

# CATECHIST HANDBOOK 2023-2024

THEME

**"COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE  
BURDENED"**

## SAINT HIPPOLYTE OUR LADY OF LOURDES

IT IS THE MISSION  
of Saint Hippolyte Parish  
to fully, consciously, and actively  
grow as a family centered in Christ  
ministering to the entire Christian community.

Revised 9/6/2023

## THE CATECHIST

The catechist has one of the most important jobs in the world. They have the opportunity to share their faith in Jesus Christ and the Traditions of the Church with fellow Christians. This ministry in the church participates in the ministry of the Bishop of the diocese, who is its chief teacher. The Bishop delegates this responsibility to the pastor of the parish, who in turn shares this privilege with the catechist. To share in this task of the church is a great privilege and a great responsibility.

Parents are trusting that catechists will responsibly assist them in nurturing the faith formation of their children. Catechists provide an environment which nurtures the faith life of their students and ensures their safety. In order to do this it is crucial for all catechists to be aware of their responsibilities and have a clear understanding of their duties. This handbook provides information that will enable catechists to perform their duties and minister the Gospel of Christ effectively.

Because of the importance of this ministry and the responsibilities inherent in it, this parish will use catechists who are fully initiated into the Church or prepared by a master catechist.

## CATECHESIS

The Catholic Church has issued many documents that describe the ministry of catechesis. This program is based upon the principles and guidelines found in these documents: *The General Directory for Catechesis*, *The National Catechetical Directory*, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These documents, as well as diocesan statements on the ministry of catechesis, provide a framework for parish programs. The following is a summary of the most important directives provided by these documents and a clarification of how they help guide the catechetical program of Saint Hippolyte Parish.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes John Paul II from *Catechesi Tradendae* as he describes what is entailed in the ministry of catechesis:

Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life. CCC, #5

*The National Catechetical Directory* further clarifies what elements should be a part of a catechetical program:

Like other pastoral activities, catechetical ministry must be understood in relation to Jesus' threefold mission. It is a form of the ministry of the word, which proclaims and teaches. It leads to and flows from the ministry of worship which sanctifies through prayer and sacrament. It supports the ministry of service, which is linked to efforts to achieve social justice. NCD, #32

Guided by the principles found in the documents of the Church on the ministry of catechesis, the catechetical program of Saint Hippolyte Parish will include the following elements:

#### MESSAGE

The story of scripture and the teachings of the Church will be communicated within the context of the faith story of each student and the signs of the times.

#### COMMUNITY

Efforts will be made to form Christian community among the students through interaction and faith sharing.

#### WORSHIP

The participants will experience many forms of prayer and worship to help them to become prayerful people.

#### SERVICE

Participants will be called to service and justice, which is inherent in the message of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

#### MISSION STATEMENT

It is the Mission of the Religious Education Program of Saint Hippolyte Parish to catechize parishioners in the faith of the Catholic Tradition in order to grow as a Christian community centered in Christ.

#### VISION STATEMENT

It is the vision of the Faith Formation Program at Saint Hippolyte Parish that each parishioner will have the opportunity to grow in awareness, knowledge and practice of their faith.

## PROGRAM GOALS

Saint Hippolyte Faith Formation Program strives to be a Christian community faithful to the Gospel and the Catholic Tradition. The parish is, in reality, a community of communities: students, faculty, farmers, townspeople, and commuters; all united in the endless struggle and search to know, love and serve God, self and one another. The unique diversity of the parish offers at once a challenge and a rich resource for learning. The goals of Saint Hippolyte Faith Formation are:

- To provide a program of formal religious instruction for the children, youth and adults of the parish.
- To support parents in their role as primary educators of their children.
- To offer sacramental preparation to parents, children, youth, and adults.

To help youth and adults discover the richness and challenges of Scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church.

To build a strong Catholic identity among the youth and adults of the parish.

- To allow youth and adults to experience the Church as community.
- To deepen the prayer life of children, youth and adults.
- To motivate youth and adults to live lives rooted in charity and justice based on the moral teachings of the Church.
- To expose all parishioners to the liturgical and sacramental richness that is part of the Catholic Tradition.
- To enable all parishioners to become responsible, self-reflecting, loving and praying individuals.
- To make programs that meet diverse spiritual needs available to youth and adults of the parish.

## ROLE OF THE CATECHIST

A catechist is called to....

