulates that if an individual student needs to be dismissed early, the request should be given in writing by the parent to the Director and presented prior to the scheduled class. This request should include: the name of the person picking up the child, the designated date and time,

the reason, the signature of the parent.

Following dismissal the Director should check the premises to make sure all students have been picked up. The *Family Handbook* tells parents to instruct their children to report to the director in the unforeseen event of not being picked up. The child will then remain with the director until the child's parent arrives.

Dress Code

A statement regarding modest dress and any other parish requirements should be stated in the *Catechist Handbook*.

Emergency Procedures:

It is the responsibility of the Director to make certain that all Catechists know exactly what to do in an emergency. These instructions are given orally, but are also written in the handbook. There should be a brief, clear statement of emergency procedures, including fire, weather and bomb threats. Fire and police telephone numbers should be posted in various conspicuous places on the premises. In each area where catechetical sessions are held, a diagram of emergency exit routes is on display. A record of each evacuation of the premises, including fire drills, is kept on file.

Bomb Threat

If a bomb threat is received by telephone or in writing, the following procedure is recommended: inform the police department immediately and accept the advice of the police with respect to the action to be taken.

Fire Drills

At least once a semester a fire drill is held, making use, insofar as possible, of the procedures known to the children from their public school drills. The route to be used in evacuating the children is posted in the room where the session is regularly held and also is included in the handbook. Fire Department personnel should assist the Director in determining the safest evacuation routes. Each catechist should be aware of a secondary evacuation route should it be necessary.

Instructions given to catechists include the following:

- Insure that all students are out of the room and then lead them to the assigned place of safety;
- Have the last person out of the room close the door;
- Bring the attendance register and use it to verify that all those in your charge are safely out of the building.

A staff member is appointed whose responsibility is to check the bathrooms and to evacuate any students in those rooms. For each

disabled student in the program, a staff member is appointed to assist that student. This is always an adult other than the Catechist. The Director's immediate responsibility is to see that the facility has been completely evacuated. The date on which the drill occurred and the number of seconds/minutes that it took to evacuate the building must be recorded and kept on file in the director's office.

Accidents and Illness

If a relatively minor accident occurs to a student while attending the catechetical program, the following steps are taken:

- The catechist reports the accident immediately to the director who will report it to the Pastor/Administrator;
- If bleeding is involved, the procedures outlined under "Bloodborne Pathogens" are followed;
- The director notifies the parent; if parent cannot be reached, the director follows instructions on student information record.
- The director completes an accident report and keeps it on file whether or not there appear to be injuries. A copy of the report should also be e-mailed to the Diocese of Venice Insurance Department, spoo@dioceseofvenice.org. If the director feels that there could be a potential lawsuit, then a report should be made to the Diocesan Insurance Agent: Gallagher Bassett, 1-877-376-2561 and the notification to Gallagher indicated in an e-mail to the Diocesan Insurance Department spoo@dioceseofvenice.org.

In case of serious accident or illness:

- the catechist reports the accident immediately to the Director who reports it to the Pastor/Administrator;
- 911 or the local police/emergency rescue squad is called immediately;
- the director notifies the parent; if parent can't be reached, the director follows instructions on student information record;
- the director completes the accident form, keeps a copy in the file, and notifies Gallagher Bassett at 1-877-376-2561; a copy to the report is e-mailed to the Diocese of Venice Insurance Department, spoo@dioceseofvenice.org, so that they will be prepared in the event that an accident/illness gives rise to a claim.

Liability Insurance

The Diocese of Venice maintains liability coverage for negligent acts resulting in bodily injury or property damage. The director, the catechist, and other volunteers are covered as long as they are acting within the scope of responsibilities assigned to them by the parish and as long as the act was neither intentional nor criminal. If bodily injury or property damage should occur, the director should notify Gallagher Bassett at 1-877-376-2561 and the Pastor/

Administrator. A copy of the report is e-mailed to the Diocesan Department of insurance, spoo@dioceseofvenice.org. Failure to give notice could be a basis for a carrier to deny coverage.

Any questions regarding claims should be e-mailed to Dionne Spoo at spoo@dioceseofvenice.org, telephone 941-484-9543 Ext. 3008.

