

ST. MARGARET MARY PARISH  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

**CATECHIST HANDBOOK**

**2025-2026**

## **Litany for Catechists**

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Mary, star of the New Evangelization, Pray for us.

St. Joseph, patron of families, Pray for us.

St. Paul the Apostle, patron of evangelists, Pray for us.

St. Gregory the Great and St. Catherine of Alexandria, patrons of catechists and students, Pray for us.

Sts. Charles Borromeo, Robert Bellarmine, and Francis de Sales, doctors and patrons of catechists, Pray for us.

Sts. Thomas Aquinas, Jerome, and Ambrose of Milan, doctors and patrons of youth, Pray for us.

St. Francis of Assisi, patron of families, Pray for us.

St. Margaret Mary, patroness of our parish, Pray for us.

All holy men and women, Pray for us.

Christ the Teacher, Teach and guide us.

Word of God, Teach and guide us.

Jesus the Rabbi, Teach and guide us.

Good Shepherd, Teach and guide us.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life, Teach and guide us.

Prophet of the Most High, Teach and guide us.

Wisdom of God, Teach and guide us.

Spirit of God, Teach and guide us.

Open our hearts, Christ, hear us.

Strengthen our minds, Christ, hear us.

Increase our faith, Christ, hear us.

So that we might bring our students into communion with you. Christ, hear us.

Let our students know you, Christ, hear us.

And love you, Christ, hear us.

And desire to grow constantly closer to you. Christ, graciously hear us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

Jesus, teach us, like your mother, to treasure the Gospel in our hearts.

Help us to “Proclaim it, celebrate it, live it, and transmit it in  
catechesis to all those who have decided to follow Jesus Christ.”

*General Directory of Catechesis, no. 78 Amen.*

# **2025-2026 Important Information:**

## **School Wifi**

Name: SMM - Guest

Password: SMMWelcome20

## **Religion Teacher Login Information:**

Username: [religioused@smmomaha.org](mailto:religioused@smmomaha.org)

Password: Faith4all2!

Religion Teacher is a fantastic resource with ideas for lesson plans, activities, videos, catechist formation, worksheets, and more! You will be able to access all of these resources for free with our SMM group subscription.

## **Catechist Formation Dates**

### **Catechist Meetings**

- September 10th, October 8th, November 5th, November 19th, January 14th, February 4th, March 18th

### **Catechist End of Year Social**

- May 13, 2026 - 6:30 - 7:45 p.m.

### **Catechist Inservice**

- October 15, 6PM-7:30PM

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the St. Margaret Mary Parish Religious Education Program! You have accepted the Christian role of passing on our Catholic faith and traditions to the next generation.

**“The heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father... full of grace and truth, who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. It is Jesus who is the way, and the truth, and the life, and Christian living consists in following Christ.”**

*“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.”*

**What assiduous study of the work of God transmitted by the Church’s Magisterium, what profound familiarity with Christ and with the Father, what a spirit of prayer, what detachment from self must a Catechist have in order that he/she can say: ‘My teaching is not mine.’”**

(John Paul II “On Catechesis in Our Time”)

Our Catholic community of St. Margaret Mary parish calls you as a co-worker to teach as Jesus did and to make Christ known, loved, and followed. As a guide to help you in your task, the following guidelines are offered:

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## I. A CATECHIST

Definition: A person who receives and responds to a ministerial call, which comes from the Lord and is articulated in the local church by the Bishop.

### **Ideal Qualities of Catechists:**

#### 1. Response to a Call

This includes willingness to give time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one's own continued growth in faith and understanding.

#### 2. Witness to the Gospel

For Catechesis to be effective, the Catechist must be fully committed to Jesus Christ. Faith must be shared with conviction, joy, love, enthusiasm, and hope. The Catechist must establish a living, ever-deepening relationship with the Lord. He or she must be a person of prayer, one who frequently reflects on the scriptures and whose Christ-like living testifies to deep faith.

#### 3. Commitment to the Church

A Catechist represents the Church to which God's Word has been entrusted. The Catechist believes in the Church and is aware that, as a pilgrim people, it is in constant need of renewal. Committed to the visible community, the Catechist strives to be an instrument of the Lord's power and a sign of the Spirit's presence. The Catechist realizes that it is Christ's message which he or she is called to proclaim. To insure fidelity to that message, Catechists test and validate their understanding and insights in the light of the Gospel message as presented by the teaching authority of the Church.

