

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGISTRATION

After an incredibly challenging year for everyone, faith formation should look a lot more familiar this year. We pray and hope that COVID cases will remain low in Erie County so that we can hold in-person religious education classes through the coming months. I am so grateful to the youth and their families who were faithful to Zoom religious education classes despite “Zoom fatigue”. I am incredibly grateful to the catechists who found ways to reach their students on this unfamiliar and less-than-ideal platform. I am grateful to this parish community for their prayerful support. And I give all praise to the Holy Spirit who did for us far more than we could have asked or imagined.

Registration for the 2021-2022 religious education program will take place after all Masses the weekend of August 14-15. If you have found that you have missed the general registration weekend, please stop by the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation during normal working hours. All families with children intending to participate in the 2021-2022 Rel. Ed. program are asked to register at this time. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Again this year, there will be a \$10 discount on the registration fee for those families who provide the parish with current clearances for at least one parent. If you already submitted clearances and they are less than 3 years old, the discount will apply. As most of you know, all those who volunteer with children must have government issued clearances, both Criminal Background checks and Child Abuse Clearances. This law applies to parents helping with a classroom party, chaperoning a field trip, religious education substitutes and the like. These clearances are free for volunteers. However, they must be on file with the sponsoring organization before any volunteer can assist with any aspect of any program.

Our Lady of Mercy believes that parent participation in the religious education ministry is essential to its success. Whether parents can volunteer on a weekly basis or assist with a one-time project, we value your gifts and time. The only way that we can involve parents is if we have their clearances on file.

Many of you already have obtained these clearances for school, scouting, sports or other programs. If you do not already have these documents, you can apply on-line. All links can be found at the diocesan website <http://eriercd.org>. If you have any difficulty completing the on-line application for these clearances, call the parish and we will assist you.

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| In an attempt to encourage parents to provide Our Lady of Mercy with these clearances, we are offering a \$10 registration discount to any family who provides us with both clearances on one parent (clearances must be less than 3 years old). | |
| <i>Program Fees</i> may be paid at the time of registration. Checks should be made payable to Our Lady of Mercy Religious Education. Program fees are: | |
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| \$40.00 | Registration-One Child |
| \$50.00 | Registration-Two Children |
| \$60.00 | Registration-Three or more children |
| \$55.00 | Registration-Per Child Non-Parishioner |
| \$10.00 | Youth Ministry fee per child Gr 7-12 |
| \$25.00 | Youth Ministry Fee for 3 or more children Gr. 7-12 |
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| <i>For a family who has current Criminal Background Checks and Child Abuse Clearances on at least one parent on file at OLM, the fee schedule is:</i> | |
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| \$30.00 | Registration-One Child |
| \$40.00 | Registration-Two Children |
| \$50.00 | Registration-Three or more children |
| \$45.00 | Registration-Per Child Non-Parishioner |
| \$10.00 | Youth Ministry fee per child Gr 7-12 |
| \$25.00 | Youth Ministry Fee for 3 or more children Gr. 7-12 |
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| If we have current clearances on file, a notation will appear on your registration form. If you present clearances at time of registration, the registration fee will be adjusted accordingly. | |

Kindergarten religious education class is held on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:45. Participants must be age 5 by September 1 and should be in the same school grade.

Grade One religious education is required prior to participation in the Sacramental Preparation program. First grade religious education students meet on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:45.

First Reconciliation preparation is conducted on the second grade level. The First Reconciliation program, held 9:30-10:45 Sunday morning, is open to all students in Grade 2 or older who have previously been involved in at least one year of religious instruction and who have been baptized. **No child can be registered for the grade 2 RE class who has not attended one year of formal religious education classes at a Catholic parish. In order to qualify as successfully completing 1 year of instruction, the child must have been present for a minimum of 3/4th of the schedule classes or provide a letter of completion from the pastor or director of the parish program they attended stating such.** Participation in a 3-hour preparatory retreat is required prior to the celebration of the sacrament. The celebration of First Reconciliation occurs in March. Parental support and involvement is essential during periods of sacramental preparation.

First Eucharist preparation is the curriculum for the third grade program. Individuals must have celebrated the sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation prior to the celebration of their First Eucharist. First Eucharist is celebrated in May. Students are required to participate in an April retreat day as part of the preparation program. Parental involvement and support is essential during periods of sacramental preparation.

The Intermediate Program encompasses grades 3-6. Students participating in religious education on this level gather for classes on Tuesday afternoons from 4:00-5:30. Our Lady of Mercy arranges for bus transportation from the Harborcreek public elementary schools to the church. Parents are responsible for picking up their children at class end.

Behavior for the Rel. Ed. bus follows the same policies as that enforced by the Harborcreek School District. Failure by any student to behave in an appropriate fashion while riding the bus to religious education classes will result in the suspension of the privilege to receive this transportation for the remainder of the academic year.

Junior High Program is conducted on Sundays. On the first three Sundays of each month, students meet from 9:30 to 10:45 AM for classroom style sessions. On the final Sunday of each month, the young people gather for an extended youth ministry session from noon to 3:00 which combines opportunities for community service, retreats, community building and more.

Confirmation Preparation is a three year process. Individuals may enter the program in the ninth grade or later. Those attending a Catholic high school are not required to participate in the first two years of this process. This program includes Home Sessions, service projects, retreat days, etc. Those celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation must be in the second semester of eleventh grade or older, have been baptized, and have completed all requirements.

Days of Retreat are provided for students in the formal religious education program. All program provided retreat experiences are free to participants. Attendance at these events is required for those preparing for a sacramental celebration (Grade 2 First Reconciliation, Grade 3 First Eucharist and Grade 9-11 Confirmation). All other experiences are encouraged, but not mandatory. These days combine fun with spiritual growth.

Family Faith Days are opportunities for families to share in the faith formation process with their children. Currently, these are scheduled three times during the school year during the Sunday morning program (the first day of class, late autumn, winter). On these specially designated mornings, all children in Kindergarten through gr. 2 are joined by parents, siblings and any extended family members to share in a special morning of prayer and fun.

Parent Meetings enable family members to best support the faith development of their child. Every year we hold a series of parent meetings designed to inform parents of curriculum topics, special projects and other details of interest. All parent meetings are designed to be informative and brief. All parents and guardians are highly encouraged to attend these meetings. Please consult the religious education calendar and the bulletin for specific times and dates.

Absentee Policy: Preparing for a sacramental celebration is a very important process. Extra care and attention is directed to these parts of the program by the R. E. Office, the catechists and the families. To ensure that youth are as well prepared as possible, attendance policies are in place for these years. **Children preparing for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist (grades 1, 2 & 3) must be present for a minimum of $\frac{3}{4}$ of scheduled classes.** Any child absent for more than a quarter of the scheduled classes will not be approved to celebrate this sacrament. (Any first grade student who has missed more than a quarter of the scheduled classes will not have met the requirement of completing a year of religious ed necessary to enter the First Reconciliation program.) **Confirmation candidates (grade 9, 10 & 11) are permitted a maximum of 2 absences per year.** Additional absences must be made up with the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation before the candidate can continue in the process. Additionally, these years of preparation include work to be done at home. **All homework must be completed and returned before the individual will be approved for the sacramental celebration.**

To all returning catechetical ministers, students and families, I look forward to seeing you soon.

To all new participants in the religious education program, I welcome you. To all members of this parish community, I encourage your comments, ideas and suggestions.

Religious Education Classes begin on Tuesday, September 7.

Religious Education calendars are available at the time of registration.

May you continue to deepen your love for God and one another. May this coming year of faith formation bring many blessings to all.