Field Trips:

If a field trip is planned for the catechetical program, catechists should be familiar with the Diocesan **Guidelines Concerning Supervision for Trips and Other Functions**. The parent/guardian must sign the form: **Consent, Release of Liability and indemnification for Field Trip Form**. These are located on the Diocesan website under Diocesan Forms/Children and Youth.

It is recommended that the signature on this form be verified by comparing it with the signature on the student information record. Telephone calls should not be accepted in lieu of written permission forms. The written permission forms must be kept on file for one year after the trip. Great care must be taken to ensure the safety of the students during the entire course of the trip, including the provision of excellent supervision.

Any hired buses, carnival operators and their equipment, etc. must be properly covered by insurance provided by the contracted service. A certificate of insurance must be obtained by the parish contracting for the service. The parish must be named as "Additional Insured." The certificate must be submitted to the parish with the contract and a copy of the certificate must be forwarded to the Diocesan Insurance Department at least 10 working days prior to the event for review.

The director should insure that a student information record is brought for each student on the trip.

There may be a situation where volunteers have agreed to use their own automobiles to transport children for various catechetical program activities. In these cases, the volunteers should understand that the automobile policy of the volunteer responds first in the event of any accident. (Insurance follows the car, not the driver.) Any volunteer who volunteers to drive children must have completed and been approved through the Diocesan Safe Environment Background Screening and fingerprinting processes.

Homework:

If homework is to be given, there should be a clear policy regarding what may be required by the catechist and what are the permissible consequences of a student's not completing the required homework.

Learning Environment

Catechists are expected to create a learning environment which leads students to connect religious education with the Liturgy and to the essentials of their faith. Therefore, in keeping with parish resources, the learning area should contain items to include but limited to: a Bible, a candle, a prayer table, Sacramentals.

Lesson Plans

All catechists should have written lesson plans so that a substitute is required, that person will be able to teach the scheduled lesson.

Medical Condition of Student:

The catechist should be informed about any student who has a special medical condition which could flare up in the session or which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. allergies, asthma, auditory or visual impairment, possibility of seizures, learning disability, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, etc.). The Catechist should be reminded that this information is confidential and to be used with discretion.

It is recommended that the catechetical program avoid serving food during the sessions because some children may have medical restrictions or allergies to certain foods or ingredients.

Medical Emergency Information:

Every child should have on file in the parish religious education office the student information record which contains the medical emergency release. These forms must be reviewed every year and bear the original signature of the parent. Any changes to the record are made in writing by the parent/guardian.

Medication:

No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) should be administered to, or taken by, the student during the Parish Catechetical Program. If an exception has to be made, the parent must provide a written request and directives.

Plant Safety:

Inspection of Parish Premises

An inspection of the parish premises for fire hazards and general safety should be made regularly by a qualified inspector chosen by the parish and the record kept on file in the parish office.

Additionally, the parish is inspected on a periodic basis by its insurance carrier. These inspection reports contain loss prevention/control recommendations pertaining to parish premises and are kept on file both in the parish and in the Diocesan Insurance Department. When there are concerns about safety and the suitability of certain areas of the parish facility for use in religious education sessions, inspections can be arranged by contacting the Diocesan Insurance

Department.

Although these inspections are not the responsibility of the director, it may be advisable for the director to consult the reports when choosing and maintaining the spaces where catechetical sessions are held. The director should be alert to basic safety requirements such as clearly marked exits and doors that open readily from the inside.

Floor Plan

A floor plan indicates the precise location of each catechetical session, as well as the day and time the session is held. This plan is posted in a prominent place so that, in an emergency, individuals and groups can be located without delay.

Location of Sessions

Catechetical sessions are always held on parish property because they can be supervised by the Director and because the parish property is inspected and insured by Gallaher and Bassett. An exception may be made for a child whose disabilities prevent him from attending sessions on parish property. The parent may request that a catechist be sent to the child's home for the catechetical sessions.

Visitors

No unauthorized persons should be allowed in the area where the catechetical sessions are taking place. Parents and other visitors go directly to the Catechetical Office or designated reception area.

Records:

Parents have a right to inspect any and all of their child's records; all persons except appropriate parish program authorities should be denied access without written parental permission or a court order.

