

**OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

FAMILY HANDBOOK



**GROWING A FAITH ON FIRE
GROWING DISCIPLES**

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Church
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2025-2026

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Acknowledgement Form (sign and return to the parish office)

Student Code of Conduct (sign for appropriate grade and return to the parish 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. As past experience has shown us, events may arise that will cause us to make adjustments in our program for the safety and wellbeing of all. If this occurs, you will be updated and your concerns addressed as appropriate.

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 and direct any questions to our office promptly. The last page is an "Acknowledgment Form". It must be signed and returned to our office before your child begins our program.

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

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OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Church, Department of Religious Education, seeks to serve the faith needs of our parish community through various religious and spiritual enrichment programs for both children and adults.

VISION AND GOAL STATEMENT

Our children's program provides formal religious education during the school year for parishioners from Pre K through 12th grade. For the high school students we have a Youth Program with the goals of providing both required religious education and guidance as they develop a deeper understanding of how to live one's faith in our world today.

Our 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 policy of The Diocese of Venice requires these sacraments be conferred in one's home parish.

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

Our OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) process leads adults and young people through understanding 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, bible studies, 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 Catholic Church. Children from other faith backgrounds are welcome to participate with their Catholic friends as well, provided their parents submit written permission for them to attend a class or register them to attend regularly.

Students with special needs will be accommodated to the best of our ability. It should be noted that our Religious Education Catechists (teachers) are volunteers and are not certified to work with special needs students. That being said, 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/guardians must provide a copy of their child's baptismal certificate (with notations of First Eucharist if applicable) if the child's sacraments were received at a different parish.

Tuition/Registration Fees are as follows:

Pre K	\$30
One child	\$60
Two children	\$100
Three or more children	\$150
Sacramental Prep (per year) - additional fees.....	\$25

Payment may be made using Faith Direct, cash, credit card, or checks made payable to ***“Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Church”*** with ***“Religious Education tuition”*** written on the memo 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.

Families with financial hardship may be eligible for assistance or scholarships. To request some financial assistance, an appointment must be made with Joann Deserio, CRE, prior to submitting registrations.

We will also gratefully accept donations to help defray the cost for students with financial need.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PLAN

It is the expectation that parents, guardians, the OLQM Religious Education Department and catechists work as a cohesive team committed to foster and support each student's spiritual growth. Taking this into consideration, we put forward the following plan.

For parents/guardians :

1. We will be conducting face-to-face classes for Grades Pre K-8 and 9-12 (Youth Group). Students meet in the St. George Center 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 must notify the Religious Education Office in a timely manner.
2. Sacramental Prep classes for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation will be held one Sunday a month (after 10 AM Mass) at 11:15 AM—12:15 PM.
3. If your child shows any signs of illness, please keep them home and notify the Religious Education Department of the excused absence in a timely manner.
4. You will sign your student in and out for each class, which include Wednesday night classes, Sacramental Preparation classes, and retreats. High school students may sign in and out for themselves.
5. 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 by you, the parent/guardian. ***No student will be released without prior written consent.***
6. Attendance at mandatory parent meetings, Sacramental Preparation classes that include family, and Sacramental retreats is expected. If you are unable to attend, you must contact the Religious Education Department in a timely manner.
7. Please 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 acknowledge and support the program rules as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. A grade-appropriate copy signed by your child and co-signed by you, the parent/guardian, is required annually and will be maintained (securely) 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 the classes. A copy of legal documentation, if available, should be given to the Coordinator of Religious Education to be kept securely 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 Pre K-8th grade at OLQM consists of **both** weekly classes and attendance at the Sunday liturgies.

OLQM Youth Group/Ministry is open to 9th-12th grade high school students. Their meetings will also be on Wednesdays, 7-8 PM in the OLQM Youth Room. Youth are also expected to meet Sunday Liturgy obligations.

**The Program for 2025-2026 year will begin Sept. 10,2025
(see the Religious Education calendar)**

There will be a special family Mass for the beginning of the new year on Wednesday,Sept.3,2025 at 6:30 PM. Parents/guardians are expected to attend with their children.

Classes:

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.** Parents/guardians and approved third parties will escort the student to their respective classrooms and sign them in, with the exception of Youth Group members. Those students may sign themselves in and out.