- Be willing to share his/her love of Church and Love of God.
- Be a witness of the Good News of Christ and the Catholic faith and be a model of the attitudes and actions of a disciple of Christ.
- Be willing to share his/her faith story, when appropriate, with the students.
- Be a practicing Catholic who accepts the teachings of the Church and follows its laws.
- Be a person of prayer.
- Share the love of Christ with the students through openness, listening, respect and forgiveness.
- Continue to grow in his/her own understanding of Christ's call and Church teachings.
- Continually evaluate his/her performance as a catechist and try to improve.
- Communicate the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Pray and celebrate liturgy with the students by regularly attending weekend Mass in this parish.
- Challenge the students to live lives of justice and love based on Scripture and the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Foster community among the students in the classroom.
- Be willing to begin the diocesan certification process for catechists.
- Follow the policies and procedures set forth in this handbook.

## **DUTIES OF THE CATECHIST**

When a person accepts the role of catechist in the Faith Formation Program, it is assumed that the person is willing to complete the following tasks and accept the following responsibilities. Catechists who have questions about any of the following duties should discuss them with the Coordinator of (CFF). Faith Formation

Each catechist will.....

- Attend meetings and training sessions scheduled by the CFF.
- Be present for each class at least 15 minutes in advance of the scheduled starting time and remain for any announcements.
- Spend an appropriate amount of time planning before each class.
- Follow the format provided in the textbook for each session.
- Supervise the students in the class he/she is teaching, making sure to provide a safe catechetical environment.
- Use the time during class to form and inform the faith of the students in his/her care.
- Maintain discipline in the classroom following the policies outlined in this handbook.
- Provide prayer experiences for the students in the class.
- Follow diocesan and parish policies regarding catechesis.
- Enroll in diocesan certification as a catechist in a timely manner.

## **BENEFITS PROVIDED TO THE CATECHIST BY THE PARISH**

- Reimbursement for approved expenses.
- Fees for approved workshops and in-services.

- Orientation and training.
- Ongoing prayers and support from CFF and pastor.

### **V CATECHIST ETHICS**

- Catechists will model a Christian lifestyle in and out of the classroom.
- Catechists will follow the teachings and laws of the Church.
- Catechists will display a positive attitude toward the students and their families.

### **CATECHIST SCREENING**

Everyone who works with children in the parish catechetical program will be screened through the Pennsylvania State Police (Criminal Record Check) and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (Child Abuse History) as required by the Diocese of Erie. Application forms for these are available from the CFF and the parish will pay all expenses. These clearances are expected before someone can assume responsibilities with children or youth. This process determines if the individual has a criminal record and is required for the protection of the children.

Catechists are mandated to participate in a Diocesan-approved Child Protection In-service each year. This in-service is provided online and will enable the catechist to understand and respond to issues of child safety and welfare.

### **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING**

The pastor and CFF and anyone working with children are required by the Pennsylvania Revised Code and Diocesan Policy on Child Abuse to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. All other staff members of Saint Hippolyte Parish, both paid and volunteer, are bound by Christian conscience to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. The Diocese of Erie's written policy on child abuse is attached to this handbook.

**PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGES IN THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR.**

## **CATECHIST CERTIFICATION**

In order to carry out this important ministry, training and resources are essential. In his first encyclical letter, *Catechesi Tradendae*, Pope John Paul II states:

As the twentieth century draws to a close, the Church is bidden by God and by events...to renew her trust in catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy...in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel. This is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith. And an attitude of faith always has reference to the faithfulness of God, who never fails to respond. *CT, #15*

In order to carry out this call for trained catechists, the diocese has developed the Ministry Training Program. We are beginning a new process called Echo's. It is the responsibility for each catechist to commit him/herself to this program. A schedule of local courses can be obtained from the CRE or the diocesan Department of Religious Education

## **CATECHIST EVALUATION**

The CFF is responsible for the supervision of each catechist. During the year each catechist may be observed by the religious education leader and given feedback on their progress in an interview session. The Catechist Observation Form will be used to report the results of the evaluation to the catechist. The purpose of these evaluation sessions is to continually improve the parish program by supporting those who teach in it.

