



IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY
CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION
HANDBOOK
LEXINGTON PARK, MARYLAND

Session Times:

English LEVEL K through 5	Sessions A	SUNDAYS	9:45 am – 11:00 am
English LEVELS 5 & 8	Confirmation Preparation	MONDAYS	6:30 pm - 7:45 pm

Rite of Christian Initiation for Children sessions are scheduled depending on the family needs and availability of catechists.

Religious Education Office:

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Revised 2019
IHM Religious Education Office

Children's Faith Formation Mission Statement

- *The Immaculate Heart of Mary Children's Faith Formation (CFF) Program proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ and teaches children to embrace the values of the Catholic Faith Community.*
- *We strive to develop in our students a strong sense of self-worth as well as a genuine concern for others. Children are taught to value themselves and all people as a reflection of God's love.*

The Religious Education staff is here to assist parents in the spiritual formation and ongoing moral development of their child through a formal program of continuous religious education.

Our Parish Religious Education Program is structured to provide catechetical instruction in the Catholic faith to all parish children who are attending non-Catholic schools. Parents, by word and example, teach their children from birth throughout life. At their child's Baptism, the parent undertakes the responsibility of providing for their child's Christian formation.

*Committed to this active partnership between parish staff and families,
we place our efforts with confidence in God's loving hands.*

Admission Policies

All students must re-register each year. After September 1st, there will be a late charge for returning students (see Financial Policies). **Please note:** All families who register with the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Religious Education Program must also be registered members of this parish community.

New Students transferring from another parish's Religious Education Program or Catholic school must supply the following information when registering:

- **A copy of the child's Baptismal Certificate**
- **Dates of all sacraments received**
- **A letter of prior Religious education or Catholic school completion (report card, or letter from prior parish)**

Students transferring from another parish's Religious Education Program or Catholic Students who enter into our program without having celebrated the sacraments of initiation, beyond the usual age for reception of these sacraments are provided with special transition work and supplement materials which will be the responsibility of the parents to implement at home. Mentoring will be provided during the first year of IHM program CFF integration.

Children with special learning needs are welcome and participate in many levels, thanks to the volunteers who work with clergy and families as well as other partners to encourage youth with special needs to participate fully in the parish.

We encourage the whole family to participate in Sacred Liturgies, Sunday Mass and to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist regularly as a model for the students. Your family's involvement in parish activities is a witness to your strong commitment to Jesus Christ. Our Faith Formation does not end after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, but continues until we ultimately come face to face with our Creator. Spiritual formation continues into adulthood even as we face secular and material values which are inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation is a serious one. This is not merely a matter of Parish policy. Divine law sets forth this expectation in the Third of the Ten Commandments, "Remember, thou, keep holy the Sabbath." Obviously, extraordinary circumstances such as sickness, travel, or bad weather may excuse the faithful from this obligation. The elderly or disabled are not bound to Sunday Mass attendance. While an individual disregard of this precept would not constitute grave matter (and thus serious sin), habitual disregard for God's Law and the Law of the Church would.

Parents and Sacramental Preparation

Parents of students preparing for First Penance, First Eucharist (or Holy Communion), and Confirmation are required to attend Parent Sacramental Preparation meetings. These dates are listed on the Religious Education calendar. Attendance at all sacramental meetings is evidence of family support and sincere partnership with our parish.

Home schooled and Catholic School Students

- First Eucharist – All students whether part of religious education, home schooling or Catholic School programs must attend all workshops, interviews and rehearsals (see calendar).
- **Confirmation** - All students whether religious education, home schooling or Little Flower School must complete the following:
 1. Take the placement examination in January or February ONE YEAR before Easter. **For those home schooling** the required information to be known by the student is provided by the Archdiocese of Washington and will be made available two years prior to Confirmation. Students will be tested upon the required knowledge base.
 - Assessment scores of **100 to 81%** = **CFF Monday sessions**
 - Assessment scores between **80-61%** = **CFF Monday sessions with monthly attendance of parents. The completion of required catechism work will be the responsibility of the family.**
 - Assessment scores of **60% and below** = **the student will be required to attend Monday sessions regularly with an adult family member.**

In the rare occasion where a student is exempt from attending regular Monday sessions, they are still expected to attend the retreat, participate in Archdiocese Chastity program (or an alternative program reviewed and approved by the Director), complete the required paperwork (saint report, service hours, etc.), and attend the rehearsal.

Students who are unable (for valid reasons) to attend their required Monday sessions will be referred to a neighboring parish program.

Students will not be allowed to substitute RCIA for confirmation class, unless students are in 10th level or older OR at least 16 years old and have conflicts in the schedule with Monday night classes. If a student required to take the CFF class has a scheduling conflict, then neighboring parishes will be contacted by our pastor to see if they can be accommodated in the neighboring parish.

2. Students will be required to complete 20 hours of community service. The service can come from a variety of sources. There needs to be at least 2 activities so that no one activity can exceed 15 hours.