#### 4. Sharer in Community

The Catechist is called to foster community. Beginning with acceptance of individual strengths and weaknesses, it progresses to relationships based on shared goals and values. It grows through discussion, recreation and cooperation on projects. Christian community is fostered especially by the Eucharist.

#### 5. Servant in the Community

Authentic experience of Christian community leads one to the service of others. The Catechist is committed to serving the Christian community particularly in the parish, and the community at large.

#### 6. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

A Catechist must have:

- A solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship;
  - Familiarity with Scripture;
  - Communication skills;
- The ability to use various methodologies;
- Understanding of how children people grow and mature and of how persons of different ages and circumstances learn.

(Summarized from NCD #206-211)

## II. Primary Catechist Job Description

### Qualifications:

- The Catechist is a person who...
- Is a practicing Catholic and attends Mass regularly.
- Is a visible participant in parish life.
- Has a basic understanding of Church teaching.
- Is a person of faith.
- Is able to communicate with children/youth.
- Is willing to learn.
- Is able to work with groups.
- Can express own faith to others.
- Is able to follow the steps of a lesson plan in the text material.
- Is up-to-date with Safe Environment training.

Tasks to be performed:

The Catechist will...

- Teach each class of the grade level agreed upon.
- Plan and prepare lessons before each class.
- Follow the content provided in the text for each class, and appropriately supplementing.
- Be present for classes as scheduled or make arrangements for a substitute; this includes remaining with students until the last child is picked up.
- Incorporate prayer as a part of every lesson.
- Attend the scheduled catechist meetings during the year.
- Monitor and evaluate student progress.
- Maintain contact with parents/guardians throughout the year.
- Begin and continue providing for their own faith growth/development.
- Engage in Catechist Formation Plan with Religious Education Director.
- Follow discipline policies outlined by the Religious Education Director.
- Comply with all Archdiocesan policies including the policy on the issue of sexual abuse and sexual conduct.

**The Archdiocesan policy for all ministers, staff, employees, and volunteers in any way connected with the Archdiocese of Omaha, either through parish, institution, or school, who deal primarily with children under the age of 18 is “...sexual behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, is inappropriate in any ministry setting.”**

**Support/Benefits:**

The parish will...

- Provide baby-sitting as necessary.
- Provide text and resource materials.
- Pay for workshops and required training courses.
- Give an annual stipend of \$400 to each full-time Catechist (part-time is prorated).

## Catechist Assistant Job Description

### Qualifications:

The Catechist Aide is a person who...

- Is a practicing Catholic.
- Is a visible participant in Parish life.
- Has a basic understanding of Church teaching.
- Is a person of faith.
- Is able to communicate with children/youth.
- Is willing to learn.
- Is able to work with groups.
- Can follow directions.
- Enjoys children/youth.
- Is able to arrive 15 minutes before the session begins.
- Is up-to-date with Safe Environment training (if 19 of age or older).

### Tasks to be performed:

The Catechist aide will...

- Work with the catechist of the grade level agreed upon.
- Greet each student as they arrive in the auditorium between 6:15-6:30 p.m.
- Take attendance or assist with attendance.
- Hand in attendance card before you leave the auditorium.
- Walk students to the classroom at 6:30.
- Help individual students who require more attention.
- Follow the catechist's directions.
- Help the catechist to maintain discipline.
- Assist with notes to go home.
- Collect homework.
- Assist with record keeping.
- Work with small groups as directed by catechist.
  
- Must take Safe Environment training and complete background check.

*The Archdiocesan policy for all ministers, staff, employees, and volunteers in any way connected with the Archdiocese of Omaha, either through parish institution, or school, who deal primarily with children under the age of 18 is "...sexual behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, is inappropriate in any ministry setting."*

Support/Benefits:

The parish will...

- Provide orientation and training.
  
- Give an annual donation of \$200 (for attending all sessions—part-time is prorated.)