### **SUSPENSION**

The parish reserves the right to suspend and/or not renew the volunteer ministry position of any catechist who is not successfully performing their duties or who is not fulfilling the responsibilities in this handbook. Any catechist who is accused of a serious crime or who is discovered to have committed a serious crime will be put on immediate leave until the matter has been investigated and it is determined by the pastor that there is no danger to the children or youth of the parish. Conduct inside or outside of the program that is detrimental to the reputation of the program/parish or the safety of others may be grounds for suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the pastor.

## CATECHETICAL TASKS

*The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion [and] intimacy, with Jesus Christ.*

### Catechesis In Our Time 5

Catechists do a lot of different things. First and most important of all, you are a model for children of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean that you are perfect. It means that you remember the children are watching you to learn what it means to be a Catholic. So you try your best to look, act, and sound like one. Of course, at various times you also will make short presentations, tell stories, facilitate dialogue and activities, and lead prayer.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* identifies six important tasks of catechesis (GDC 85-87). Reflect on the list and assess your abilities in each of these areas before you begin the year.

- 1. Promoting knowledge of faith.** Catechists introduce their learners to all that has been revealed through Jesus Christ by initiating them gradually into the whole truth revealed through Scripture and Tradition. *Pflaum, and Life Teen*, student text and catechist guide will show you what to teach this year.
- 2. Liturgical education.** As a catechist you help children understand the Church's sacramental life and give them an experience of the signs, symbols, gestures, prayers, and creeds of the Church. The weekly and seasonal, *Pflaum and Life Teen* prayer experiences will give you many examples. Please read handouts as given and attend inservices that are available.
- 3. Moral formation.** Moral catechesis involves both the announcement of the good news through your proclamation of the Gospel call to moral living and your presentation of what the Church's Tradition teaches about this message. *Pflaum and Life Teen* will help you with the best language and strategies to use.
- 4. Teaching to pray.** You will introduce children ever more deeply to the forms of prayer that it includes: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition and expression of sorrow for sins, all expressed with the intimacy that comes from knowing we are children of God. *Pflaum and Life Teen* will provide you with a wide variety of prayer experiences and also offer you a complete unit exploring the prayer life of the Church.
- 5. Education for community life.** You are leading children into a way of life that you are already experiencing. You invite them to join a loving community of faith, to live simply and humbly, to care for the poor and alienated, to forgive as they wish to be forgiven, and to join in common prayer. Your classroom will become a weekly experience of Christian community for the children.

**6. Missionary initiation.** Catechesis prepares children to live the Gospel in daily life and to work to prepare the way for the coming of the kingdom of God. *Be My Disciple* is filled with suggestions for outreach activities and service projects to build in children a sense of the Church's mission.

## CURRICULUM

The catechetical curriculum must communicate clearly and completely, according to the age level of the person being catechized, the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. The source for these teachings and traditions is Scripture and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These resources have been made accessible and age appropriate by the development of a *Diocese of Erie Religious Education Curriculum*.

Textbooks and other materials used in the classroom conform with the teachings found in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The use of these particular textbooks has been mandated by Bishop Donald Trautman because they offer catechists the resources necessary to conduct classes which include all the elements of the ministry of catechesis.

The textbooks currently used are:

Pre-School	Seeds	Pflaum
Grade K & 1	Good News	Pflaum
Grade 2, 3	Promise	Pflaum
Grades 4, 5,	Venture	Pflaum
Grades 6, 7, 8	Edge	Life Teen
Grade 9 & 10	Purpose	Life Teen
11 & 12	Small Groups	

These text materials have been evaluated and found acceptable by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Catechism of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Each catechist will have a access to the Bible and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* , in the Religious Education office. The textbooks we have implemented must be used by the catechist as the primary resource for planning and teaching. Catechists are not to substitute other materials or disregard the text as a resource unless permission has been given by the CFF.

## **PLANNING**

Because of the importance of planning and organization in order to teach effectively, each catechist is expected to spend sufficient time prior to class planning his/her lesson. A lesson plan is to be written for each class. The religious education leader will periodically check lesson plans.

Planning is important not only for the individual class session, but for the entire year. A calendar for planning the catechetical year is provided to each catechist. This calendar is to be submitted to the CRE by the end of September.

## **SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS**

Catechists who have to miss a class session must notify the religious education leader and are required to find their own substitute teacher from the list provided. It is the responsibility of the catechist to have a lesson plan available for the substitute to use. Substitute teachers should be given the lesson plan at least one week if possible in advance in order to be properly prepared for the class.