Attendance Register

An updated attendance register is maintained for each class by the Catechist. It must always be legible and updated, and include each student's record of both absences and tardiness. The attendance register is never taken from the parish premises. At the end of the year, the information is transferred to each student's permanent record card. The register may become a legally significant document and therefore must be kept on file for a minimum of 7 years.

Permanent Record Card:

A single card is kept for each student on which the information is recorded each year that the student is in the program. When the child first registers a Baptismal record should be shown and the information recorded on the

Permanent Record Card. The original certificate is then returned to the parent. These cards can become legally significant documents and the parish must keep them on file for 60 years. When a student transfers to another program, the director of the receiving program should request a copy of the permanent record card before the student is placed in a class. The sending program retains the original.

Student Information Record:

This is completed by the parent at the student's first registration in the program and updated annually. Any changes to this record are made in writing by the parent. This record notes third party pick-up rights, medical information and other pertinent information about the student.

Student Discipline Records

If a student transfers to another program, student discipline records are not sent with the permanent record card. They are viewed as internal documents to which only parents and appropriate parish program authorities have access.

Retention of Students:

Catechists should be aware of the program policy and procedures for addressing this situation should be clearly stated, including alternatives to repeating the grade level.

Snacks:

It is recommended that the catechetical program avoid serving food during the sessions because some children may have medical restrictions or allergies to certain foods or ingredients.

Supervision:

Children and youth participating in parish catechetical programs must be supervised by a responsible adult (18 years or older). This is true during activities sponsored by the program as well.

Supervision is a mental as well as a physical act; therefore the supervisor must be attentive to those in her/his care as well as being physically present with them. The younger the child, physically, emotionally or mentally, the more supervision is needed.

This supervision is also necessary upon children's arrival and departure and their going to and from locations of sessions, lavatories, and other destinations on parish premises.

The handbook specifies the responsibilities of the adult supervisors and details the procedures to be followed in fulfilling these responsibilities. If, in an

emergency (e.g. an accident or sudden illness), a catechist must leave a group unsupervised for a few minutes, the catechist must first instruct the students on how to behave in the catechist's absence.

The handbook gives further guidance on the content of these instructions.

Special needs Students:

Refer to the Diocesan ***Guidelines for Religious Education for Persons With Special Needs.***

Table of Contents:

A Table of Contents should be included in the handbook.

Welcome Letter:

A Welcome letter to catechists should be included in the handbook.

Appendix

Date:

Dear Catechists,

The formation of the students of (parish name) in the Catholic faith is a vital and important ministry. Thank you for your commitment, dedication and willingness to be part of the faith formation process here at our parish.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) set this year's catechetical theme as *Do This in Memory of Me*. This year's theme is timely in view of the coming changes to the Roman Missal and the new focus on the Sunday Liturgy.

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command - to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded" (*Catechesi Tradendae*). As the *General Directory for Catechesis* notes, "The Lord Jesus invites men and women, in a special way, to follow Him, teacher and formator of disciples. This personal call of Jesus Christ and its relationship to Him are the true moving forces of catechetical activity."

We are looking forward to working with you this school year. It is truly a privilege to know that God has entrusted us as catechists with "the heart of the Church" -- the youth. May God bless you in your catechetical efforts.

As a catechist, you demonstrate the qualities of a person who has responded to the call of Christ to give witness to His Gospel, and to be committed to the work of the Church. Through this work, you share in and are a servant of the faith community at (parish name). To reflect this position all catechists and aides are asked to read, sign, and return the attached Code of Moral Conduct.

