

## OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGISTRATION

Hints of fall are everywhere. Back to school sales are being advertised. Nights hold the nip of autumn. Days are growing shorter. As families prepare for a new school year, the OLM family is preparing for a new year of religious education. With the changes to our Mass schedule, there will be changes to our faith formation schedule also.

**Registration for the 2024-2025 religious education program will take place after Masses the weekend of August 17-18.** 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 2024-2025 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.**

**Program Fees may be paid at the time of registration. Checks should be made payable to Our Lady of Mercy Religious Education. Program fees are:**

\$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
<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>	
\$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
<b>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.</b>	

**Kindergarten** religious education class is held on Sunday mornings from 10:30-12:00. Participants must be age 5 by September 1 and should be in the same school grade. The Kindergarten group meets in classroom #5.

**Grade One** religious education is required prior to participation in the Sacramental Preparation program. First grade religious education students meet in classroom #7 on Sunday mornings from 10:30-12:00.

***First Reconciliation*** preparation is conducted on the second grade level. The First Reconciliation program, held 10:30-12:00 Sunday morning in classroom #6, 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. The school bus service for Harbor Creek School District brings children from the Harbor Creek elementary schools to the parish. 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 Harbor Creek 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 youth meet*** Sunday from 10:30-12:00. Combining fun activities, faith sharing, witness talks and prayer, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade youth are invited into a deeper relationship with Christ and with His Body, the Church. The junior high group gathers in the gym. Diocesan policy mandates that youth participate in 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade faith formation prior to beginning Confirmation preparation. The Diocese of Erie requires 90% attendance at this level.

***Confirmation Preparation takes place in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.*** Those attending a Catholic high school must prepare for the sacrament in their home parish. This program includes small group Sessions, service projects, retreat days, etc. Those celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation must be in the second semester of 9<sup>th</sup> grade or older, have been baptized,

and have completed all requirements. Confirmation preparation takes place Sunday from 10:30-12:00. The group meets in the Ritchie Room.

***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 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 twice during the school year during the Sunday morning program. 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.) Jr. High youth are required to attend 90% of the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade sessions before enrolling in Confirmation preparation. **Confirmation candidates (grade 9) are mandated by diocesan policy to attend 90% of the sessions.** Additional absences must be made up with the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation before the candidate can continue in the process. Additionally, this year of preparation includes 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 3.***

***Religious Education calendars are available at the time of registration.***

May you continue to deepen your love for God and one another. May the remaining weeks of the summer season bring many blessings.