

OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
FAMILY HANDBOOK**



**GROWING A FAITH ON FIRE
GROWING DISCIPLES**

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Welcome Letter | 4 |
| Mission, Vision and Goal Statement | 5 |
| Admission Policy | 6 |
| Religious Education Plan..... | 7 |
| Registration Process | 7 |
| Custodial Rights of Parents/Guardians | 8 |
| Student Attendance (face-to-face) | 8 |
| Student Attendance (virtual) | 8 |
| Student Attendance (Sunday Mass) | 9 |
| Faith Formation Curriculum | 9 |
| Sacraments | 9 |
| Sacramental Prep Class Attendance | 10 |
| Calendar | 10 |
| Emergency Procedures | 11 |
| Student Medical Information | 11 |
| Student Records | 11 |
| Field Trips | 11 |
| Safe Environment Training for Children | 12 |
| Safe Environment Training for Adults | 12 |
| Volunteers | 12 |
| Catechist Education/Certification | 12 |
| Student Code of Conduct | 13 |
| Student Behavior, Disciplinary Actions | 13 |
| Dress Code , Prohibited Items | 14 |
| Prayer of Thanks | 15 |
| Acknowledgement Form (sign and return to office) | |

Welcome to OLQM Religious Education Program.

We are pleased that you have registered your child to receive additional instruction in the Catholic faith. While you, as parents and guardians, have the primary responsibility of raising your children in the Catholic faith, we — the parish staff and volunteers — will work with you to the best of our ability to support you and help your children grow in their love of God and understanding of our faith.

Great effort, by the Departments of Religious Education at the diocese and here in our parish, has been put into the creation and development of this year's Religious Education Program. During this unprecedented time, facing the uncertainty of the future, we may need to adjust our plan dramatically as we did in the Spring.

This handbook provides to you, the parents and guardians, information about our program regarding both your and our responsibilities in this important undertaking. Please take the time to read through this handbook as it contains important information for you regarding our program. The last page is an Acknowledgement Form. It must be signed and returned to the office before your child begins our program.

If you have any questions, you are always welcome and encouraged to contact us. We thank you again for your participation. God bless you.

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OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish, Department of Religious seeks to serve the faith needs of our parish community through various religious programming for both children and adults.

VISION AND GOAL STATEMENT

Our children's program provides formal religious education during the school year for parishioners from kindergarten through tenth grade. We also have a new Youth Program for high school teenagers with the goal of helping them develop a deeper understanding of how to live one's faith in our world today.

The sacramental preparation programs for First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation for children are offered in conjunction with the religious education programs for both public and Catholic school children. At this time the expectation of The Diocese of Venice requires these sacraments be conferred in one's home parish.

The baptismal preparation program for parents and godparents provides an understanding of their roles as the child's primary teachers of the faith.

The RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation) process leads adults and young people through the Catholic faith, culminating in their acceptance into full communion in the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil.

Other programs are offered for continuing adult religious education and enrichment throughout the year, including seminars, retreats, discussion groups and special seasonal workshops.

All the programs under the auspices of Religious Education are proffered by staff and volunteers sharing the love of Christ to encourage a growing faith in our parish family and celebration of God's gifts.

Admission Policy:

All children are welcome to participate in religious education at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish. Children from other faith backgrounds are welcome to participate with their Catholic friends as well, provided their parents send in written permission for them to attend with their Catholic friends OR register them to attend regularly.

Students with special needs will be accommodated to the best of our ability. It should be noted that all Religious Education catechists (teachers) are volunteers and are not certified to work with special needs students. Parental/guardian involvement in the classroom may be required, depending upon the needs of their student.

Registration Process:

Parents/guardians are required to complete a Religious Education registration packet (including payment) prior to their child's admission into the Program. ***A student may attend classes only if this process has been completed.***

Parents must provide a copy of their child's baptismal certificate (and First Eucharist if applicable) if the child's sacraments were received at a different parish.