## **NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT RIGHTS**

Catechists will be advised by the religious education leader of the non-custodial parental rights of each child from a divorced family when this information is available. It is the catechist's responsibility to have duplicates of any parental correspondence sent to the non-custodial parent as well as the custodial parent if this has been requested. Catechists must recognize that occasionally children will miss religious education because of custody issues. It is never in the best interest of the child to force competition between time with a parent and time in a religious education program. Compassionate understanding is needed even when these situations cause absences.

## **HOMEWORK**

Catechists are asked to assign homework. This will enable the parent(s) to keep informed about the material being covered, and involve them in their child's formal religious education. Parent(s) are asked to assist their children with all home assignments. If a student is absent, homework will be assigned to the student for each classroom session missed. This includes missing Retreats.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

In order to give the students formal feedback on their behavior in class and their participation and cooperation in the catechetical process, each catechist is to send the student and parent(s) a progress report two times a year, in December before the Christmas break, December 1, 2023 and on May 5, 2024 at the end of the school year. Progress Reports are available in the parish Faith Formation Office. These reports may be given to the parent(s) or mailed to the student's home. The catechist is responsible for writing out the report and addressing the envelope provided for each student. The religious education office will stamp and mail them as needed.

Remember: Progress reports are not used to grade the student's faith, but rather to report on their participation in the program. A person's faith can never be measured. The comments the catechist writes on the progress report must be specific, behavior-oriented and verifiable. In other words, they must describe student behavior the catechist has witnessed. These progress reports should avoid judgmental comments. To say "Johnny has a difficult time sitting still" is very different than saying "Johnny is a wiggler-worm." (The first describes behavior while the second belittles Johnny's person.)

### **SUPERVISION**

Catechists are responsible for the supervision and safety of the children in their care. Catechists must be present at all times when class is in session. A catechist may leave his/her classroom only in a case of emergency.

Catechists must take care to keep all equipment in working order and notify the religious education leader when something is in need of repair or replacing, keep the classroom free of hazards, and monitor all student activities.

Catechists who see students wandering the halls or left unattended are to report this to the religious education leader immediately. Catechists who discover an unrecognized adult in the building are to escort the person to the religious education leader's office immediately.

When supervising the dismissal of the children, never let a child go with any adult that does not have explicit permission to pick the child up from the program.

### **RESPECT FOR PRIVACY**

Catechists must respect the student's right to privacy and refrain from casually sharing personal evaluative information about the students. Special care must be taken not to inform other catechists about student behavior problems unless it is important for the growth of the child, and the effectiveness of the catechist. Any information shared should be objective in nature, constructive and relevant to the program. No information about students should be shared with anyone outside the program except for those who are responsible for the student's care.

## DISCIPLINE

Catechists are responsible for the safety and welfare of the children in their class. Also, they are responsible for creating an environment in the room which is positive, Christian and conducive to learning. In order for that to happen, the catechist must establish him or herself as a leader in the classroom and set behavioral expectations for the children. Being on time and prepared with immediate activities for the students are critical to success in this regard. The following policies will provide guidelines in this area.

Everyone involved in the program is challenged by the words and example of Jesus to respect each person's right to be treated not only with dignity and respect but also with love. In order to provide for a safe and well ordered program, in which students and catechists can learn to follow Jesus' call to love, some rules for behavior are necessary. Students are expected by their behavior to make the classes safe and positive experiences for themselves and their classmates. The program exists for student growth and in turn they are expected to carry out the following responsibilities:

1. Respect is to be shown for all students and catechists as well as other adults in leadership roles.
2. Students are expected to display Christian values in the way they dress, speak and behave.
3. Students are expected to be present only in the areas of the building for which they have permission at a specific time.
4. Students are expected to act in a safe manner in and around the building.
5. Students are expected to use voice and display actions in a manner which is appropriate for a classroom and respectful of the study time of others.
6. Use or possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco of any kind is strictly prohibited. These items will be seized and parents notified immediately. Students will be immediately removed from the environment.

Good discipline is aimed toward growth. We recognize that children may make mistakes and the role of the catechist at times will be one of guiding and correcting those mistakes. Catechists will handle discipline problems in a positive manner. Catechists are encouraged to handle minor discipline problems in their classroom.

Students whose behavior becomes a continual problem in the classroom should be sent out of class to the religious education leader. If a student is sent from class for persistent disciplinary reasons, their parent(s) will be contacted by phone, in person or in writing.