### III. CATECHETICAL PROCESS/CLASSROOM

1. Class lists of students, addresses, and telephone numbers will be provided to you. Textbooks, supplies, resource materials, and reading background materials will also be provided for you. Rooms for classes will be assigned.
2. Prepare weekly lessons using the text assigned, suitable supplemental materials, and the catechetical method. Email a copy of your lesson plan to the DRE before each class. Each class should include:
  - Lesson introduction and objectives
  - Presentation of Catholic truths within the lesson,
  - Sharing and discussion times, and
  - Use of activities supporting the lesson such as prayer services, media use, creative art, music, projects, and service activities used.
3. Arrive at least 20 minutes before the class time to prepare the classroom environment for the lesson. Media equipment, projectors, materials, etc. should be in the classroom before class begins.
4. At the beginning of the year it is crucial to set up short, clear rules with the students to maintain discipline and set up a learning atmosphere in the classroom. Expect respect for yourself and all students in the classroom. Compliment the “positive” actions of your students. Be consistent.
5. Observe confidentiality of each student in your classroom. It is important that students know that what they say in the classroom is respected. A reasonable cause to believe that a student is subject to abuse does require the matter be brought to the Administrator.
6. Any continuous disruptive behavior actions that cannot be handled in the classroom need to be brought to the attention of the Director.
7. Classroom activity sheets to be copied and requests for materials should be requested from the RE office ahead of time whenever possible. These materials will be copied and put in the catechist’s mailbox. You may run off copies before class, but arrive early to do so.

8. Moderate amounts of homework activity may be assigned. These activities provide the family with sharing time, as well as an opportunity to integrate the lesson into family life. Sacramental preparation will include parent responsibility within its framework.
9. Students' arrive between 6:15pm and 6:30pm. The bell will ring at 6:30 PM. Attendance will be taken via Flocknote by the secretary and by the classroom teacher.
10. Prayer Booklet Procedures: Each student is expected to learn the prayers in their prayer book.. Each class period needs to have a few minutes designated to learn these prayers. When a student has a prayer learned, put two chairs in the hallway so the Prayer Person will know you are ready. The prayer person will come to your door and you may send out one student at a time to get signed off on the prayer learned.
11. Classrooms should be returned to their orderly arrangement before leaving. We are visitors in these spaces, and we must treat these spaces as good stewards do. Students should put away materials, clean off desks, clean boards, close windows, etc. before dismissal bell. Catechists will walk students outside for dismissal at 7:45pm. You may clean your room prior to dismissal and leave directly after all of your students have been picked up or return to your room after your students have been picked up.
12. Catechists are never to leave students alone in the classroom, except in an emergency.
13. It is important for students to know what to do in case of an emergency. Catechists are to be aware of the established emergency procedures. (See Emergency Plan) One practice each for fire and tornado drills will be held. Catechists are asked to review these procedures with the students each semester.
14. Each catechist is furnished with a set of rubber gloves, which must be worn if a child is bleeding. These are to be kept in the Catechist Binder or close at hand, to be available at quick notice. Other first aid supplies are kept in your supply box and in the Religious Education Office.
16. Catechists are expected to make arrangements for a substitute in the event they are unable to be present for a class. (See IX Substitute Catechists) Catechists must notify the Director a minimum of one week before there will be a substitute in the room, or as soon as possible.
18. Field trips, guest speakers, and special activities shall be brought to the attention of the Director. Permission slips, driver insurance forms, etc., need to be completed before any off-premise trips can be made.

19. Textbooks and are assigned to the individual student at the beginning of the year. Textbooks may either go home weekly or be kept as a classroom set in the RE storage area. Home pages are to be highlighted for home activities during assignment time. "Homework Assignment Sheets" are to be sent home. The student will replace any lost textbook or bag.

20. Catechists are to make themselves aware of the varied learning styles of students and incorporate various types of activities to meet their students' needs in lesson plans.

21. Catechists are to maintain contact with the parents throughout the year. Phone calls, emails, letters, and special class activities can be very effective. Dates for progress reports will be arranged by the Director. Home schooled students' parents are to be called every 4-6 weeks to inquire about the student's progress, to communicate news, and offer assistance. A report is to be given to the Director.

#### **IV. DISCIPLINE/SAFETY**

##### **DISCIPLINE**

Catechists are reminded that, in order to carry out their responsibilities for religious education, they must maintain a controlled and orderly learning environment. In order to do so, they may exercise such control as is reasonably necessary to ensure that the learning environment fosters the educational objectives of the program. It is imperative that a catechist takes the

Archdiocesan Safe Environment course and follows these guidelines.

Catechists' actions should be governed by their awareness that they act on behalf of the participant's parents and/or guardians for the duration of the religious education program.

Accordingly, only such actions as would be appropriately administered in a loving and Christian guidance of their students should be employed. Use of physical force should be avoided in all but the most unusual and extreme situations where the safety of the catechist or other participants would be otherwise threatened. Even in these circumstances, unless a grave threat to life is involved, the catechist must refrain from any act that would cause or is known to create a substantial risk of causing death, serious bodily harm, disfigurement, extreme pain or mental distress, or grave humiliation.

Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES shall a catechist engage in abusive or neglectful behavior. Abusive and neglectful behavior means knowingly or negligently causing or permitting a minor child to be:

1. Placed in a situation that endangers his or her life or physical or mental health;
2. Cruelly confined or cruelly punished (no touching during disciplining unless necessary for safety of the child or others);
3. Deprived of necessary food, clothing or care;
4. Left unattended in a motor vehicle while on a class field trip;
5. Sexually abused or exploited.

## SAFETY

From the time designated that the participants are delivered to the place of instruction to the time that participants are returned to their parents/guardians (or, in case of older participants, otherwise independently leave the place of instruction), catechists are charged with responsibility for the participants' safety. It is expected that common sense shall prevail in the discharge of these duties, which shall include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Weapons of any kind, including knives, shall be strictly prohibited on the premises of the place of instruction.
2. Catechists shall be responsible for enforcing the fire and severe weather safety policies of the place of instruction and shall instruct all participants of these policies at the beginning of the term.
3. Catechists shall supervise all dismissals. In this regard, catechists should make sure that no participant relying on a ride is stranded without one.
4. Fighting or verbal exchanges are not permitted on the premises of the place of instruction and catechists are charged with responsibility of bringing any such situations under control.
5. Particular care should be given to participants with physical or mental impairments to insure that their safety is in no way compromised.

Inherent to Catholic doctrine is the recognition that each person is uniquely created but nonetheless equal in the eyes of the Creator. In religious education, this recognition extends to all participants, regardless of sex, race, color, or national origin. Catechists are expected to respect all participants and to treat them fairly and without prejudice. Further, Catechists should strive to encourage equality in their places of instruction and help all participants understand and appreciate one another. To help insure compliance with this philosophy, all Catechists and Administrators of the Religious Education program should adhere to the following:

1. Selection of Catechists for instruction of a Religious Education Program without regard to race, color, or national origin.
2. No participants shall be denied admission to the Religious Education Program because of sex, race, color or national origin.
3. No abusive, offensive, objectionable, defamatory, slanderous, derogatory or injurious words, phrases, statements or actions regarding sex, race, color, or national origin shall be used by any catechist or participant, whether intentional or not, at any place of instruction. Violation of this provision shall be grounds for dismissal.
4. No instructional materials containing offensive and derogatory content with respect to sex, race, color, or national origin shall be used except in select, approved instances where the purpose of such materials is to illustrate and instruct of its heinous nature.
5. All catechists will take the Safe Environment Course and follow the procedures.

## V. NEGLIGENCE / ABUSE

**Definition:** The failure to do something that a reasonable person guided by ordinary considerations would do; the doing of something that a reasonable and prudent person would not do.

Safety is one of the primary responsibilities of the catechist and the Religious Education

Administrator. Negligence is the legal action most often brought against churches and their programs. The law governing negligence is the same in both the public and private sectors.

### **What negligence is, and is not.**

Negligence is an act or omission on the part of one who has a responsibility to an individual that results in injury to the individual. Intention does not matter in negligence, resulting harm does. A catechist who leaves a group of students unsupervised can be held liable if a student is injured, even if he/she has no intention of exposing students to harm.

There are four elements that must be present before a person will be found guilty of legal negligence.

1. The person must have had a duty in the situation.
2. The person's action is in violation of duty.
3. There is a proximate cause. Proximate cause has been defined as a contributing factor.
4. There is an injury. If no one is injured, a court will not find a person guilty of negligence.

Religious Education Administrators and catechists must understand that injuries can be psychological, emotional, mental, or physical, and catechists can be held responsible for injuries caused.

The best protection for a Religious Education Administrator or a catechist against being accused of negligence is a reasonable effort to implement rules and regulations.

## VI. SEXUAL ABUSE

### PHYSICAL SEXUAL ABUSE

This involves hands on touching in a sexual way. The range of abusive behaviors that are sexual include sexualized hugging or kissing; any kind of sexual touching or fondling; oral and anal sex, masturbation of the victim or forcing the victim to masturbate the offender; sexual intercourse.

### OVERT SEXUAL ABUSE

This involves voyeurism or exhibitionism. The criteria for voyeurism or exhibitionism is whether the adult is being sexually stimulated. This is about an adult using a child for his or her own conscious or unconscious sexual stimulation.

### COVERT SEXUAL ABUSE

- a) Verbal – This involves inappropriate sexual talking: and adult calling another person by objectified sexual names; It includes derogatory comments, jokes or slurs.
- b) Boundary Violation – Not respecting the privacy or space of a child.

