



**Immaculate Conception Church
Religious Education Program**

Welcome

I know many of you are already preparing for your children and teens to begin their school year. In school they learn many different subjects. The one subject missing in public schools is religion. Let us give our children an opportunity to build a true and lasting relationship with God. Our program is held on Sunday throughout the ICC campus. We offer classes from Kindergarten to High School. If you registered last year, there is no need to register again; just let us know if anything has changed. If you are new to the parish or did not participate in the religious education program last year, please fill out the registration form. Registration forms can be located in the church office, or online. The Religious Education Program exists to assist in the catechetical formation of your children. The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with information and the expectations of the Religious Education Program of Immaculate Conception Parish.

Class Time

Religious Education is held on Sunday mornings at 9:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

- Students should have already gone to the restroom, or had a drink of water, and be in the classroom, seated and ready for class to begin at 9:15 am. Tardiness interrupts the flow of teaching. Class time is limited and your help is greatly appreciated.
- Food and drink are not allowed in the classrooms.
- Class ends at 10:30 am. Please pick up your child/children in the FLC Social hall.
- Cell phones are to be turned off and put away during class time. If a student is found using a cell phone for any purpose the cell phone will be collected and the parent will be asked to retrieve the cell phone from the teacher or Director.

Behavior

Our religious education teachers are VOLUNTEERS. They give of their time freely to help you build a foundation of faith in your child/children. They deserve respect from all concerned.

All students are expected to conduct themselves in a Christian manner by respecting their teachers, each other, and church property. Misbehavior in class will not be tolerated. If there is a problem, the teacher and the Director of Religious Education will contact the appropriate parents and solicit their assistance. Parents of a student with chronic behavior issues may be asked to attend class with their child; this will require the parent to pass a background check in order to remain in the classroom.

If a problem arises with a child:

- 1st:** The teacher will speak to the child about their behavior trying to resolve it.
- 2nd:** If there is no improvement the teacher will speak to the parent about the issue.
- 3rd:** If there is still no improvement the Director will speak to the parents.
- 4th:** If the child is still disruptive, at the discretion of the Director;
 - The parent/s will be asked to attend class with their child
 - The parent/s will be asked to home school their child

Safety

A parent must accompany their student to the classroom and sign them in/out if they are in an Elementary grade. Parents dropping off students must make sure their student goes to the classroom.

- We cannot be responsible for the safety and well-being of a student who has not reached the classroom.
- Once a student is in the classroom, he/she WILL NOT be allowed to leave the room without permission from the teacher and supervision by a volunteer.
- At the parents request we can inform parents of a student's attendance in order to help them know that their child is actually reporting to the classroom.

Sacramental Classes

First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation require a little more attention than other classes. A Catholic in good standing has a right to receive the Sacraments, but it is the responsibility of the Pastor to assure that those receiving a Sacrament for the first time have been properly catechized. This cannot be accomplished without your help.

Parents enrolling children in a sacramental preparation class will be asked to provide a copy of the student's baptismal certificate. Students in Sacramental Preparation classes may not have more than **three unexcused and six excused** absences during the school year.

First Reconciliation:

First Confession is received prior to their First Holy Communion. The Diocesan policy states that those preparing for the sacrament must be in 2nd grade or are 8 years of age. Soon after classes have begun parents will be provided with information about the knowledge students must master prior to receiving the sacrament. This will include the basic Catholic prayers that must be recited, the prayers used in confession, and basic knowledge about the sacrament. Parents will need to work with their children at home to help them master this information and know their prayers. First Confession will be held the First Saturday in February after the 8 a.m. morning mass.

First Holy Communion:

First Holy Communion at ICC takes place in the 2nd grade and occurs the second Saturday in May at the 5:30 p.m. evening mass. Again, soon after classes have begun in the fall, parents will be provided with information about the knowledge students must master prior to receiving the sacrament. **All candidates for First Communion must present a copy of their baptismal certificate along with the sacramental information sheet provided. Paperwork must be turned in by December 31st.**

1. Dress code for First Holy Communion:

Girls: White dress (veil is optional), white socks and dress shoes - shoulders must be covered (St. Mary's Bookstore can provide veils. This will be discussed in the meeting with parents.)

