

Holy Cross Children's Catechesis Parent Handbook

Mission Statement of Holy Cross Parish

As disciples of Jesus who are inspired by the Holy Spirit, we, the Roman Catholic Community of Holy Cross Parish, strive to glorify God by using our time, talent, and treasure in worship and in service to all our brothers and sisters.

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.
John Paul II, On Catechesis in Our Time, October 16, 1979

This handbook is provided for informational purposes only. It is not a contract and may be amended at any time as determined necessary by the parish.

Absences

If your child needs to be absent from an afterschool catechetical session, please notify the Director of Children's Catechesis in advance at keffron@hcpsb.org or call the parish office at 574-233-2179, if at all possible. In-school catechetical sessions will follow the regular absence reporting process of Holy Cross School.

Attendance

Catechists will keep a record of attendance for each session of catechesis. Regular attendance assists participants to grow in their Catholic faith. When it is the case that a participant is not able to attend catechesis regularly, alternative approaches to catechesis may be proposed by the Director of Children's Catechesis to the family of the participant, in consultation with the Pastor.

Arrival and Dismissal procedures

Arrival

For after school catechesis, in order to ensure that participants are supervised at all times, please bring your child to the entryway of the Smith Center where they will be greeted by their catechist or a volunteer. You will be required to wear a mask and we request that you maintain social distance from other families during this time.

Dismissal

For after school catechesis, at the conclusion of the catechetical session, catechists will walk participants to the entryway of the Smith Center. The catechist will release participants only to parents/guardians or other adults for whom we have written permission to release your child.

Late pickup

If an emergency occurs and you will be late to pick up your child, please notify the Director of Children's Catechesis or your catechist as soon as possible. When it is the case that a participant has not been picked up by an authorized adult, the Director of Children's Catechesis or catechist will attempt to contact parents and other emergency contacts using the registration information provided. If no contact can be established with the parents or other emergency contacts within 20 minutes, it will be presumed that a dire emergency has occurred and the police will be contacted.

Temperature Checks

Before entering, every child will have their temperature taken with a non-contact forehead thermometer. If their temperature is 100.4° F or greater, the parent/guardian will need to take them home immediately. Parents are expected to remain with their child until their temperature is checked at the door.

Baptism

Baptism is not required for participation in catechesis at Holy Cross parish. If a child has not yet been baptized, or a child has been baptized in another Christian tradition not in union with the Catholic Church, a meeting with the parents and Pastor and/or Director of Children's Catechesis will help determine the best approach to catechesis and sacramental reception for the child.

Baptismal Certificates

Ordinarily, parents will provide a copy of their child's baptismal certificate at the time of their first registration.

Calendar

The calendar for parish religious education is available at https://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=hcssparrish.org_0dh51pdkj3o218n9djn7llfp7o%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/New_York .

Cancellations

If it is the case that an after-school session must be cancelled due to snow or another emergency, you will be notified via text alert. If you have opted out of the text alert system, you will be notified by phone.

Catechesis Records

Holy Cross parish maintains records for participants in order to provide continuity and ongoing support. If your child has participated in children's catechesis at another parish or school previously, please request from that parish or school that they send your child's record to our parish. Should you need to participate in children's catechesis at Holy Cross in the future, please request in writing (electronic communication is acceptable) that the parish send a record to the receiving parish.

Catechetical Staff

Catechists, Catechist Aides and other Catechetical volunteers are people who make a year-long commitment to assist the children and young people of Holy Cross parish to listen to God and grow in their faith. Catechists commit to significant formation in preparation for this service and this formation varies depending on the particular kind of catechesis the Catechist leads. Catechetical aides receive preparation in assisting the Catechists with their work. Catechetical volunteers receive training according to their role. All Catechists, Catechist Aides and Catechetical volunteers participate in diocese-provided Safe Environment Training. If you are interested in becoming a Catechist, Catechist Aide or Catechetical volunteers please contact the Director of Children's Catechesis at keffron@hcpsb.org or 574-233-2179.

Change of Information

Please notify our office of any changes in address, phone numbers, emails, or medical situations.

Classroom / Atrium expectations

Participants are expected to respect others, themselves and their environment at all times.

Communicable Disease Procedures

COVID-19

Participation in after-school catechesis sessions

Participants and leaders are expected to stay home from catechetical sessions if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19 based on CDC Guidance that is not otherwise explained. These include a fever (100.4° F or greater), cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell¹.

If a participant or leader has recently had contact with a person with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, has someone in their home being tested for COVID-19, or has recently traveled from somewhere considered to be a “hot spot” by the CDC, that person is expected to stay home from catechetical sessions for 14 calendar days.

Emergency Medical Treatment

In the event that someone exhibits emergency warning signs of COVID-19, emergency medical assistance will be contacted. Emergency warning signs include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face.²

Notification of possible exposure

It is the responsibility of the local health department to contact the person confirmed with COVID-19, inform direct contacts of their possible exposure, and give instructions to those involved with the confirmed case, including siblings and other household members regarding self-quarantine and exclusions. The individual who tested positive will not be identified in communications to other participants at large but may need to be selectively identified for contact tracing by the local health department.