### EMOTIONAL SEXUAL ABUSE

Emotional sexual abuse results from cross-generational bonding. When one parent has a relationship with the child that is more important than the relationship they have with their spouse, there is emotional sexual abuse. The issue is whether the adult is there for the student's needs, rather than the child being there for the adult's needs. And while children have the capacity to be sexual in a way appropriate to their development level, whenever an adult is being sexual with a child, sexual abuse is going on.

This material adapted from, *Bradshaw on: Healing the Same that Binds You* by John Bradshaw. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc., 1988.

## VII. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Catechists should understand what sexual harassment is. Federal anti-discrimination law can bind Catholic institutions.

**Definition:** The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission has issued guidelines that define sexual harassment, forbidden by Title VII as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct by an individual is made explicitly or implicitly a term of employment;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment decision;
- And such conduct has the purpose or effect to interfere with an individual's work performance, or creates a hostile or intimidating environment.

The above definition concerns employment conditions; however, "education" can be substituted for "employment" in the definitions, and the basis for Title IX violations would be evident.

Students are protected against sexual harassment in much the same manner that employees are protected. Since parishes sponsor religious education programs in much the same manner as schools are sponsored, it seems that participants should also be protected from sexual harassment.

**EXAMPLES:** The following are examples of behaviors that could constitute sexual harassment: Sexual proposition, off-color jokes, inappropriate physical contact, innuendoes, sexual offers, looks, and gestures.

## PREVENTION

It is far easier to prevent claims of sexual harassment than it is to defend them. To that end, employees, catechists, and volunteers must take Safe Environment Training. Staff members must understand what sorts of behaviors can be construed as sexual harassment.

Catechists should discuss issues of fair treatment of others with their students, and should promptly correct any students who demean others. Defenses such as, “I was only kidding,” will not be accepted if the alleged victim states that the behavior was offensive and unwelcome and a court finds that a reasonable person could find the behavior offensive and unwelcome.

Sexual harassment and other forms of demeaning behavior have no place in a catechetical program. Guarding the dignity of all members of the parish community should be a priority for all catechists and catechetical leaders.

## VIII. CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

Nebraska law imposes a mandatory duty upon physicians, nurses, school employees, social workers, and any other persons to report child abuse or neglect.

Basis for report: If a person has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances reasonably would result in abuse or neglect.

Definition of abuse and neglect: The Nebraska Statutes define “abuse or neglect” as knowingly, intentionally, or negligently causing or permitting a minor child to be:

1. Placed in a situation that endangers his or her life or physical or mental health;
2. Cruelly confined or cruelly punished;
3. Deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or care;
4. Left unattended in a motor vehicle, if such minor child is six years of age or under;
5. Sexually abused, or;
6. Sexually exploited by allowing, encouraging, or forcing such person to solicit for or engage in prostitution, debauchery, public indecency, or obscene or pornographic photography, films, or depictions.

### Time and Method of Reporting:

1. Report is to be made immediately.
2. Report first may be made by telephone to a law enforcement agency or to the Department of Social Services. The toll free number for the Department of Social Services is 1-800-652-1999.
3. Any oral report must be followed by a written report, which shall contain:
  - a. The address and age of the abused or neglected child;
  - b. The address of the person or persons having custody of the abused or neglected;
  - c. The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect, or the conditions and circumstances which would reasonably result in such abuse or neglect;
  - d. Any evidence of previous abuse or neglect including the nature and extent;
4. Any other information which in the opinion of the person may be helpful in establishing the cause of such abuse or neglect and the identity of the perpetrator or perpetrators. Once the department of Social Services is notified of the suspected child abuse, the Department shall take the appropriate legal action to protect the abused or neglected child.

### Failure to Report

- a Any person who willfully fails to make a report or knowingly releases confidential information other than through the process described above shall be guilty of a Class II misdemeanor.
- b If convicted of a Class II misdemeanor, the person faces a maximum of three months imprisonment or \$500 fine, or both.

### Report to Archdiocese (Sexual Abuse)

- a In addition to the mandatory reporting procedure described above, all personnel of the Archdiocese shall make a verbal report of the incident to the Chancellor, followed by written report.
- b The Chancellor shall immediately notify the members of the Archdiocesan Sexual Complaint Response Team, the attorney representing the Archdiocese on sexual misconduct matters, and the liability insurance carrier of the reports.