3. **A copy of their baptismal form and First Communion reception certificate must be on file, along with a Confirmation Sponsor certificate, a chosen Saint report, a service journal or report and a letter to the Bishop requesting for Confirmation must also be submitted before April. Chastity class and retreat attendance as well as participation in a pilgrimage/ special field trips are also part of the youth's formation.**

Financial Policies

First Communion fee is \$100.00 per child Confirmation Fee is \$100.00.

Otherwise, annual fees are **\$100** for one **newly registered** student. The fee for a **returning student** is **\$60**. The fee for **any student after the first child** is **\$40 per child**.

Returning families will be asked to re-enroll and pay their registration by September 1st. **A late fee of \$20 will be charged after that date.** Families experiencing financial difficulties are asked to contact the pastor to explain their situation and request a partial or full waiver. Such requests will be kept in strict confidence.

No child will be denied religious instruction due to a financial situation.

All children who are celebrating sacraments have an activity fee built into their regular tuition. This fee will help defray the expenses of the retreats, certificates, program booklets and other costs incurred.

Families who withdraw children from the program before the scheduled start date will be entitled to a partial refund of 75%. Withdrawal from the program after the scheduled start date, but not after December 1st, will be entitled to a partial refund of 25%. No refund will be given after December 1st.

Books/Assignments

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their children complete all work assigned by their Catechist. We appreciate parents who remind their children to bring their completed assignments and books to each session. Promotion to the next level of instruction is not automatic.

If a textbook is lost, the student will be required to purchase a new book. The fee for a **replacement textbook is \$25.00**. Students in levels 6, 7 and 8th are required to have a bible in class. If your child does not have a **CATHOLIC bible**, discounted Catholic Youth Bibles are available for sale (discounted at \$15.00 regularly \$25.)

MINIMUM PRAYER AND CATHOLIC DOCTRINE LEVELS:

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Faith Formation Program has several LEVELS to ensure the successful progress of its students. After an initial interview and meeting between the student, parents and the Director of Faith Formation, all parties agree on an initial class placement or assignment. We do not promote students automatically. Twice a year, teachers report on the Progress of each student. Students receive completion certificates at the end of each formation year.

Minimum Prayer and Catholic Doctrine Levels:

LEVEL 1 - Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be

LEVEL 2- Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be and Act of Contrition (concept of sin and the Eucharist)

LEVEL 3- Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Contrition and Apostles Creed (brief summary of beliefs said with the Rosary)

LEVEL 4 children should know the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Act of Contrition, Glory be, Creed, and the Ten Commandments.

LEVEL 5- Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Contrition, Creed, 10 Commandments, & 7 Sacraments.

LEVEL 6 - The entire list above plus: Holy Days of Obligation, the liturgical year & basic biblical knowledge (Old & New Testament).

LEVELS 3 to 8 groups are to take the Archdiocese of Washington mandated Faith Knowledge Assessment (FKA) and as a class also sponsors one Sunday Children's Mass.

Attendance Policies

Christian principles learned in the classroom and in the home make sense only if they are practiced regularly. ATTENDANCE AT MASS IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM. It is expected that students enrolled in the program be fully aware of their Sunday Mass and Holy Day obligation and fulfill that obligation faithfully by attending Mass with their family.

Please note that **tardiness** is disruptive to the class and we stress that every attempt be made to arrive for class on time. 3 late occurrences will be marked as 1 absence.

Parents are encouraged to see that their children attend Religious Education classes regularly during the year. There are times, however, when an absence from class is necessary. In such cases, parents are asked to contact the child's Catechist directly, explaining the reason for the absence.

Class Cancellations

Scheduled Sunday classes will be held whenever Mass continues to be offered that day at our church. In the case of inclement weather or other emergencies that occur toward the end of a Saturday before a CFF Sunday, we will do our best to notify the students directly and place a recorded announcement on the CFF direct line: **301-863-8793**. We encourage everyone to err on the side of safety, particularly taking into account the accessibility of your particular neighborhood. Whenever inclement weather forces closings of the St. Mary's County Public Schools, and after school activities, Monday sessions are also cancelled.

Discipline Policies

Every person is worthy of being treated with care and the respect befitting one made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, classroom behavior needs to be characterized by genuine Christian care, mutual respect, and honesty. Disruptive behavior prevents learning for the whole class and can be frustrating for the Catechist who is volunteering their time for the good of the students. Thus, at the beginning of each year, the teachers will be explaining standard behavior policies and rules.

Substance Abuse Policy

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, or trafficking in any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, injection or percutaneous means. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property will be immediately suspended from the program. Any student trafficking illegal substances will be formally removed from the program.

Child Protection Policy

The parish Religious Education Director is required by the Archdiocese of Washington DC Child Protection Policy to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Catechists and parents who observe actual or suspected child abuse are encouraged to report the matter in confidence to their Director of Religious Education immediately.