If the student's behavior continues to be a problem, the student will be removed from class and the parent(s) will be contacted. At this time the parent(s) may be asked to sit in on the class for a few weeks to observe their child and his/her interaction with the catechist and other students.

Any form of abusive treatment (either verbal or physical) or corporal punishment of a student by catechist is strictly forbidden. Catechists must never abuse a child verbally or touch a child in a way that could be construed as punitive. If a catechist strikes or injures a child or if there is a serious altercation between a catechist and a student or between students, it must be reported immediately to the CFF. The parish will support the catechist in the event of legal action arising from such an incident only if the catechist was acting in self-defense and was in imminent danger from the student.

### **WEAPONS POLICY**

In order to ensure a safe and Christian environment, it is forbidden for anyone to possess a weapon or any object/material/substance that could be used as a weapon or confused with a real weapon by any reasonable person (toy guns, etc.) in the buildings or within the geographic boundaries of Saint Hippolyte or in any location used by the parish to conduct any catechetical activity, or in any conveyance providing transportation to or from any activity related to the religious education program.

Weapons or potential weapons will be confiscated by the religious education leader when this action does not place the religious education leader in danger. If they student has used a weapon against another person or will not surrender the weapon or offending object/material/substance immediately and willingly, the local police will be called first, followed by notification of the parent(s). This is a zero tolerance policy.

Any student who violates this policy will be subject to immediate parish disciplinary action over and above any civil/criminal action brought by injured parties.

The student will be removed from the religious education class and an alternative method of religious education will be negotiated with the parent(s) for the remainder of the year. Judgments about re-admittance to the program for the following year will be made on a case by case basis and this decision is at the sole discretion of the pastor.

If the incident involves an exchange of bodily fluids (for example, as in a wound which breaks the skin), the student(s) will be asked to submit to medical tests for transmittable diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis B as recommended by a doctor. These tests will be at the parent(s) expense. In the name of being a community of Christians motivated by care and respect, this policy asks that the results of these tests, which are governed by guidelines of strict confidentiality, be openly shared with the respective parties on a need to know basis.

## **KEEPING STUDENT CONFIDENCES**

Occasionally students will share their personal problems with catechists. This can be very beneficial and healing for the child or youth. Catechists must make the students aware, however, that there is a point at which the catechist must share information with the student's parent(s) or someone else who is responsible. A brief statement such as, "I will keep your confidence unless the life, health or safety of yourself or others is involved," can help students understand that catechists are legally responsible to pass on such information. Remember, we are not trained counselors.

If, in the course of classwork, or a retreat program, a catechist requires the students to write journals, and hand them in, the catechist is responsible to read them. And again, if there is any information that involves the life, health or safety of one of the students, the catechist must report that information to the CFF, the pastor or to the parent(s), whichever can be reached in the most timely manner.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

Often, as catechists work with students, they form caring relationships with them. Good relationships with the students can help foster faith growth. However, caution must be exercised in relationships that develop between catechists and students. Some guideline for these relationships are:

- The catechist is the one responsible for making sure relationships with students are appropriate.
- Catechists should avoid situations that would appear to be inappropriate.
- Catechist should avoid being alone with students in an area hidden from view. When a class meets in a home, at least one other adult must be present. See the Child/Student abuse policies for more guidelines in this regard.
- Caution must be used when touching a child. Any touch that could be interpreted as sexual must be avoided. Hugs should be appropriate and initiated by the child.
- Catechists should never transport students when they would be alone with a student in the car. Call the parent and wait with the child.
- If a relationship with one child keeps the catechist from meeting the needs of the other students on a regular basis, the relationship should be examined.
- Catechists who drop by to visit students, frequently telephone students, take social trips with students, may be performing legitimate pastoral service but caution is advised.
- Catechists who find themselves sharing personal problems with students are well beyond what is appropriate and should end the relationship.

## **THREATS OF VIOLENT BEHAVIOR**

As a community of believers who value patience over aggression, and love above all else, it is inconsistent with our basic values to tolerate an environment of threat or fear. Threats of harm made against another individual or group of individuals are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

This policy recognizes that in any community of people there will always be some conflict. Students will always be encouraged to manage their conflict in a positive, non-aggressive manner. Behavior such as cursing, pushing or fighting will not be tolerated.