Handwashing

All participants and leaders will be expected to wash hands at the start of every session, after using the restroom, and after coughing, sneezing or nose blowing. Participants will

¹ See “Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19),” Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms.pdf>

² See “Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19),” Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms.pdf>

receive presentations on handwashing, coughing, sneezing and nose blowing prior to their regular participation in catechetical sessions or at the first session.

Developmental Differences, Delays and Disabilities

Holy Cross Parish has a duty and responsibility to ensure that all people have the opportunity for catechesis and especially preparation to receive sacraments. When a child is best served by accommodations to the approaches used in on-site catechetical offerings, the parent should contact the Director of Children's Catechesis to determine a plan for catechesis of the child or young person. When a child is currently participating in on-site catechetical offerings and demonstrates an unaddressed need for accommodations, the Director of Children's Catechesis may contact the parents to determine a plan for catechesis of the child or young person.

Discipline Procedures

For after school catechesis, if it is the case that a student does not observe behavior expectations, the following procedure will be observed:

First instance: Warning by catechist

Second instance: Student will be asked to spend a few minutes collecting her or himself in a space separate from the larger community, which we call the "centering chair."

Third instance: Parent notification, visit with the Director of Children's Catechesis and Behavior Plan

Fourth Instance: Parent conference

Fifth Instance: Behavior contract

Failure to observe a behavior contract is an indication that the on-site catechesis offered at Holy Cross parish is not a good fit for the student and alternative approaches to catechesis will be proposed by the Director of Children's Catechesis in consultation with the Pastor.

Catechesis sessions during school will follow the procedures of Holy Cross School.

Electronic Communication

With Adults

All electronic communication with adults will occur in one of three ways. The standard method will be via email. In case of emergency a phone call will be made to any phone numbers given at registration. For cancellation alerts, text messages will be sent via our SMS system.

With Youth

No direct electronic communication will be made with the youth without express consent from the parents/legal guardian of the child. This consent can be given either via a waiver sent out and signed at the beginning of the year or via a written note that will be kept on file in the parish office.

The primary form of electronic communication with youth will be through video chat software (i.e. Google Meet and Zoom) for any catechetical sessions that cannot take place in person. Parents are encouraged to feel comfortable sitting in on any catechetical sessions done through these means.

Emergency Contact Information

Parents must provide emergency contact information of a minimum of one additional adult to be used in the event of an emergency.

Financial Assistance

Catechetical Fees offset (but do not completely cover) the costs associated with providing Children's Catechesis at Holy Cross parish. Payment plans are available. If it is the case that the full payment of catechetical fees presents a significant hardship to a family, parents may request financial assistance from the parish.

Homeschooling

Parents are the first catechists of their children. When a family has discerned that this approach is best for their child's catechesis, Holy Cross parish honors this and works to support the family in that effort. *A Pastoral Letter on Homeschooling with Diocesan Statutes* of the Diocese of Fort Wayne South Bend is available at

<http://www.diocesefwsb.org/Data/Resources/d0a519cc85926417c2e5f72e172e084a-homeschool.pdf>.

Parents who choose to offer catechesis at home will be asked to register their children and maintain regular communication with the Pastor and/or the Director of Children's Catechesis. When textbooks are used, parents will be asked to choose a textbook from the *Confirmity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series* of the USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism available at

<http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>.

When a family wishes homeschool using a text or approach that is not found on the *Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series*, a meeting between one or both parents and the Pastor and/or Director of Children's Catechesis will be necessary.

Non-custodial Parents

Holy Cross parish presumes that both parents have the right of decision making and access to information about a child's catechesis 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 of all special directions. No child will be dismissed from the program to the non-custodial parent without the written consent of the custodial parent/guardian.

Photography Release

Permission for the taking and use of photographs, video, and other media of every child will be requested at the start of the catechetical year. Parents will be sent waivers to fill out either granting permission or denying permission. It is the right of every parent to choose whether or not to give this permission.

Record Transfer

Holy Cross will provide a copy of a child or young person's catechetical record to parents and other communities at the request of parents.

When a child or young person has participated in catechesis at another institution prior to participation in catechesis at Holy Cross, it will be necessary for parents to request copies of catechetical records from the previous institution to be sent to Holy Cross. At a minimum, the records should include year(s) of participation, attendance at sessions and textbook title and level/approach to catechesis and level (if textbook is not used). When a child coming from a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium in another community is beginning to participate in an atrium at Holy Cross, it is extremely helpful to request a record of presentations the child or young person has been given.

Registration

Requirements to Register

Ordinarily, in order for a child to be eligible to be registered in after school Children's Catechesis at Holy Cross parish, the child will have turned 3 by August 1. Parents of children who will turn 3 after August 1 may request special consideration for eligibility.

Ordinarily, successful independent toileting is not a requirement for registration. However, due to COVID-19 limiting who is allowed to be in the Atrium, we are unable to accommodate parents remaining throughout catechesis sessions with their child. No catechetical staff is able to assist a child in toileting during a catechetical session (with the exception of catechists who are parents assisting their own children) and therefore all children must be capable of successful independent toileting.