Progress Reports

To encourage student accomplishment and accountability for learning, students will be monitored and assessed throughout the year. Areas include:

- Attendance
- Behavior and positive attitude
- Class participation
- Prayers and Memorization
- Homework
- Grasp of content or knowledge of Doctrine

If a student does not satisfactorily meet the above, the Catechist will contact the parent and a conference will be held. A productive year will result in advancement to the next level. A student who fails to meet the learning objectives will be required to work with a parent during the summer to complete all work and the student will be re-assessed in August or early September. If competency is achieved, the student will be promoted to the next level. Failure to complete all work will result in the student repeating the level. *Our purpose is not to fail, retain, or punish students, but rather to ensure that each child is receiving the knowledge necessary for them to become mature followers of Jesus Christ and active members of the Catholic Church.*

Progress reports are distributed twice a year. Parents are asked to sign the **envelope** containing the report and return it to the Catechist.

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents

Both parents have access to a child's religious education progress reports and achievement information unless one parent produces a legal (court certified) document to the contrary. Upon reception of such a document, it will be attached to the child's record and all Catechists to whom the child is assigned will be informed these special directions. Progress reports to the non-custodial parent will be provided upon request, which must be made in writing. Changes in the child's normal routine must be approved by the custodial parent in collaboration with the Religious Education Office and catechists will be notified of these changes. No child will be dismissed from the program to the non-custodial parent without the written consent of the custodial parent.

Student Safety

In order to ensure the safety of all students before and after Religious Education classes, parental cooperation is necessary. Therefore, **DROP OFF** for students is at the rear of the school building on the SOUTH side of the church. Students will be permitted to leave for dismissal from both sides of the school. Please arrange with your child exactly where they are to be picked up. Students in Level 1 through Level 4 **must be picked up** at the classroom door by a parent or duly designated individual unless other arrangements are made, in writing, with the teachers. This is for everyone's safety.

Class Content as Mandated by the Archdiocese of Washington DC

OUR LEVEL 1 to 5 TEXTBOOKS: *Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts* reflects a vision of our Catholic faith grounded in Scripture and Tradition and an **Ignatian** recognition of the presence of God in all things. The expression of that vision is based on our Catholic belief that effective catechesis

- *reflects the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*
- *centers on the person of Jesus Christ*
- *proclaims the liberating good news of salvation through Jesus Christ*
- *leads the Christian into the world in mission and action*
- *addresses the needs of the culture in which it is presented*
- *invites believers to reflect on personal experience in light of growing in relationship with God*
- *leads to full, conscious, active participation in the liturgical life of the Church*
- *creates a climate of prayer and nurtures a faith that is expressed in prayer*

OUR LEVEL 6 to 8 TEXBOOKS: *Christ Our Life* also has a **spiral curriculum**, which ensures consistent progress and development of children's knowledge of our Catholic faith. Texts help children respond to the Church's essential mission to evangelize and to be a disciple of Christ. Its **Catholic faith content** empowers catechists and teachers to teach with confidence by integrating Scripture as well as the four pillars of the Church into each lesson. With abundant resources such as family unit newsletters, an at-home edition, and prayer books *Christ Our Life* has been found to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Service

The **Immaculate Heart of Mary** Parish Community is encouraged to give of our time, talent and treasure. As part of our classroom instruction, it is important that we instruct our students so that they may have a true understanding of stewardship. As part of the stewardship lesson of time and talent, each child will be required to participate in Christian service projects. Service projects for Level 1 through 6 will be performed as a group and may be completed during class time. Level 7 and 8 will participate in both group and individual service projects.

Communications

The church bulletin is the most important vehicle of communication. It is distributed at all weekend masses. All parents will be provided a calendar of activities and important dates in the beginning of the school year. As the need arises, flyers will be distributed to all students during class.

Please check our website regularly: <http://www.cff.ihmrcc.org/>

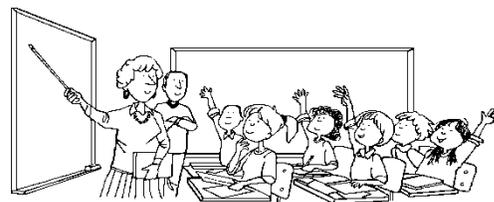


Knowing Jesus
AND MAKING HIM KNOWN
IHM CFF 2019-2020

**All parents are required to complete the following forms:
Permission Form**

FORMS

Please complete **one form for each child** enrolled in the program and return to your child's Catechist on the **FIRST day of class.**



I hereby give permission for my child _____
(Please enter full name) (age)
to walk to other parish buildings/grounds during the course of their Level _____ Section _____
(name your IHM religion group assignment)
Religious Education classes. I understand that my child will be accompanied by a Religious Education volunteer during any of these outings. I also give permission **for authorized staff to photograph** my child.

_____ (Parent's signature) _____ (Date)

_____ (Parent's Printed Name)

Policy Contact for School Year

I have read the religious Education Handbook and have taken the time to explain the policies to my child. We understand that we are required to adhere to the polices in this handbook.

_____ (Parent's signature) _____ (Date)

_____ (Student's signature) _____

Emergency Card for School Year

Please Print:

Parent Name: _____ Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____ EMAIL: _____

Health concerns/allergies: _____

In case your child is ill and we are unable to contact you, **please** provide the name of a relative or friend whom we may call.

Name of an Emergency Contact: _____

Relationship to child: _____ Emergency Phone: _____