Registration fees are as follows:

| | |
|---|-------|
| One child | \$45 |
| Two children | \$80 |
| Three or more children | \$125 |
| Sacramental prep - additional fees..... | \$10 |

Please make checks payable to ***“Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church”*** with ***“Religious Education tuition”*** written on the subject line.

These fees go towards covering the costs of our program. We make every effort to ensure that the fees are as fair and equitable as possible. This year many changes were required in the classrooms to accommodate the requirements for safety during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to add a virtual component to our program.

Families with financial hardship may be eligible for assistance. To request assistance, an appointment must be made with our DRE, Fr. Timothy, prior to submitting registrations.

We gratefully accept donations from those who wish to contribute to other students with financial need.

Religious Education Plan:

It is the expectation that parents, guardians, and the OLQM Religious Education Department work as a cohesive team committed to foster and support each student's spiritual growth. Taking into consideration our current understanding of the circumstances in Western Florida, and following the recommendations of the county health department, state and local governments, and the Diocese of Venice, we put forward the following plan.

For parents/guardians, for face -to-face classes:

1. Students meet for Wednesday classes which begin at 7 PM and end at 8 PM. Please ensure your student arrives on time for every class and is sitting in their seat before 7 PM. If your student is going to be absent, you need to notify the Religious Education Office a timely manner.
2. Understand that as part of our effort to mitigate the community spread of Covid-19, a wellness check (*consisting of a short questionnaire and temperature check*) will be done on each student prior to attending class. If the student exhibits a temperature \geq 100.4F or answers yes to any of the questions, they will not be admitted. Masks will be worn by everyone while in the buildings and classrooms.
3. You will sign your student in and out for each class, including Wednesday classes, sacramental preparation classes, and retreats.
4. Only parents/guardians, and persons listed on the "Third Party " form will be permitted to take a student from the building. This is for their safety. If you chose to allow a person not on the list to pick up your student, a one time form can be signed when the student is dropped off. ***No student will be released without prior written consent.***
5. Attendance at mandatory parent meetings, sacramental preparation classes that include family, and sacrament retreats is expected. If you are unable to attend, you must contact the Religious Education Department in a timely manner.
6. Ensure that the Religious Education Department has all of your updated contact information and any pertinent medical information for your student.
7. You are expected to understand and support the rules in the Student Code of Conduct .They vary by age. A copy signed by your child and co-signed by you, the parent/guardian is required annually and will be maintained in their registration files.
8. We ask that you let us know if something has happened at home or in school that could affect how your student behaves during religious education classes.
9. Visitors are not allowed in the building while classes are in session.

Custodial Rights of Parents/Guardians:

The Coordinator of Religious Education should be informed by the custodial parent/guardian of the rights of a noncustodial parent/guardian as they pertain to the child's participation in the program. In addition, we need to be informed as to which other adults are or are not permitted to pick the child up from classes. Legal documentation, if available, should be given to the Coordinator of Religious Education to be kept in the child's file.

It should be noted that noncustodial parents/guardians/grandparents cannot enroll the child in Religious Education. The custodial parent/guardian must complete and sign all registration paperwork.

Student Attendance:

The Religious Education Program for K-8th grade at OLQM consists of **both** weekly sessions, either face to face or virtual, and attendance at the Sunday liturgies. The Program for 2020-2021 year will begin Sept. 23, 2020. (see the Religious Education calendar). There will be a special family Mass on Sept. 16 at 6:30 PM with an Orientation in Fr. Flynn Hall to follow. All parents/guardians are expected to attend.

OLQM Youth Group/Ministry is open to 9th-12th grade high school students. They also meet weekly on Wednesdays 7-8 PM in the OLQM Youth Room.

Face-to-face (in person):

Face to face classes will be held on Wednesdays from 7 PM to 8 PM. Students are expected to be on time and in their respective classroom seats by 7 PM. After the wellness check is done, parents will sign their child in and the child will be escorted to their classroom by one of our volunteers. Doors will be locked by 7:10 PM by security. Under special circumstances (for example prior notification) a child may be admitted to their class if approved by the Coordinator of Religious Education. The doors will be reopened at 8 PM by security, and the child will be brought out to the parents after they have been signed out. This is how we will track class attendance. If your child misses a class, it is expected that they will complete and submit any make-up work before the next class is held.