## **IX. COPYRIGHT LAWS**

### **Copyright Law Consideration**

Section 107 of the 1976 Copyright Act deals with “fair use” and specifically states that the fair use of copies in teaching “is not an infringement of copyright.” The “sticking point” is what the term “fair use” means. The section lists four factors to be included in any determination of fair use:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purposes;
2. The nature of the copyrighted work;
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as whole;
4. The effect of the use upon the potential market of or value of the copyrighted work.

## **X. SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS**

Substitute catechists are called by the regular weekly catechists and are to be given the teacher’s manual and the lesson plan ahead of time. The plan is to include the evening’s activities and materials necessary for execution.

Catechists should have written general procedures and helpful hints to aid the substitute. This should be on file with the RE Office so it will be available when a substitute is needed. Items should include fire and tornado emergency procedures, where supplies are located, helpful hints about individual children, allergies, etc.

The Director is to be given the date a substitute is being requested, the name of the substitute, and a copy of the lesson plan one week in advance.

In case of emergencies, substitutes will be asked to teach and will be notified as soon as possible. Catechists are to make every effort to make the materials available to the substitutes on these occasions. An extra teacher’s manual may be found in the director’s office for the substitute’s use.

Substitute catechists are to receive a SMM Catechist Handbook and are required to exhibit the same professional behaviors as the weekly catechists.

## XI. EMERGENCY PLAN

### Drill Procedures, revised 07/23/22

#### Fire Drill procedures are as follows:

- A. The signal for a fire drill is a continuous sounding of the fire alarm.
- B. Teachers/aides must close their classroom doors.
- C. Teachers, when possible, are to take their attendance list with them during the fire drill.
- D. The teacher will lead the class out. If there is an aide, s/he will follow the last child out of the room. Once a class arrives at its designated location, the class turns to face the building.
- E. The teacher will count the class once they arrive outside. The number should correspond to the class list. Any discrepancy should be brought to the Director's attention at once.
- F. Classes move in a single file line with hands at sides. Silence is maintained until the class returns to the classroom.
- G. A regular bell ringing will be the signal to return to class.
- H. Fire Drill locations are as follows:

Religious Education Door to Blacktop Grades 7 & 8, & Extended Day Care Room

Middle Door to sidewalk to Blacktop Library and Grades 3, 4, 5, and 6

Main Entrance to Blacktop Grades 1 and 2

East Auditorium Door to Blacktop Auditorium

Northwest Gymnasium Exit to Blacktop Gymnasium

**Tornado Drill procedures are as follows:**

- A. The signal for a tornado drill will be an announcement stating the fact.
  - B. Teachers/Aides must close their classroom doors. Attendance sheet and flashlight shall be taken to the Tunnel.
  - C. Students are to sit on the floor in an orderly manner. Silence is maintained until the class returns to the classroom.
1. All students are to follow behind their catechist and walk using the Main Stair Well to the Tunnel. The aide should walk at the end of the line so all children follow. (The tunnel can be accessed from all stairs.)
  2. The director will announce when it is time to return to class.

**XII. CRISIS PLAN**

**1. Bomb**

- a. The cue is “Would the faculty and students please go to church for our prayer service now!”
- b. Immediately walk up to church quietly.
- c. Discuss with students if this happens and they are not in the classroom, they need to get back as fast as possible. If you know someone is missing from your room, go get them.

## 2. Intruder

- a. An announcement will be made, “An intruder is in the building.”
- b. Let the students know the procedure before it happens.
- c. Also let the students know that we will probably never have a real intruder, but we do have to practice it. Tell them the reason for a lockdown—an intruder is in the building and we want to keep all the students safe.
- d. Discuss with them that if they are in the restroom, they need to go to the closest classroom before the door gets closed. Look in the hall for any children and bring them into your room, even if they are not your students. Turn off your lights. Close your doors. They should be locked. **DO NOT OPEN YOUR DOOR FOR ANY REASON!**
- e. The students then need to go to the coat closet for concealment purposes. They are to sit down low with **NO** talking so they don’t arouse attention.
- f. Be ready for an intruder drill at any time, so please go over the procedures.

### XIII. LESSON PLANNING: HOW TO MAKE A LESSON PLAN

*Use the grade level calendar and the RE Calendar to plan your lesson.*

**Use Resource Pages:** Familiarize yourself with the Teacher's Guide: background information on Church's teaching, learning styles, stages of faith development, and various methods suggested.

#### 1. Pre-plan

A. Read materials for the weekly unit one week in advance of presentation (teacher's manual, student text, parent pages).