In cases which are deemed by the catechist or religious education leader to be “minor” (meaning: no reason to believe the situation would lead to physical harm) the students will be separated and encouraged to work out their differences after a “cool-down” period.

If the catechist regards the altercation as “serious” (meaning: reasonable expectation that the conflict will lead to physical harm) the students will be immediately separated, the religious education leader will be notified, and the parents(s) of the students will be called. The CFF must determine that the situation is resolved before the students will be readmitted to the program.

Students are expected to report to their catechist, or CFF any threat made by a student which mentions the killing of any person. Such threats will be immediately reported to the police for investigation. The student making such threats will be suspended from the program until such time as the police investigation is completed and the appropriate authorities are satisfied that there is no real threat of harm. In such cases, judgments about re-admittance to the program will be made on a case by case basis and this decision is at the sole discretion of the pastor.

## **BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

Respect for the dignity and worth of each individual is a basic precept of Catholic doctrine and therefore of Saint Hippolyte Parish. Each person is entitled to work in an environment free from discriminatory practices such as any form of harassment based on race, sex, creed, color, age, or disability including sexual harassment. Parish leadership wishes to be vigilant regarding harassment whether between or among catechists and/or parish leaders, among students or between catechists/parish leader and students. Such behavior will not be tolerated and if persistent harassment is proven, the offender will be dismissed when this is appropriate. Harassment of all forms is illegal as well as immoral and individuals will be encouraged to seek legal protection.

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior manifested by the use of force or coercion to offend others, particularly when the behavior is habitual and involves an imbalance of power.

The terms “bullying and harassment” refers to behavior that is not welcome, that is personally offensive and that fails to treat others with dignity and respect. It includes treating someone unfavorably because of their race, sex, creed, color, age, or disability. Harassment may take the form of discrimination, unwelcome or critical comments or action. Harassment on the basis of sex might include unwelcome sexual advances, requests or demands for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct, including, but not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, intimations or comments.
- Visual contact such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures.
- Physical contact such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movements, or interfering with work, study or play because of sex.
- Retaliations for having reported or threatened to report such harassment.

The term “sexual harassment” refers to harassment based on the gender of the offended individual when the people involved are of different “levels” within the parish. It involves threats and demand to submit to sexual requests as a condition of employment, grades or other benefits or to avoid some other loss and offers of

benefits in return for sexual favors. It also means creating a hostile environment for the student or employee such that it is an unfit environment for learning or work. Examples include, but are not limited to, repeated unwelcome sexual advances, repeated sexually explicit jokes or comments, or the displaying of sexually inappropriate materials.

Allegations and complaints of any type of harassment must be reported as soon as possible. Parent(s) who become aware of incidents of sexual harassment should report them immediately to the pastor or to the religious education leader.

### **WEATHER AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

**CANCELLATION OF CLASSES** Classes may be cancelled from time to time because of inclement weather. Catechists will be contacted by phone if classes are cancelled. A call list will be provided for catechists to follow in order to notify students of the cancellation.

### **SAFETY PROCEDURES**

There are safety procedures posted in each room for fire emergencies. Catechists will instruct the students in these procedures the first week of class, and review instructions periodically through the course of the year. Fire drills are to be conducted throughout the year.

In case of **fire** the catechist's main responsibility is the evacuation and safety of the children, not extinguishing the fire. In case of fire, the following steps are to be followed:

- If a fire is discovered, catechists or the religious education leader should call 9-1-1.
- Each class is to follow their designated evacuation route and gather at their designated gathering point outside the building.
- Catechists are to lead their class in a calm and orderly manner.
- Catechists are to take role when they arrive at their gathering point. Students must remain at the gathering point until dismissed by the catechist either to return to the class or to their parent(s).

In the case of impending **severe weather**, the religious education leader will advise the classes if there is a need to take cover. Catechists will direct the class to go the area designated for shelter during storms and take cover or, if that is not possible, to take cover away from windows, under the desks or tables. If possible, catechists will draw drapes or blinds on all windows.

## INJURY

If one of the students is injured, the catechist is to inform the religious education leader or CFF immediately and apply first aid as appropriate. First aid kits are available in the religious education leader's office. Gloves are provided in each classroom so the catechist can avoid contact with blood and other body fluids. The religious education leader will send a first aid provider to help, if one is available, and inform the student's parent(s). If the injury is serious, the religious leader will contact the appropriate emergency services.