Doors will be locked by 7:10 PM by security. Under special circumstances (for example, prior notification) a child may be admitted late to their class room if approved by the Coordinator of Religious Education. The doors will be reopened at 8 PM by security. The parent/guardian or approved third party will return to the classrooms to sign the students out. These signatures are used to track class

attendance.

If your child misses a class, they will be provided with make-up work. it is expected that they will complete and submit any make-up work by the next class, or as otherwise scheduled.

Student Attendance (cont.):

Sunday Mass:

All Religious Education students are expected to meet their Mass obligations and regularly attend a weekend Mass. Mass times at OLQM are every Saturday at 4 PM (Vigil Mass) and Sunday at 8AM and 10 AM.

A box of envelopes will be provided to each student at the start of the school year. **To document in person attendance at the Sunday Mass, students are to place their envelope in the weekend collection basket.** Monetary donations are not necessary, but a note of how your child will live their faith each week is strongly encouraged (ex. prayers, acts of kindness etc.). If your child attended Mass at another church, they need to bring back a copy of that church's bulletin and submit it to their catechist at their next class.

Faith Formation Curriculum:

OLQM is currently using Pflaum's Gospel Weeklies as a part of the curriculum for Pre K through 5th grade. This curriculum is designed to follow the liturgical year in pamphlet form. The Gospel Weeklies will reference the coming week's Sunday Gospel readings. The middle school students (6th-8th grade) will use the "Connect" curriculum. As parents/guardians, you are the primary teachers and active participants in how your child learns about his/her faith. Each student will be provided the necessary materials, including an age appropriate bible to use in class. A part of their lessons will be the structure of the bible and how to access readings. In addition, for K-5th grade, a prayer book has been provided for each child and "Discover-Finding Faith in Life program" is also used. Additional supplemental resources will be provided as needed.

Our First Reconciliation and First Eucharist program will use the ***"Renewed: Your Journey to First Reconciliation"*** series and ***"Received: Your Journey to First Communion"***. Our Confirmation program uses ***"Dynamic Catholic"*** along with Catholic Youth bibles and ***"The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth"***.

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, as well, with the Gospel Weeklies that the students are expected to complete at home. If a student misses a face-to-face class, they will be given an assignment to complete and submit as make-up for the missing class.

SACRAMENTS

In the Diocese of Venice, children generally receive Baptism as infants, Generally, First Reconciliation and First Communion are received in second and third grade, and Confirmation in tenth 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 for your child to receive them.

Sacramental Prep Class Attendance:

First Reconciliation/First Eucharist

Children who need to prepare to receive their First Reconciliation and First Communion must also enroll in the parish's regular Religious Education Program for their appropriate grade. The Diocesan policy states that these students are expected to attend a full year of religious education prior to receiving their sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. It is a two year preparation, with the first year for First Reconciliation and the second year for First Communion.

First Reconciliation/First Communion preparation sessions are held once a month on designated Sundays from 11:15 AM to 12:15 PM in the St. George Center (school building) (see calendar). **A parent/guardian is expected to attend these sessions with their child.**

Confirmation

Students preparing for Confirmation (preparation is generally done in 9th/10th grade) are expected to have continuous religious education classes or attendance at a Catholic school **and** also attend 2 years of preparation at Confirmation classes at their parish of registration. Youth Group sessions are the religious education classes for high school students. Confirmation prep classes are designated as C1 and C2 and will meet on designated Sundays from 11:15 AM to 12:15 PM. in the St. George Center. Youth group is one part of the Confirmation class curriculum and is mandatory for students not attending Catholic school. The Youth Group classes are held on Wednesdays from 7 PM to 8 PM in the Youth Room. In addition, attendance at an approved retreat event is mandatory for each of the two years of preparation.

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 CRE .

CALENDARS

The 2025-2026 Religious Education calendars will be available in print and on the parish website under "Faith Formation". If any changes need to be made during the school year, you will be notified by email. You will also be notified of any special events that may be planned during the year.

As the parent/guardian it is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of the class schedule, retreat and special events 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 your phone can receive text messages. It is vitally important that these numbers are kept up-to-date.**

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 if the evening's session is to be cancelled.