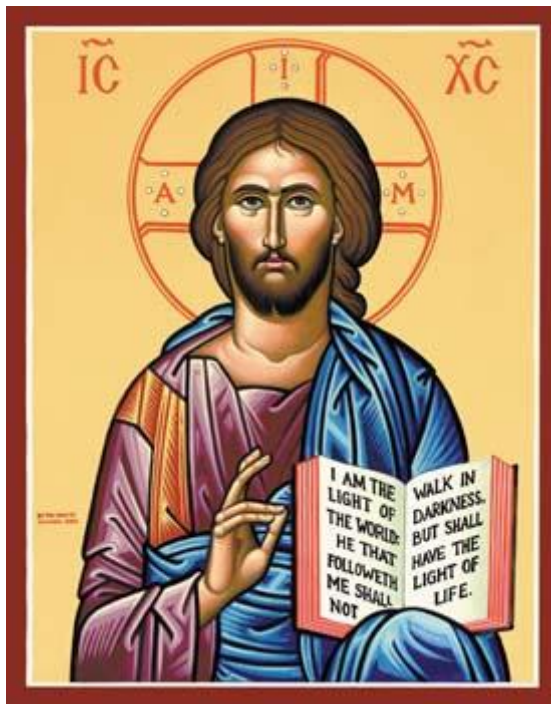
Jesus was sent to reveal the deepest truth about God. He then commissioned His Church to do the same: to teach about God, and to foster love of God and one another. All Catechists, as Heralds of the Word, must give support to the Church's official teaching on all matters of faith and morals. We are not bearers of our own message, but rather the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You represent Christ to the youth, and speak in His name. Thank you for your service!

Sincerely in Christ

Name

Title

Contact Information



Catechist Prayer

*Loving Father, you have called me and I have responded. Here I am, Lord!
You invite me to a personal relationship with you so that I may share the Good News of your Son, Jesus Christ, with those you have entrusted to me. My mind and my will are yours. Through the Holy Spirit, enlighten me with your wisdom, set my heart on fire with your love, strengthen me and guide me so that my life faithfully echoes the Gospel. Grant that, having deepened my understanding and appreciation of the treasure that is the Catholic faith, I may share it fully with others. May I find in the parish community the wisdom, support, and inspiration that I need to serve you in this essential ministry.*

Code of Christian Conduct for Students

Jesus was a teacher; the disciples were his students. Jesus taught the disciples that each of them was a reflection of God, the Father, even when they disagreed with one another. So, the disciples not only learned from Jesus, but learned from one another as well. **Therefore, in the class as well as at home, I will be respectful of adults and other young people with whom I interact.**

Jesus never told a parable or a story to the crowds without praying for long hours first. It was important for the Son of God to prepare for each day and each activity so he would be sure to say and do the right thing. **Therefore, I will prepare for religious education by reading the assignment and completing the homework before coming to class.**

Jesus never told people to do something that he himself was not willing to do. He lived the kind of life that made his Father, who was God, proud of him. **Therefore, I will be an example in the classroom and at home to those who would want to know what Jesus would do in any particular situation.**

Jesus told people things that often made them uncomfortable, even though these things were the truth. For example, he said that if the things you owned were more important than the people around you, you could not enter heaven. **Therefore, I will tell my friends the truth when they do things that Jesus would not have done, especially if they try and get me to do something that is wrong. I am a child of God, who is destined for heaven.**

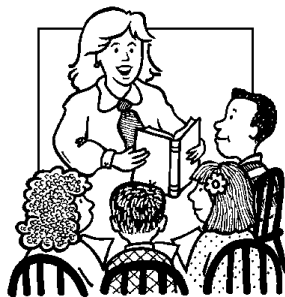
Jesus taught us that sacrifice is a part of Christian living. Jesus made the greatest sacrifice of all when he gave his life for us. **Therefore, I will go gladly to Church even when I want to stay home; I will take care of the responsibilities I have around the house or in the classroom willingly; I will share the things I treasure most with others who are less fortunate.**

Jesus is the Way, the Life, and the Truth. He guides me in everything I do or say. As I become closer to Jesus, it will be easier to think and say and do things exactly the way Jesus would want me to. However, it requires prayer and praise, worship and quiet time with God in order to become closer to Jesus. **Therefore, I will learn all that my teacher and the other students in Religious Education have to teach me about Jesus, so that I can become closer to God in His Kingdom here on earth and later in heaven.**

Student's Signature

Diocesan Handbook for Parish Catechists

Setting the Stage for a Spiritual Classroom *Atmosphere in the*



We all know that students arrive to class at different times and in different states of mental, emotional and spiritual preparedness. The challenge is to help our students quiet down in a way that encourages them to reflect on their faith and also set the stage for the lessons which will help bring them closer to God in a meaningful way.