If the incident involves an exchange of bodily fluids (for example, as in a wound which breaks the skin), the student(s) will be asked to submit to medical tests for transmittable diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis B as recommended by a doctor. These tests will be at the parent(s) expense. In the name of being a community of Christians motivated by care and respect, this policy asks that the results of these tests, which are governed by guidelines of strict confidentiality, be openly shared with the respective parties on a need to know basis.

## AIDS AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Confidentiality for students who are HIV positive or have other infectious diseases is protected by law. These students are not required to inform the catechist or religious education leader if they have these diseases. In case of injury or sickness, care should be taken to avoid contact with bodily fluids or blood. Rubber gloves are available in all classrooms and disinfectant is provided in the first aid kits. All catechists are to be informed of and understand the Blood-borne Pathogens Policy of the Diocese of Erie. This policy can be found in the Religious Education Handbook.

Accidents and injuries involving bodily fluids or blood must be reported to the C f using the Incident Report Form. Catechists are to read the health forms of the students in their care to anticipate any health problems that may arise.

## FIELD TRIPS

Catechists who wish to take their class on a field trip or any other activity out of the ordinary routine are to request permission for the activity at least two weeks in advance in writing. If permission is granted by the pastor and CFF, the activity may be arranged under the following conditions.

- The activity or field trip must have a catechetical purpose.
- The event must involve reasonable activities and distance.

The catechist is responsible for informing parent(s) and getting permission slips

from all students IN ADVANCE, IN WRITING.

- A Medical Release Form must be on file for each student participating.
- The field trip or special event must be limited to the pre-arranged plan and should not be altered.
- At least one adult chaperone for every 10 children above fourth grade, and one adult for every 5 children, fourth grade or younger must accompany the group.
- A bus should be used for transportation whenever possible.
- If cars are used, drivers must be over 25 years of age. A copy of the driver's license and registration must be obtained and certified to be current. They must show proof of current insurance and they must be informed that their insurance is the primary insurance in the event of an accident. They must be informed of the route to be taken and follow that route.

No field trip or special event is considered sponsored by the parish unless the permission of the CFF and pastor is granted in advance.

### **MEDIA RESOURCES**

Catechists are encouraged to take advantage of the various videos made available through the Diocesan Religious Education Office. Saint Hippolyte participates in the diocesan Video Subscription Plan which provides our parish with unlimited use of videos for an annual fee. Visit the diocesan web site at [www.eriesd.org](http://www.eriesd.org), click on "Religious Education", click on "Media Resources" and search by topic or grade level for a video that will serve the needs of your class.

### **CELL PHONES OR ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

No electronic devices or cell phones are permitted in any classroom or event sponsored by the church. Please leave them at home or give to teacher to hold for you. Teachers may take devices if the student fails to cooperate. Parents have been instructed on this policy.

### **COPYRIGHT LAWS**

Catechists are expected to be aware of and adhere to copyright laws regarding both print (work or music) and media materials (music, video, digital images, etc.). These laws regulate the copying and distribution of information created by someone other than the catechist. As a general rule of thumb, catechists are permitted to make one copy of print material for their personal use. While there are some print materials which are

considered public domain and may be copied freely, these materials are few and rare. Therefore, it is the expectation that any material this is copied for distribution within the religious education program be explicitly marked with the required permission to copy information. This permission is obtained by calling or writing the publisher of the material and asking for permission to copy. This regulation expressly forbids copying any textbook/workbook/activity book pages for distribution to a class unless there is an explicit statement in the text stating permission is granted.

## EXPOSURE CONTROL PLAN FOR BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGENS

In educational settings, it may not be known who carries an infectious disease. Because pathogens such as Hepatitis B and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV causes AIDS) are carried through the bloodstream, each contact with human blood or other body fluids represents a risk of disease. In an effort to minimize exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials by catechists (including volunteers and employees), the Department of Religious Education sets forth the following policy effective January 1, 2001.

- I. POTENTIALLY INFECTIOUS MATERIALS  
These would include blood and other body fluids such as feces, a large amount of nasal secretions, sputum (saliva mixed with mucus from the breathing passages), urine and vomiting containing visible blood.
  
