



FAMILY PREP HANDBOOK 2022-2023

The Christian family is ordinarily the first experience of the Christian community and the primary environment for growth in the faith. Because it is the “church of the home,” the family provides a unique locus for catechesis. It is a place in which the word of God is received and from which it is extended. Within the Christian family, parents are the primary educators in the faith and “the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.”

~National Directory for Catechesis

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION FAMILY PREP PROGRAM

THIS HANDBOOK CONTAINS CERTAIN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR IMMACULATE CONCEPTION'S PREP PROGRAM. THE PROGRAM MAY CHANGE ANY OF ITS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AS NEEDED AND APPLY THEM AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE.

IN THE EVENT OF SUCH A CHANGE PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN PROMPT NOTIFICATION AND PROVIDED WITH AN ADDENDUM IF NECESSARY.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT A PARTICULAR POLICY OR PROCEDURE PLEASE CONTACT THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR.

STUDENTS AND PARENTS MUST ACCEPT AND ABIDE BY THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CONTAINED IN THIS HANDBOOK IN ORDER FOR THE STUDENT TO ATTEND THE PROGRAM.

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Immaculate Conception BVM Parish Religious Education Handbook 2022-2023

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for parents/guardians, catechists, and students in Immaculate Conception BVM's Religious Education Program.

The Mission of Our Religious Education Program

The Immaculate Conception Parish Religious Education Program encourages students to deepen their ***knowledge of the Catholic Faith***, its heritage and traditions; to participate more consciously and fully in the ***liturgical life*** of the Church; to grow in understanding the attitudes and values of Jesus Christ as found in the Sacred Scriptures which lay the foundation for ***moral decision making***; to become people who know their prayers as well as people of ***prayer***; to grow in understanding the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to a **faith community**; and, to have a fuller understanding of the ***missionary*** nature of the Church that is rooted in our Baptism. It is our hope that this program, strengthened by parental involvement, regular prayer at home as well as study, participation at weekly Mass and the sacraments, will bring children to a deeper love of God and others and a more generous service of God and others.

We recognize the role of parents as primary religious educators and have organized the program as an aid and supplement of the faith formation, religious instruction, and practice of the faith received in the home. Through an understanding of these ***tasks of catechesis*** (italicized above), the use of the **Archdiocesan Religious Guidelines** and basic religion texts, each catechist strives to nurture the student's spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social abilities in an effort to bring the child to a personal, living relationship with God.

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Chaplain of PREP: Rev. Al Masluk

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GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Sessions begin promptly at **10:45 A.M.** Doors will open at 10:35 A.M. Students arriving by car should enter at the back door and students walking should enter at the front door. All students should head directly to their classrooms.

Parents/Guardians are asked to assist with safety by monitoring the front door of the school and the back cafeteria door.

ASSESSMENT

Students need to exhibit proficient mastery of the required material for their grade level to be considered for promotion at the end of the year. Assessing student progress provides feedback to students, parents, and catechists alike, allows corrective measures to be taken when necessary to help ensure that a student's proficient mastery is attained, and ensures that families receive assistance as needed to help them succeed.

ARCHDIOCESAN ASSESSMENTS

Two assessments developed by the Archdiocesan Office for Catechetical Formation (OCF) will be administered to students by their catechists during the PREP school year. The Archdiocesan Mid-Year Assessment will be administered to students in January and the Year-End Assessment will be administered in May. A study guide for each assessment will be provided to parents a month in advance. The study guides are in the format of an outline and are roughly two pages in length. The assessments are approximately 30 questions consisting of multiple choice, true & false, matching, word bank, and 1 or 2 short answer questions. Parents whose child may need testing accommodations should contact the Program Director to discuss particular needs.

ARCHDIOCESAN RELIGION GUIDELINES

So that you can be aware of the Archdiocesan Guidelines for each grade and help the children with the knowledge of their faith, the main focus for each grade is detailed below.