Procedures are in place for evacuation in case of fire or lockdown for 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 emotional/developmental challenges 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 over-the-counter and prescription) can be administered to or taken by the student during Religious Education classes. The exception is an EpiPen, which can be administered if the parent/guardian provides a written request and directions for use.

STUDENT RECORDS

Student files are kept secure and confidential. Parents/guardians have the right to view their child's records after submitting a written request. All other persons (except appropriate Church authorities) will be denied access without written permission from the 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. We will integrate outings and events into class offerings as appropriate. There will also be volunteer and service opportunities for these students.

We will be looking for those students interested in being youth leaders in our program. Time given to parish ministries and events can count towards service hours. Contact the Coordinator of Religious Education, Joann Deserio with any questions by phone at 755-1826 ext. 330 or email: Faithformation@olqm.net.

Safe Environment Training for Children:

Every parish in the diocese is required to provide a Safe Environment class for all students with the objective being 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.

The sessions provide the students a “protected space” where they can feel safe to share questions and concerns, and instills in them the knowledge that they can receive help without feeling guilt or shame if they do choose to share issues or concerns. **It is a part of the annual Diocesan curriculum for parish Religious Education Programs.**

This is *not* the same program that is offered in the public school system or through 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 for our students.

Safe Environment Training for Adults:

Every employee and volunteer who may have contact with children or vulnerable adults is required to attend the diocesan Safe Environment training. Every employee or volunteer within the Venice Diocese who may have 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. Teens who may assist adults working with younger children also have a specific diocesan Safe Environment program they must complete.

ACADEMIC STAFF

Catechist Education/Certification:

The catechists (teachers) who teach the Religious Education classes are volunteers with varying backgrounds. The Diocese of Venice and this 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 a certification upon completion. Our catechists are currently certified, or in the program to become certified.

Volunteers:

Additional 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 children of these volunteers.*

GENERAL STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Student Responsibilities:

Students are expected to observe basic rules of behavior and Christian conduct 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 away so as to avoid being a distraction. No electronic or technological devices are permitted for student use in classrooms unless otherwise indicated. Devices include but are not limited to: cell/mobile phones (including the camera that may be part of the phone), camcorder, MP3 player/iPod, tablet, laptop, gaming systems, laser pointer. These items are to be kept turned off and out of sight unless a Catechist gives permission to do otherwise. If this rule is not followed, the Catechist may take possession of the device, put it aside, and return it at the end of class.

Student Behavior Issues:

Catechists, as volunteers, are not expected to deal with serious or chronic behavior issues. Any student who continues to demonstrate behavior problems in class will be referred to the Coordinator 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 the student is 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 made aware of the situation 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 attempts for resolution have proven ineffective and the student's conduct is unchanged. A student may be expelled (excluded) from the Religious Education Program by the Coordinator of Religious Education for the remainder of a school term or school year. The Coordinator 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 distract the attention of other students or Catechists from their work, the student will be required to make the necessary alterations to such attire or grooming habits before attending subsequent classes.

If your student fails to meet the acceptable standards of cleanliness, neatness, safety, decency and age appropriate dress as determined by the Coordinator 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 or paper 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 artwork
- f. Beachwear, pajamas or other sleepwear
- g. 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.
- h. Jeans with frays, holes, cuts, or slits that expose undergarments
- i. Any clothing that does not meet modest esthetics
- j. Weapons or any clothing or jewelry that can be used as a weapon
- k. Aerosol sprays of any kind

As the School Year Begins

Lord Jesus Christ, as a child, you increased in wisdom and stature, you listened to your teachers and asked them questions. Bless those who learn that they may grow in knowledge of their Maker, Redeemer, Life-giver, and of your glorious world we live in.

Bless those who teach, that they may share the wisdom they have received from above, and that they may do their work with patience and love that reflect your mercy that endures forever.

Bless our families. You yourself are the Great Teacher. Instruct all of us in your commandments: to show love by glorifying you and serving our neighbors. Disciple all of us with your holy Gospel: to be forgiven, renewed and empowered through your life, death and resurrection.

Fill our hearts with wonder and excitement as we grow to see your Glory in all that surrounds us. Your holy Word also tells us, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” By your power, help us increase in wisdom, never ceasing to learn all the days of our lives, until we sit at your feet in your Kingdom; where with the Father and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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