Virtual Classes (distance learning):

The ability to have internet access is essential for the virtual class modality to be successful. Our Program will use the electronic version of "Gospel Weeklies" for distance learning. In addition, families will receive the print copies of the same content. We will also supplement the learning experience by selecting materials from other virtual learning resources. Submission of assignments will be an important part of this process so that we may track your student's "attendance" and progress.

Sunday Mass:

All Religious Education students are expected to regularly attend a weekend Mass either in person or virtually. Mass times are every Saturday at 4 PM (vigil mass) and Sunday at 7:30 and 10 AM, both in person and are televised in real time from our parish. These masses are available on the parish Facebook page (<https://facebook.com/olqmsarasota>). The virtual masses are also saved on the website so as to be available for future viewing.

To document in person attendance at the Sunday Mass, children are to put a children's envelope in the weekend collection. A box of envelopes will be provided at the start of the school year. Monetary donations are not necessary, but a note of how your child will live their faith each week is encouraged (ex. prayers, acts of kindness etc.). For virtual students, an email can be sent to: faithformation@olqm.net with a reference as to which Mass they watched and what the homily was about.

Faith Formation Curriculum:

OLQM is currently using Pflaum's Gospel Weeklies curriculum for K thru 8th grade. This curriculum is designed to follow the liturgical year in pamphlet form. Each student will be provided the necessary materials, including both printed lesson materials, and an electronic version of the same. As parents/guardians, you are an active part of how your student learns about his/her faith. The Gospel Weeklies will reference the coming week's Sunday Gospel readings and engage your children in the Mass. Also, you will be provided with links to Pflaum's resources on their website. You will also receive instructions to access FORMED for any additional resource material we will send to you to supplement your student's learning.

Our First Reconciliation and First Eucharist program uses the "Together in Jesus" series. Our Confirmation program uses Dynamic Catholic and Youth bibles.

Homework:

While our curriculum does not provide "homework" lessons per se, assignments may occasionally be given at the discretion of the catechist. There are family activities to do with the Gospel Weeklies that the students are expected to do at home. If a child misses a face-to face class, they will be given an assignment to complete and submit as make-up for missing a class.

Virtual students will also submit assignments electronically so we can track their participation in the program.

Sacraments:

In the Diocese of Venice, children generally receive Baptism as infants, First Reconciliation and First Communion are received in second grade, and Confirmation in 10th grade. If your child is of an age to receive these sacraments, please be sure to include this on your registration forms. If your child has not received one or more of these sacraments and has passed the usual age of reception, please contact the Religious Education Coordinator to make arrangements to receive them.

Sacramental Preparation Class Attendance:

Baptism/First Reconciliation/First Eucharist

Children who are ready to receive Baptism, Reconciliation, and Communion must also enroll in the parish's regular Religious Education Program for their appropriate grade. It should be noted that these students are expected to attend a full year (1st Grade) of religious education prior to receiving their sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

First Reconciliation/First Communion preparation sessions are to be held once a month on designated Sundays from 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM in the St. George Center (school building) (see calendar). A parent/guardian is expected to attend these sessions with his/her student. If a student misses a sacramental prep session, that student will need to complete a make-up session that will be coordinated by the Catechist. ***ANY EXCEPTIONS MUST BE APPROVED BY THE DRE (Fr. Timothy).***

Confirmation

The Diocese of Venice has established requirements for students desiring Confirmation. A candidate for confirmation must be registered in a parish for both the preparation and the celebration of the Sacrament. One must "be enrolled in a catechetical program at a parish or in religion classes at a diocesan Catholic high school (in addition to the Sacramental Preparation program)." The Sacramental Preparation program begins in 9th grade and continues through the 10th grade concluding with the celebration of the Sacrament at the end of 10th grade. The candidate for Confirmation "must have a history of formal and continuous faith formation. A minimum of two full years, during 9th and 10th grade, is required in Youth Group / Religious Education / Catholic School." In addition to the afore mentioned formal catechetical education programs, all candidates "must attend the Sacramental Preparation program in the parish in which they are registered" and will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Calendar:

The 2020-2021 Religious Education calendar will be available in print and on the parish website under "Faith Formation". Once again, please understand that the status of face-to-face education remains a fluid situation based on the conditions of our pandemic situation. If any changes need to be made during the school year, you will be notified by email. As the parent/guardian it is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of the class schedule, retreat and special function dates.