Level 1: Creation: human beings have a unique place in creation; human life is sacred; God the Father: the First Person of the Trinity; God the Son: Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity; God the Holy Spirit: the Third Person of the Trinity; Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist; Sunday Mass; The Liturgical Year; Mary: Titles of Mary; Days in Honor of Mary; Saints
Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be To The Father (Doxology), Angel of God; Simple Morning Prayer; Prayers at Mealtime

- Level 2:** Blessed Trinity: Central Mystery of Our Faith; One God in Three Persons; Sacraments: Instituted by Christ; Sacraments of Initiation; Sacraments of Healing: Penance and the Sacrament of the Sick; Sacraments at the Service of Communion: Matrimony and Holy Orders; The Liturgy: Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist; Topics related to The Liturgy and Mass; The Liturgical Year; Mary: Titles of Mary; Days in Honor of Mary; Saints
Preparation for First Penance/Reconciliation and First Eucharist
Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be..., Act of Sorrow (Contrition); Prayers of Praise (adoration – A), Asking for Forgiveness (Contrition – C); Thanks – T; Prayers for the needs of others (supplication – S) ACTS; Prayers/Responses of the Sunday Liturgy
- Level 3:** The Trinity: Central Mystery of Our Faith; Community of Love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; The Church; The Sacraments - more fully developed; Apostles and the Mission of the Church; The Liturgical Year; The Sunday Liturgy; Mary: Titles of Mary, Days in Honor of Mary; Saints
Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be..., Act of Contrition, Apostles Creed, The Rosary, Prayer of the Mass, Angel of God, Stations of the Cross
- Level 4:** God the Father: revealed the Covenant on Mt. Sinai; Commandments: Words of God; Path of Life; Duties to God and to Neighbor; Grace; Gift of the Spirit; Sin: Original and Personal; Conscience: Formation, Examination; Jesus Christ Our Redeemer: Reveals Meaning of the New Covenant; The Beatitudes; The Works of Mercy; Virtues: Theological and Cardinal; The Liturgical Year; Mary: Apparitions; Days in Honor of Mary; Saints
Prayers: Prayers of Levels 1-3; Prayers of the Mass; Hail, Holy Queen; The Angelus; The Rosary
- Level 5:** Sacraments: Definitions; Purpose
Sacraments of Initiation: Definition; Purpose; Rite; Elements
Sacraments of Healing: Definition; Purpose; Rite; Elements
Sacraments at the Service of Communion: Definition; Purpose; Rite; Elements
The Liturgical Year; Mary: Beliefs about Mary; Days in Honor of Mary; Saints
Prayers: Prayers of Levels 1-4; Understanding of Vocal, Mental, Liturgical Prayer; Prayers of Adoration; Thanksgiving, Petition, Contrition; The Rosary; Regina Coeli; Magnificat
- Level 6:** The Bible: Definition; Structure
Hebrew Scriptures: Major Persons and Events (Creation, The Fall, Choosing A Special People, Moses, Exodus, the Covenant, Judges, Kings, Important Queens, Prophets
Christ Fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures: Incarnation; Baptism and Public Life
The Liturgical Year; Mary: Dogmas believed about Mary (Immaculate Conception, Mary's Divine Motherhood, The Virgin Birth, The Assumption); Days in Honor of Mary

Initiate Preparation for Confirmation

Prayers: Prayers of Levels 1-5; Memorare; Magnificat; Kinds of Prayer:

Communal – Liturgical; Private; Sources of Prayer: the Word of God, the Liturgy of the Church

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance at Mass and classes is essential for any measure of success in a Religious Education Program. Weekly attendance enables your children to grow in the knowledge of the Faith; to develop a sense of belonging to the parish community; and, to grow, through regular prayer, in their relationship with God.

Since PREP takes place for only **60 minutes each week**, time in the classroom is very short. Consequently, we ask that students not be dismissed from their class early unless it is an extreme emergency. Parents must notify the Director of Religious Education via email and provide a note to the catechist in this event.

If your child is going to be absent on a given Sunday, please notify the Director of Religious Education and the catechist in writing. It helps make the class go more smoothly when the catechist knows a child will be absent.

At the beginning of each class, attendance is taken. Tardiness and early dismissals are a great disruption. Please try to keep this to a minimum out of respect for the other children.

Excused Absences constitute mandatory school activities (such as school concerts, etc.) and must be communicated to the PREP office a week prior to the activity. Illness or a death in the family are, of course, excused absences.

If a child has missed four or more classes, the parents/guardian will be notified. If the absences continue another meeting will be set up to discuss the child repeating the grade the following year. A maximum of 4 classes may be made up via our online educational system.

Parents/Guardians are asked to contact PREP for work that has been missed.