B. Prepare: Read the child text first. Read the Teacher's Guide next. Connect the lesson with your own faith story to get in touch with the heart of the message being presented. Remember the text is just a tool, a guide. You will be the living message, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So let your creativity come to bear on the lessons.

#### 2. Stew and Brew

A. Think through the message and be on the alert for current materials related to the topic. Search for events, items, etc. that will actualize the message in the student's real world.

A. **Be Creative!** Use your own ideas to make the message of the evening exciting.

3. Know the message and the aim of the lesson -be able to state the objective in a simple statement.

A. Plan the lesson to be child-centered, that is, make the objectives state what the children are doing, not what you are doing. That way you can tell how active the class will be. This will cut down on your talking. All activities should help the children understand the objective for the lesson.

B. Look for and identify a social justice theme for the students.

4. Outline the lesson to be taught

A. **The experience of the learner**—Introduce an experience common to the students.

**B. The Christian Message** — Reflect on the Christian message as it relates to that experience.

**C. Lived Response** — Conclude with an activity integrating the deeper Christian meaning into their daily lives.

5. Plan:

Plan carefully the amount of time you spend on an activity – the outcome should be equal to the amount of work you put into it. As a norm, change your pace about every 10 minutes. Activities may take longer.

6. Choose:

Choose the activities you are most comfortable with. Often you cannot do all the activities that are suggested.

7. Summarize and Evaluate:

- Was the aim achieved?
- Has the doctrine just presented been made relevant to the everyday life of the student?
- Has the learner been made aware of ways to respond in daily life to God's gift of love?

8. Pray & Trust:

**The Spirit of God is with you. Fear not!** Prepare well, love your students, share your faith and faith stories. The students will learn and love you, and their God.

LESSON PLAN

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Room # \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter \_\_\_\_\_ Pages \_\_\_\_\_

Important things to remember: \_\_\_\_\_

Objective for class: What is the most important thing every student should know?

\_\_\_\_\_

Opening Prayer: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps to teach this objective in order:

A) \_\_\_\_\_

B) \_\_\_\_\_

C) \_\_\_\_\_

D) \_\_\_\_\_

Materials needed: \_\_\_\_\_

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How will you know if they know this objective? \_\_\_\_\_

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Home Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Booklet Review: #1 #2 #3 #4 #5

What method will you use to reinforce this prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

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Announcements: \_\_\_\_\_

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Pass out handouts.

Closing Prayer: \_\_\_\_\_

Question of the night? (Think of a question to ask students as they go out the door to check if they learned the objective.) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Final Check

The day before you are scheduled to teach a class, it's a good idea to review this checklist to make sure that you are prepared.

- I have prepared, reflected, and prayed about the theme.
- A copy of my lesson plan will be at hand to help me keep my lesson on track.
- My mind is clear about the theme of the lesson and its relationship to the previous lessons.
- I am clear about what I want the children to learn from this lesson and about the attitudes and understandings I hope to build.
- The lesson includes prayer experiences.
- Visuals, props, art supplies, and other materials needed for the lesson are collected and arranged in the order they will be needed. There are extra materials for students in case they will be needed.
- The lesson includes activities that will allow for the children's active participation in their own learning.
- I have connected the lesson to interests, situations, and events that are current in children's lives.
- I am prepared to ask thought questions as well as fact questions.
- I am prepared to share a story of my own faith experience that relates to the theme - a story that will encourage youngsters to share their own experiences.
- I realize that the lesson may not develop as I planned and am ready to make adjustments if need be.
- Any audiovisual equipment I plan to use is in good working condition.
- I have previewed films, videos, or filmstrips to make sure that they fit the lesson theme and are age appropriate.

## XIV. Classroom Management and Aides of Discipline

All catechists will promote an open, inclusive, joyful and Christian environment. Parents are asked to discuss expectations of what cooperation looks and sounds like with their children, especially in the beginning month of the program and periodically throughout the year.

Students enrolled in Religious Education classes are expected to maintain a high standard of behavior. This expectation will encourage and strengthen each child's character in accordance with Catholic principles, and promote order and an atmosphere of discovery/learning throughout the Program. Compliance with three rules is expected of all students at all times. These rules are:

1. Demonstrate respect for yourself and others;
2. Contribute to the learning environment at all times; and
3. Following religious education classroom rules and procedures.

The St. Margaret Mary RE faculty consists of catechists and aides who are volunteers. They give freely of their time, talents, and energies and deserve our utmost respect, consideration and support at all times.