Emergency Procedures:

In case of a medical emergency with a student, a parent/guardian will be contacted via the phone numbers listed on the Religious Education registration form. Please let us know if

Emergency Procedures: (cont.)

In the event of inclement weather, power outages, etc., parents/guardians will be notified via email, phone call, and/or text message that the evening's session is cancelled.

Procedures are in place for evacuation in case of fire or lockdown in case of a law enforcement emergency. For more information on these procedures, contact the OLQM Department of Religious Education.

Student Medical Information:

The Department of Religious Education is to be notified if a student has specific medical concerns or developmental/emotional difficulties and may need special consideration or treatment. A "Medical Authorization for Minors" form will be kept on file in the student's record. This information is kept confidential. Please note that no medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) can be administered or taken by the student during religious Education. The exception is an EpiPen, which can be administered if the parent/guardian provides a written request and directions for use.

Student Records:

The parents/guardians have the right to inspect any and all of their child's records. All other persons except appropriate parish program authorities will be denied access without written permission from their parent/guardian or a court order. Student records are kept for a minimum of seven years.

Field Trips:

Field trips are sometimes a part of the Youth Group Religious Education curriculum. However, with the current public health situation, all trips are cancelled until further notice. In the meantime, online retreats and special events or movie links will be offered as an option to supplement their curriculum. If bans are lifted, we will then integrate outings and events back into our class offerings.

your phone number can receive text messages. ***It is vitally important that these numbers are kept up-to-date.***

Every parish in the diocese is required to provide a Safe Environment class for all students with the objective to help them remain safe from predators and abusive situations. Safe environment training allows children to become more aware of their physical and spiritual self.

It provides them a resource with whom they feel safe and can trust to share questions and concerns, and instills in them the knowledge that they can receive help without feeling guilt or shame if they do tell. **It is a part of the Diocese curriculum for parish Religious Education Programs.**

It is ***not*** the same program that is offered in the public school system or other venues such as Scouting. Our goal is to give children information so that they may feel empowered to tell someone they trust if they are harmed or in danger of being harmed and can assist in their own self-protection. Together we can work to minimize the risk of abuse to our students.

Safe Environment Training for Adults:

Every employee and volunteer who has contact with children or vulnerable adults is required to attend the diocesan Safe Environment training. Every employee or volunteer within the Venice Diocese who has contact with a child or vulnerable adult is required to be fingerprinted and then rescreened every five years before being allowed to assist in a classroom. This training addresses diocesan requirements for all employees/volunteers including training regarding appropriate touch, never being alone with a child, and how to report suspected abuse.

Academic Staff:

Catechist Education/Certification:

The catechists (teachers) who teach in the Religious Education classes are volunteers. The education level of catechists varies. As such the Diocese of Venice and the parish Religious Education Department provide instructional workshops for the catechists to grow in their faith and better meet the needs of our young people. The Diocese of Venice also provides a program that will confer certification upon completion.

Volunteers:

Volunteers are always welcome and needed for the OLQM Religious Education Program. If a parent/guardian would like to volunteer as catechist or teacher's aide they must also complete the screening process. *Religious Education registration fees are waved for the chil-*

dren of volunteers.

Student Code of Conduct

Student Responsibilities:

Students are expected to observe basic rules of behavior which are posted in each classroom, come to classes prepared to learn and participate and to show respect to catechists, staff and other students. Repeated misbehavior, fighting, violence, bringing drugs or alcohol onto the premises, cheating, lying, or property damage may result in suspension or expulsion from the Religious Education program.