- II. OBSERVATION OF UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS
  - A. Avoid direct contact with any body fluid. Disposable gloves made of an impenetrable material (e.g. latex) must be worn whenever there is an anticipation of direct hand contact with body fluids (e.g. treating bloody noses or scrapes, handling clothes soiled by incontinence, cleaning small spills [vomit, urine, blood, etc.] by hand).  
  

**N.B.** Programs would be well advised to consider the purchase of latex-free gloves to avoid serious allergic reactions from people who are latex sensitive.
  
  - B. Protective gloves should be removed by pulling from the wrist and turning the glove inside out. Gloves should be disposed of

after one use; never wash and re-use.

**N.B.** After removal of protective gloves, hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and hot water.

- C. In the event that an unplanned and unanticipated skin contact with any body fluids should occur where gloves are not immediately available (e.g. when wiping a runny nose, applying pressure to a bleeding injury) hands and other affected skin areas should be thoroughly washed with soap and water.

### III. DISPOSAL OF INFECTIOUS WASTE

To be considered infectious waste, items must be *saturated or dripping with blood/body fluids*.

- A. If this amount of blood is present in an emergency situation, it is recommended that an ambulance, paramedic or other professional medical unit be called. These professionals will take and dispose of any infectious waste that is present due to a serious accident.
- B. Gauze pads, band aids, tissues, etc., stained with drops or small amounts of body fluid are **not** considered infectious waste; they should be double bagged in plastic and disposed of in a normal manner.
- C. Body fluids containing blood, such as vomitus, must be disposed of in a red biohazard bag. (Try to ascertain if red color in body fluid is due to something the person ingested, such as red beverage, jello, fruit snack, etc. If in doubt, treat as infectious waste.) For disposal of red biohazard bag, please call the Diocesan Director of Religious Education for instructions.
- D. Surfaces contaminated with spilled or leaked body fluids will be cleaned with an industrial strength detergent to remove visible soil and disinfected by rinsing for at least 3 minutes with a 1:10 solution of bleach.

### IV. REPORTING OF INCIDENT

- A. Any incident involving the presence of blood should be reported to the Parish Faith Formation leader immediately.
- B. Parents of the student involved should be notified immediately in the case of a serious incident or as soon as possible in the case of a minor accident.
- C. The Faith Formation leader will complete the **Potential Exposure Incident Report**. (It is not necessary to complete a form for an incident which simply required washing with soap and water and applying a bandaid or use of a tissue.) A copy of this report should be given to the catechist involved, to the parents of the student involved, a copy placed in the catechist's personnel file.
  - N.B.** This form must be sent to the Diocesan Director of Religious Education in the event that exposure was not controlled by universal precautions (i.e., no gloves were used, splattering of blood or mucus occurred, etc.).
  - D. In the case of unprotected exposure, it is recommended that the person exposed contact their physician immediately to determine the necessity of hepatitis injections.

## V. PARISH PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Catechists are to be in-serviced regarding the policy for Blood-borne Pathogens. A record of this in-service is to be included in the catechist's personnel file, using the Blood-borne Pathogens In-Service Form.
  - B. Protective (latex or other) gloves are to be provided for each catechist and stored in every room used as a Religious Education area (e.g. desk, cupboard, supply basket, etc.) and are to be immediately accessible to the catechist.
  - C. Body Fluid Clean-Up Kits must be available in each area where students gather for Religious Education (i.e. school, church hall, center, etc.).
  - D. Volunteers who accompany students on field trips, retreats, ect., who have not been in-serviced as a catechist, will be instructed about the precautions to be taken upon exposure to body fluids as outlined in this policy. Protective gloves will be provided to such volunteers. It is recommended that a spill kit be included in the first aid supplies which will accompany the event. Such volunteers will sign an in-service form indicating they have been in-serviced.
- N.B.** Programs may wish to provide a "home-made" kit consisting of protective gloves, antibacterial hand wipes, and instructions in a locking plastic bag for such volunteers.

DIOCESE OF ERIE  
BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGEN IN-SERVICE FORM

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_  
has completed in-service training on the topic of exposure  
to blood-borne pathogens.

Date of In-Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Catechist:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your signature on this form is an official statement that you  
have been in-serviced on and understand your  
responsibilities in relation to the Diocese of Erie Blood-  
borne Pathogen policy.

Training Session conducted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature on this form is an official statement that you have read and reviewed the Saint Hippolyte Handbook.

Please return to the PSR Office by October 15, 2023.

This form will be placed in your personnel file.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_