CATECHETICAL STAFF & PERSONNEL

Immaculate Conception PREP program participates in and adheres to the Safe Environment Program (SEP) mandated by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. This policy has been in effect in all Archdiocesan parishes, schools, and children's programs since 2002, and has undergone several revisions as the SEP and State Law have evolved. All Program personnel are required to abide by the Safe Environment Program of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which includes the following:

REQUIRED TRAININGS

- **Safe Environment Training session:** This training is mandated by and provided through the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The training session is about two and a half hours long and must be completed by new employees and volunteers within 90 days of beginning

service with Immaculate Conception PREP. This training needs to be completed one time only.

- **Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries (SMBB):** All volunteers and employees must agree in writing to abide by and uphold the SMBB, which will be presented at the Safe Environment Training Session.
- **Mandated Reporter Training:** This training is required by PA State Law and is provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. It consists of three 20 minutes training modules, which can be completed online. This training will be updated from time to time as PA State Law requires. Volunteers will be notified when this training requires updating. The entire training must be completed within 14 days of beginning service with Immaculate Conception PREP.

REQUIRED BACKGROUND CHECKS

- **PA State Police Criminal Record Check.** To be completed prior to beginning service with Immaculate Conception PREP (free for volunteers). Must be renewed every five years.
- **PA Child Abuse History Clearance.** To be completed prior to beginning service with the Immaculate Conception PREP (free for volunteers). Must be renewed every five years.
- **Federal Background Check (Fingerprinting):** Required only of volunteers who reside outside of Pennsylvania or who have resided outside Pennsylvania any time within the last 10 years (fee paid for by the volunteer and reimbursed by the parish once the processed clearance and receipt for payment have been submitted). To be completed 90 days prior to beginning service in Immaculate Conception PREP. Must be renewed every five years until 10 years of PA residency is attained. Thereafter, the volunteer must submit a *Disclosure Statement Application* every five years (see next bullet point).
- **Disclosure Statement Application.** To be completed every five years by volunteers who have resided in PA for at least 10 years.

CALENDAR

Parents/Guardians and catechists receive the PREP calendar of dates at the start of the program. Children in Levels 1-6 and Confirmation Candidates (Level 7) meet on Sundays from 10:45 A.M. – 11:45 A.M. in Immaculate Conception Parish. Please keep the calendar in a prominent place at home especially noting special dates for parent and/or sacramental meetings.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Students in the Immaculate Conception Religious Education Program are expected, at all times, to be **respectful, courteous, and honest** to the director, catechists, support help and parents assisting with PREP. Conduct by students, family members, or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the parish is grounds for disciplinary action. Conduct that includes cases of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic (including but not limited to social media posts, texting, emails, etc.), against any member of the program community, is grounds for immediate dismissal from the Program, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The Program Director makes the final determination of what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior, both in and out of class, in the Program generally, and outside the Program, where such improper behavior affects the Program community. The Program Director will make the final determination as to what behaviors warrant disciplinary action.

In the classroom students are expected to:

- Arrive to class on time
- Be prepared for class with their homework and book bag
- Respect the property of the school building and other students
- Listen to the catechist (teacher) and follow directions
- Show respect, through words and actions, to the catechist (teacher) and other students
- Not call out in class
- Not leave their seats unless asked to do otherwise
- Not be a distraction to other students

If a student is problematic in class:

- He/she will be asked to leave the classroom and report to the Director of Religious Education.
- The catechist will send a note to the director with an explanation as to why the student was asked to leave the classroom.
- The director will notify the parents/guardians.

If a student has been asked to leave the classroom on three separate occasions:

- His/her parents/guardians will be contacted for a conference with the director and if applicable with the catechist.
- If the behavior of the student does not improve after the parent meeting, the parents/guardians will be notified and the student will be suspended from the program for one week.
- If the behavior of the student does not improve after a suspension, the parents/guardians will be notified and the student will be asked to leave the program.

BULLYING

- Acts of harassment, hazing, intimidation and bullying (including cyber bullying and the like) are unacceptable behaviors and are prohibited in our Programs. Program personnel cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under their direct supervision. However, to the extent such conduct affects the environment of the Program, and the rights and welfare of the students, and is within the control of the Program in its normal operations, it is the Program's intent to prevent bullying and thus, will take action to investigate, respond, discipline and remediate any acts of bullying. Administration, catechetical staff, and all Program participants are to demonstrate appropriate behavior by treating others with civility and respect, and being aware of and not tolerating harassment, intimidation, hazing and bullying, etc. If incidents do

occur, families should be able to report and know that the inappropriate behavior will be dealt with promptly and effectively. There will be no retaliation against a victim, reporter, or witness. Bullying involves actions or words against another for the purpose of inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to a person's reputation that is intimidating or threatening and affects the learning and Program environments. The following describes types of bullying but is not an exhaustive list.