Priority Registration for 2020-2021

For the 2020-2021 school year, the following priority will be given for registration:

1. Children of catechists
2. Returning parishioners with a regular attendance record
3. New Parishioners
4. Returning parishioners without a regular attendance record
5. Returning non-parishioners with a regular attendance record
6. New non-parishioners and Returning non-parishioners without a regular attendance record

Sacramental preparation

Catechesis Prior to Sacramental Preparation

It is expected that in order to participate in sacramental preparation, participants will have actively participated in one full year of systematic, comprehensive catechesis prior to the sacramental preparation year.

Sacramental Preparation Process

Consistent Participation in Regular Preparation Sessions

Consistent participation in regular preparation sessions help the child or young person to receive the sacrament s/he is preparing for as fruitfully as possible.

Retreat

Holy Cross offers retreats in preparation for sacraments. These retreats are usually held with all the children and/or young people who are receiving a sacrament together, regardless of how they are preparing in their regular preparation sessions.

When it is the case that the retreat occurs during a regular school day and participants will miss that day of school at a non-Holy Cross school, ordinarily this will be an excused

absence as a religious observance. If the school requires additional documentation beyond a parent's note, this can be provided upon request.

First Eucharist and First Reconciliation

Age of Preparation - First Eucharist and First Reconciliation

At Holy Cross parish, preparation for first Eucharist and first Penance ordinarily occurs when a child is in second grade or the year the child turns 7 (whichever comes first).

Catechesis Prior to Sacramental Preparation - First Eucharist and First Reconciliation

If it is the case that a child is participating in systematic, comprehensive catechesis for the first time or after a year or more absence in second grade or the year the child turns 7, that child will wait to begin sacramental preparation for Reconciliation and Eucharist until the following year (third grade or the year the child turns 8).

Sponsors / Padrina/os

Sponsors are not required for the first reception of the sacrament of Eucharist. However, in some cultures and communities, children and their parents choose a sponsor or sponsors for this sacrament. It is assumed that sponsors would be able to fulfill the same requirements as those in Baptism and Confirmation.

Confirmation

Age of Preparation - Confirmation

Preparation for Confirmation ordinarily begins in the seventh grade, or the year the young person turns 13 (whichever comes first) and reception of Confirmation ordinarily occurs in the eighth grade or the year the young person turns 14 (whichever comes first).

Catechesis Prior to Sacramental Preparation - Confirmation

Because Confirmation is celebrated in the Fall at Holy Cross, it is necessary for those who wish to receive Confirmation in eighth grade or the year the young person turns 14 (whichever comes first), to be enrolled for two full years prior to the reception of the sacrament. This means that in order for a young person to receive the sacrament of Confirmation in the eighth grade year or the year a young person turns 14, it is expected that the young person will participate in two consecutive years of catechesis immediately prior (sixth grade or the year the young person turns 12 and seventh grade or the year the young person turns 13).

Sponsors / Padrina/os

In the sacrament of Confirmation, the candidate is asked to choose a sponsor other than a parent for reception of the sacrament. Requirements to serve as a sponsor are the same as those in Baptism: a minimum of 16 years of age, full initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) in the Catholic Church and living a life that is consistent with the faith of the Church. Although not required, a sponsor can be one of the candidate's Godparents.

Please see the Confirmation Handbook regarding additional information about the Confirmation preparation process.

Safe Environment Training for Children

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend requires that parishes provide age-specific safe environment training for all children participating in catechetical programming. Young children through grade 5 will receive a 15 minute presentation. Children and young people older than age 10 / grade 5 will receive more extended presentations during class time. All sessions take place in the Fall. Parents may view all the Safe Environment material that we use at <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/Safe-Environment-Training-Children-and-Youth>. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the Director of Children's Catechesis at 574-233-2179 or keffron@hcpsb.org.

Theology of the Body

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend requires that parishes provide formation in Theology of the Body using *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition*, published by Ascension Press. This program includes a Parent's Guide that can provide more information about the program.

Volunteers

Our hope is that all parents would feel welcome to volunteer their time and talent to our catechetical programs. If you are interested in being a catechists aide or a lead catechist, please contact Kevin Effron (keffron@hcpsb.org).

Becoming a catechist for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd requires specific training and is useful for faith formation both in the Atrium and at home. The more trained catechists that we

have, the more opportunities in the Atrium we can offer. If you are interested in training to be able to lead CGS, please contact Kevin Effron (keffron@hcpsb.org) for more information.

All of our CGS catechists and aides will go through safe environment training and background checks before ministering to our youth. Furthermore, any volunteer who has recurring contact, contact for an extended period of time, or one-on-one contact with any child must go through the same training and checks.

Withdrawal

Parents are welcome to withdraw their child from parish catechesis at Holy Cross parish. If a parent chooses to do so before the sixth week of the catechetical year, Holy Cross will refund catechetical fees minus the cost of the textbook (if the child is in a program that uses textbooks). After that time, because of the costs incurred, Holy Cross will not be able to refund fees paid.