Since the true form of discipline is self-discipline, it is our goal as educators to assist the student in acquiring self-control. Disciplinary actions, if necessary, will be guided by care and concern, fairness and truth. While temporary guardians of your children, the catechists wish to collaborate with the parents in a problem-solving manner for the good of all concerned. If it is determined that misbehavior is of a very serious nature, the following steps may be followed.

1. The student will be dealt with by the catechist in charge. A phone call will be made to the parent(s) or guardian(s) involved or a "Time Out Form" is completed to be returned the following week. See pages 26-27.

**2. If a problem cannot be solved quickly in the classroom setting, the Catechist will ask the student to go to the RE Office. Once a student has been sent to the office the following steps will be taken:**

- **After confirming the reason sent by the teacher, the student will be talked to, a “Disciplinary Action Plan” will be made, and then the student will be walked back to the classroom with a copy of the written plan for the teacher and parent(s).**

- **In the case of a second occurrence of being sent to the office, parents will be called for a conference.**

**3. If the behaviors cannot or will not be corrected and expulsion becomes necessary, this decision will be made by the Director of Religious Education in consultation with the Pastor. Notification may be made by phone discussion or face to face conference, but shall be confirmed to the parents in writing, as well as notifying them of their right to appeal. This expulsion may then be appealed to the Catechesis and Faith Formation Board by a written request to the President of the Board from the parent(s) or guardian(s) for a special hearing. Any such requests must be made no later than 7 days after the date of the expulsion.**

If an appeal is requested, it shall be the policy of the St. Margaret Mary Catechesis and Faith Formation Board that all students of St. Margaret Mary Religious Education Program receive a hearing before a committee appointed by the Board President in any expulsion proceedings. This committee shall consist of the Executive Committee of the Board (President, Vice-President, and Secretary) and other non-Board members appointed by the President of the Board. This committee shall hear from the Director of Religious Education and the parent(s) of the expelled student. No attorneys or witnesses shall be present. This committee shall make a recommendation to the pastor, who shall make final determination in the matter. The recommendation of the committee shall be either to uphold the expulsion or to overturn the expulsion and return the student to enrollment in the religious education program. The Pastor has the final word in such matters.

The following list enumerates some of the circumstances which may lead to immediate disciplinary action.

1. Seriously disrupting instruction or a school event.
2. Using any abusive, rude, disrespectful, or inappropriate language and/or responding in an insubordinate manner to the catechist, adult or other students.
3. Language or behavior which is of an explicitly sexual nature, name calling based upon gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability, or vulgar or profane language, or action or graffiti which is vulgar, profane or disparages others based upon the conditions cited herein.
4. Physically harming, threatening, or attempting to do physical harm by word or action, or harassing a catechist, adult, or other student.
5. Causing damage to the school, church, or another's personal property, causing a fire, or causing a false fire alarm, or threatening to cause harm or damage, or making terroristic threats toward the school or church or any person in the school or church.
6. Possessing any dangerous weapons or substances.
7. Being in a part of the school or parish property without authorization from a supervising adult.
8. Behavior of the student that presents a moral danger to other students.
9. Behavior which is incorrigible.
10. Being involved in any serious misbehavior, activity or event which violates or appears to violate the philosophy and policies of St. Margaret Mary Church.

## **CLASSROOM RULES (Sample)**

- We respect all persons, places and things.
- We listen to the person speaking.
- We take turns speaking.
- We leave the room only with permission.
- We behave in mannerly ways, showing care for others.
- We cooperate with others as on a team.
- We return our space to the way we found it.
- We complete homework assignments on time.
- We follow the dismissal and emergency plans inside and outside the building.
- When in doubt, we ask ourselves “What would Jesus do”

# **TIME OUT FORM**

Time Out Sheet Instructions:

§ To be used only after other efforts have failed, e.g., proximity, gesture, verbal reminder.

§ It is not a punishment, but time for the child to calm down, think, and reflect.

§ White copy goes to parents; yellow copy put in the DRE's mailbox; keep the pink copy.

## **DIRECTIONS FOR USE:**

1. Child goes to a Time Out desk or area and fills out top part of form.
2. Child shows teacher form and teacher signs, after briefly addressing the problem.
3. Child takes form home to complete with parent.
4. Parent and child discuss, sign, and return it next class period to catechist.
5. If child fails to return the form, the catechist calls the parent.
6. If a child fails to return a form more than one time, s/he is referred to the Director.

TIME OUT FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Identify the problem: (Use an "I" message)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution: (Done with parent at home.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Catechist's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_