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something
- Getting another person to hit or harm a student
- Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks or threatening in person or by other means
- Demeaning and making another the victim of jokes
- Making rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting the student
- Intimidating (bullying), extorting or exploiting
- Spreading hurtful rumors or gossip
- If the bully is threatening harm, a student should tell a catechist, adult volunteer and/or the Program Director immediately so that action can be taken to remediate the situation. Parents that become aware of a bullying situation should speak directly with the Program director. Parents/guardians and the pastor will be notified of the situation, and Law Enforcement Officials may be contacted if warranted (e.g., someone threatened with a weapon, terroristic threats, etc.).

CONTRABAND

BRINGING CONTRABAND TO PROGRAM SESSIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL BE CONFISCATED AND RETURNED TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS ONLY! Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified. Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to gum, toys, electronic games, iPods, iPads, mp3 players, weapons, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco products. It is unlawful for minors to be in the possession of alcohol or tobacco products. Students found to be in the possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the program. Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified. Students will be immediately dismissed from the program and all proper and necessary authorities will be notified if they or their family members bring weapons, drugs or drug paraphernalia of any kind onto parish property.

VANDALISM

The PREP Program shares space with the Immaculate Conception Community. As such, it is imperative that a healthy relationship be maintained between the two programs. All students and their families are expected to respect parish property, which includes the school facilities and all items in the classroom. At no time are students permitted to use, touch, or borrow any material or items from the Immaculate Conception classrooms. Catechists are provided with classroom supplies and other essentials and will make them available to students when needed. Incidents of vandalism to parish property, including school facilities, will be taken most seriously. The parents of any student who is found to be responsible for an incident of vandalism will be required to make restitution for the damage inflicted. The school and parish will prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law and take appropriate disciplinary action which may include suspension or dismissal from the program for serious acts of vandalism.

Suspension and Dismissal from the Religious Education Program

The Archdiocesan policy states that action shall be imposed for serious misbehavior. A student may be automatically suspended or dismissed for:

- Verbal and non-verbal disrespect for authority
- Vandalism or marking school property
- Using profane language and actions
- Absence without parent knowledge
- Leaving school or classroom without permission
- Stealing
- Smoking in the building or on school grounds
- Fighting, physically or verbally
- Carrying or using drugs, including alcoholic beverages
- Carrying weapons

The director, catechist, parent, and student will sign a written record of suspension.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Adequate and clear communication with home is essential for the success of any education of students. Parents should feel free to call the Director of Religious Education about any situation of concern.

There will be various communications to parents during the year. The following are the usual means of communication:

- Emails from the Director of Religious Education to parents regarding specific events/activities.
- Parish Bulletin
- The parish website: <https://www.iccjenkintown.org/religious-education>

Periodically children are given the responsibility of delivering flyers/notes to parents from the catechists or director.

Parents will provide email addresses to assist in making communication between parents/guardians and PREP more efficient.

CURRICULUM

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has published Religion Guidelines for use in teaching the subject of Religion in Grades Pre-K to 12. To help us accomplish this, the Immaculate Conception Religious Education Program uses Finding God 2021, Loyola University Press (Levels K-6); and Confirmed in the Spirit, Loyola University Press (Confirmation). This program makes use of many supplemental materials - written, audio and visual - to enhance the learning experience. Parents can access the program online at www.loyolapress.com and register with the code FG2021.

DISMISSAL

To ensure the safety of all students, please observe the following procedures for dismissal:

- Permission forms are provided by parents/guardians for the two forms of dismissal.
 - Dismissal via the car line is at the rear of the building outside of the cafeteria. Parents form a single carline outside. The children will be brought to the waiting parent.
 - No child, even accompanied by a parent/guardian, exits via the back door of the cafeteria unless to be picked up at the carline.
 - If a child is walking home, they will be dismissed from the front door.
- If a child must be dismissed early, the parent/guardian **MUST** send a note to the Director of Faith Formation or the catechist or the child will not be permitted to leave the building.
- Children with an early dismissal are picked up at the front door of school (not the classroom) and parents are required to use the Sign Out Sheet before any child leaves the building.
- Only children in Levels 5 and above are permitted to walk independently to and from class each week. Children in Levels 1-4 must be picked up by a parent/guardian, a designated adult, or a brother/sister in Level 5 and up.