As part of our Religious Education Program, *each classroom* will be provided with several items to accomplish the task of setting the stage. These include:

- A gallon jar of Holy Water with a special dish for blessing**
- A crucifix above the blackboard**
- A CD/Cassette player and CD's**
- A prayer table (card table) to be placed at the entrance to the classroom with various colored tablecloths to match the liturgical seasons/celebrations**
- *A Christ Candle and lighter**
- *A Bible Stand and large leather Bible**
- *A bud vase**
- Activity sheets**
- *To be placed on prayer table* (card table provided)**

When students arrive, they should bless themselves facing the Crucifix (initially, teachers will have to **consistently** insure that students do this diligently and prayerfully) and then sit down to work on activity sheets until the teacher is ready to light the candle and begin the class with prayer. Appropriate “settling down” music should be playing in the background.

Teachers will be responsible for teaching students: the connections to Holy Water and Baptism as well as to the self-blessing made upon entering church; the meaning of the

changing colors of the tablecloths (liturgical year celebrations); the meaning of the candle and the reason for the prominence of the Bible. You'll receive a handout with explanations at our first meeting.

Enthronement of the Bible

Leader: We gather together at the beginning of our Religious Education program to honor the Book of the Church, the Sacred Scriptures. We believe that through these inspired writings, God speaks to us. We believe that through the word of God we are taught, encouraged, and challenged. We pray that this enthroned Bible may be for us a constant reminder to seek God's word, to learn from its saving truth, and to apply it to our lives each day. Let us pray...

All: Ever-living God, we long for your presence and we thirst for your word. Send your Holy Spirit so that the Bible can be for us a source of spiritual growth and strength. Give us a deep love for the sacred Scriptures so that we may know your truth, grow in love for you, and follow your way more faithfully.

Reader: Let us listen to the prophet Isaiah as he speaks about God's word as a penetrating rain, watering the earth so that it may bear fruit.

Isaiah 55:10-11

For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down
And do not return there till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
Giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats,
So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will,
Achieving the end for which I sent it.

Reader: The word of God is a life-giving rain for our dry land. (Isa 55:10)

All: Come and refresh us so that we can grow in Christ and bear fruit for others.

Reader: The word of God is a lamp for my feet, a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

All: Come and guide us through the dark valleys of life with your shining light.

Reader: The word of God is a fertile seed that depends on rich soil. (Mark 4:20)

All: Come and take root within us so that your word may flourish and bear a rich harvest.

Reader: The word of God is a flaming fire and a hammer shattering rocks. (Jer 23:29)

All: Come and inflame our lives and break the hardness of our hearts so that our words may be faithful and true.

Reader: The word of God is living and effective, sharper than a two-edged sword. (Heb 4:12)

All: Come and penetrate our spirits, stirring our passion for goodness and justice.

Reader: The word of God motivates us to action, so that we can be doers of the word and not hearers only. (Jas 1:22)

All: Come and energize us so that your presence may inspire our daily decisions and actions.

Reader: The word of God will stand forever as all else passes away. (Isa 40:8)

All: Come and live with us always as our source of unchanging truth and love.

Reader: Let us listen to the words of the Gospel according to Luke, as he recounts an encounter with the risen Lord at Emmaus. **Luke 24: 44-45**

Reader: Let us listen to the teachings of our Church concerning sacred Scripture from the Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

“Access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful. The Church forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful...to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”

Commitment to the Word of God

Leader: Do you believe that the Creator of the world spoke the word to the people of ancient Israel for the salvation of all the nations?

All: I do.

Leader: Do you believe that the Word of God was made flesh and continues to live among us as the Good News for all?

All: I do.

Leader: I invite each of you, one at a time, to approach the prayer table, bless yourself with Holy Water, and then place your right hand upon the Bible. This is

a sign of our personal commitment to seek the word of life in the Scriptures.

Leader: Do you believe that God sent the Holy Spirit among us to lead us to truth and to guide our understanding of God's word?

All: I do.

All bless themselves and then place their right hand on the Bible.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Loving God, help us to open our eyes, our ears, our minds, and our hearts. May we always welcome your word of life, as you come to us with your wisdom, your truth, and your love. Amen