Boys: White shirt and black tie with black pants (suit or sport coat is optional), black dress shoes and socks.

Older children who have not made their First Confession and/or First Holy Communion will join a special class and will be prepared for the sacraments with older students.

Confirmation:

The Sacrament of Confirmation at ICC is done during the 8th Grade year. The Diocesan policy states that those preparing for the sacrament must be in 8th grade or 13 years of age. Older students and adults who have missed the opportunity to receive Confirmation will be provided with a special program of preparation

1. **All candidates for Confirmation must present a copy of their baptismal certificate along with the sacramental information sheet provided. Paperwork must be turned in by December 31st.**
2. All candidates must participate in a pre-confirmation retreat the last Friday and Saturday of January. This will be held at Immaculate Conception School.
3. Candidates will choose a Sponsor. The first choice and most appropriate choice for a Confirmation sponsor is always one of the candidate's Godparents. Regardless, Confirmation Sponsors must be at least 16, confirmed, and a practicing Catholic. Sponsors will be asked to obtain a letter from their pastor stating that they have been registered in their parish for at least one year and have demonstrated regular attendance at Sunday Mass (a form will be provided). Married sponsors must be in a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church. Parents may not serve as sponsors. A sponsor must be present at the ceremony. If the desired sponsor cannot be present a proxy can stand in their place. Parents must attend a retreat in order to meet the Parish requirements for their student's confirmation, sponsors are welcomed at the retreat.

4. Early in the fall, parents will be provided with the requirements for this program and the knowledge that must be mastered by the students prior to receiving Confirmation. Additionally, the student must complete 20 hours of community service. Of the 20 hours 5 have to be spiritual, (communal rosary, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, etc.), and 15 hours of physical service. A form for keeping track of the community service hours will be provided.
5. The date for Confirmation is set by the Bishop's office. Should the date for Confirmation at Immaculate Conception present an insurmountable conflict, arrangements can be made for the candidate to receive Confirmation at the cathedral.
6. **DRESS CODE: from the bishop's office**

Because of the special nature of the occasion, and the spirituality of the place, dress for the confirmation should reflect the importance of the moment and what is taking place.

- a. **For Girls:** Dresses which cover the shoulders and come down to a respectable length near the knee in white or pastel colors. Modest, simple clothing with no large jewelry.
- b. **For Boys:** Collared long sleeve shirts, (white or pastel in color) with appropriate tie and kaki or dress slacks with dress shoes; no tennis/jogging shoes
- c. **Sponsors:** should abide by this same dress code.
- d. No robes or "stoles" should be worn for the confirmation.

Safe at Last

This is a program mandated for the Diocese by the Bishop in accordance with the Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children to promote the safety of children and to protect them from sexual predators. A schedule of class dates will be provided to inform parents when their child's class will be taught.

All who serve in our Religious Education Program have participated in background checks to further ensure the safety of our children. Anyone wishing to participate in the program, including parents who wish to sit in classes, must complete a background check prior to any contact with children.

If any parent believes that there is a problem with any volunteer or if any parent feels that there is inappropriate behavior toward their child/children by anyone connected with the Religious Education program, adult or child, that parent should report their concerns *immediately* to the Director of Religious Education, to the Pastor or to both. As will be explained in parent orientation, *failure to report* an honest concern to the appropriate authority can be considered a criminal offense. All of us are responsible for providing the safest possible environment for our children!

Donations

Donations are greatly appreciated to help with the cost of materials. No one will be turned away for not being able to donate.

Finally

The family is the first church where the most necessary education in the faith begins. A good solid example of faith for your child begins at home. Participate in Mass together and pray together. They learn what they live, and practice what they have learned. Thank you for your cooperation and support. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at the church office.

Sincerely,

Deacon Juan Garza
Director of Religious Education
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