DUAL PARENTING REPORTING

In cases where this applies, the names and addresses of both parents should be given at registration. There should be on file custodial information indicating to which parent the child should be released after class. Unless otherwise instructed, information commonly made available to parents of any student in attendance will be made to both parents.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Program realizes that devices such as cell phones have become a necessary and convenient technological and communication tool for both parents and children. We ask your help in encouraging children to make sure any such devices are not a distraction during PREP classes.

EMERGENCIES

At registration time, parents/guardians are asked to provide home and work numbers, as well as another emergency number, which would be used in case of an accident or emergency. Parents/Guardians provide a health emergency form for this purpose as well. Should the numbers/information change during the year, please notify the Director of Religious Education at the parish office.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

If there is snow or other emergency and Immaculate Conception Religious Education Program will not hold classes, please check the website iccjenkintown.org and look for an email announcement that PREP is closed.

FEES

The program fees for PREP 2022-2023 are due by September 1, 2022. The fee is \$145/\$160 per child. These fees help cover some of the costs for student textbooks, catechists' materials, basic supplies, copy paper, photo-copying and catechist in-services.

Families who need financial aid or a payment plan can contact the Director of Religious Education.

HOME SCHOOLING

In keeping with the guidelines from the Office for Catechetical Formation, home schooling lies within the jurisdiction of the Pastor. The Director of Religious Education facilitates this effort. Parents who homeschool sign a contract/agreement with the director. Parents of students in Levels 2 and 6 are encouraged to send their children to classes during the sacramental preparation years for First Penance, First Communion and Confirmation due to the concentrated instruction and preparation for these sacraments.

HOMEWORK

Homework in the content area is encouraged to help a student gain a better knowledge and understanding of his/her faith. Parents are encouraged to actively participate in helping his/her child grow in faith by ensuring that homework is completed on the weeks that catechists assign a home activity or a special project.

PREP MASSES

PREP children should attend the 9:30 AM Mass each week as regularly as possible. In the event that you are unable to attend the 9:30 AM Mass, we expect children to attend Mass at another time. Our religious education programs can communicate information and provide experiences for celebrating the sacraments, but the practice and example of living out the faith are equally important. It is natural that parents and guardians are the primary educators and role models in the faith to those entrusted in their care. Children need to see a connection between what they learn in class and what they experience at home.

REGISTRATION

Registration for new students and re-registration for those already in the program takes place in the **summer**. It is important to fill out the forms and return them as soon as possible. This enables the director to recruit needed catechists as well as order the necessary materials for the coming year.

At the time of registration it is necessary to present:

- **A copy of your child's Baptismal Certificate**
- **The fee for the year**

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

A child is expected to attend a minimum of two consecutive years of formal Religious Education in order to begin preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. Generally, the children receive the Sacraments of Penance/Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in Level 2 (2nd Grade). Generally, the children receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the fall of 7th Grade and begin the preparation in Level 6 (6th Grade).

Sacramental Parent Meetings are mandatory for all sacraments and other events associated with the sacraments.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSONS

As part of its Safe Environment Program (SEP), the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education (OCE) in conjunction with the Archdiocesan Office for Children and Youth Protection (OCYP) provides all students enrolled in Catholic and Religious Education with grade appropriate lessons on the topic of keeping themselves safe. These lessons are required to be presented to all students participating in the PREP Program. Parents click [here](#) or visit the [Archdiocesan Safe Environment website](#) to review the “Kid Talk” lessons. Parents who do not wish to have their child/children partake in these lessons must complete an Opt Out Form by February 28, 2021. This form can be found at the end of this document. Completed forms will become part of the student’s permanent record, and a copy will also be submitted to the OCYP per their policy. Opt Out Forms must be renewed yearly.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If your child has any special needs, please notify the Director of Religious Education at registration.

Providing an IEP or other information from your child’s school is helpful. Every effort will be made to include your child and accommodate his/her needs.

TEXTBOOKS

The textbooks used in the Program are approved by the Archdiocesan Office for Catholic Education, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Every student will be assigned a textbook. This textbook is a necessary tool in helping the catechist achieve the required learning objectives. Therefore, students must bring their textbooks to every Family Session. Parents should exercise caution in making sure that the textbook is secured in a set place within the home so it is not lost during the academic year. Lost textbooks will need to be replaced. Parents assume full responsibility for all costs associated with the replacement textbook including any taxes, shipping, and handling fees.