Cell phones will have their ringer turned off and will be placed in a container prior to the start of class so as to avoid being a distraction. No electronic items are permitted, such as, but not limited to: cellular phone (including the camera that may be part of the phone); camcorder; MP3 player/iPod; tablet; game systems; laser pointer. If this rule is violated, the Catechist may take the device and return it once the class is over. Repeated violations will result in a conversation with the parent/guardian and possible suspension.

Student Behavior Issues:

Catechists, as volunteers, are not expected to deal with serious or chronic behavior issues. Any student who is a discipline problem will be referred to the Coordinator/Director as needed. The OLQM Religious Education Program reserves the right to remove a student from a session if the student's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others or a danger to themselves or others.

Disciplinary Actions:

The following types of discipline may be used.

1. A verbal warning: With the student remaining in class.
2. A written warning: An occurrence form will be filled out and one copy will go into the student's file and one copy will be given to the parent/guardian once they are spoken with when they come to pick up their child.
3. Suspension: If the discipline issue is deemed severe or continues, the student may be suspended from attending religious education classes for up to three weeks. Suspension also means that the student cannot be in the building during class time or attend any Religious Education activities. Be aware that this may affect sacramental preparation.
4. Expulsion: Expulsion is the most serious action, and will only be invoked after all other means of discipline have proven ineffective and the student's conduct is unchanged. A student may be expelled (excluded) from the Religious Education Program by the Director of Religious Education for the remainder of a school term or school year. The Director of Religious Education is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations.

Dress Code:

Your student is expected to dress appropriately for faith formation and for the business of learning with proper attention given to personal cleanliness, grooming, and neatness. If their personal attire or grooming habits distracts the attention of other students or teachers from their work, the student will be required to make the necessary alterations to such attire or grooming habits before attending class. If the student fails to meet the acceptable standards of cleanliness, neatness, safety, decency and age appropriate dress as determined by the pastor or Director of Religious Education the student will be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures, including suspension.

Prohibited Items:

*The following apparel or items are **NOT** allowed during religious education classes, retreats, or sacramental prep sessions:*

- a. Alcohol, illegal drugs, or drugs being used for other than their intended purpose
- b. Sunglasses, hats, visors, bandanas or other head apparel (*A cloth covering that is being used as a mask is an exception.*)
- c. Visible gang-related tattoos or inappropriate tattoos, known gang related symbols
- d. Clothing that exposes the midriff or bra
- e. Clothing that advertises alcoholic beverages, drugs, has questionable language or art work
- g. Spandex-type dresses or skirts
- h. Beachwear, pajamas or other sleepwear
- j. Any clothing, costumes, accessories, jewelry or hair styles that may be a distraction to self or others, or that have obscene or drug related phrases.
- q. Jeans with frays, holes, cuts, or slits above the knee
- l. Shorts, skirts or dresses that do not reach to the fingertips of the student when standing.
- m. Any clothing or jewelry that can be used as a weapon
- p. Aerosol sprays of any kind

Prayer of Thanks

Blessed are You, loving Father,
For all Your gifts to us.
Blessed are You for giving us family and friends
To be with us in times of joy and sorrow,
To help us in days of need,
And to rejoice with us in moments of celebration.
Father,
We praise You for Your Son Jesus,
Who knew the happiness of family and friends,
And in the love of Your Holy Spirit.
Blessed are you for ever and ever.

Amen.

**Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish
Religious Education Program
Parent/Guardian Handbook Acknowledgement
2020-2021**

As parent/guardian of _____, I have read this handbook, understand its contents, will support the processes written within, and agree to its implementation.

I understand that if I have any questions or concerns I may request a meeting with the Coordinator or Director of the Religious Education Department.

I understand that if I choose to voluntarily withdraw my child from the Program, the registration fees will not be refunded, but I will be given the learning materials from the education program that were distributed to my student.

I understand that changes in the health status and concerns within our community may require some adjustments to the program plans that have been outlined within.

Parent/Guardian (print name) Date

Parent/Guardian (signature)



