



HOLY CROSS CHURCH

Children's Catechesis Parent Handbook

2023-2024

Mission Statement of Holy Cross Parish

*We are disciples of Jesus in the Roman Catholic tradition at Holy Cross Parish.
Our welcoming and diverse community of faith, centered on the Eucharist, is
committed to know, love, and serve God and neighbor.*

Catechesis is the echo of the Word of God....Catechesis is a special space for fostering a personal encounter with Him.
-Pope Francis, January 30, 2021

We welcome you and your family to our Children's Catechesis programs at Holy Cross Parish!
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.

Remind App

Please note that we will be using the Remind app this year to facilitate communication with families. *Note: If your child attends Holy Cross School, this Parish Remind account is separate from the school's Remind account.* Parents' cell phone numbers listed on the child's registration form will be added to one of the following classes: CGS Level 1, CGS Level 2, OCIC, or Confirmation Prep. Please follow the prompts you will receive to register, so that communication between the Director of Children's Catechesis, catechists, and families is simplified. If you have questions about how to use the Remind app, visit <https://help.remind.com/hc/en-us/articles/4409807883149-Frequently-asked-questions-for-parents> for more information or contact Heidi Witte at hwitte@hcpsb.org / 574-233-2179 x 115.

Absences

If your child needs to be absent from a catechetical session, please notify Heidi Witte, Director of Children's Catechesis, in advance by sending a message via the Remind app. (If you are unable to use the Remind app, please email Heidi at hwitte@hcpsb.org or notify the Parish Office at 574-233-2179.)

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 both Sunday morning and afterschool OCIC / sacramental prep, **please bring your child to the entryway of the Smith Center (920 Wilber Street)** where they will be greeted by their catechist or a volunteer. This will help us ensure that participants are supervised at all times.

Dismissal

For Sunday morning Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) sessions, **please pickup children in the narthex of Holy Cross Church (inside the entrance to the Church, facing Wilber Street) at 10:20 a.m.** You are invited to join our parish community for 10:30 a.m. Mass directly afterwards, where we offer Children's Liturgy of the Word each week! Because Mass will begin 10 minutes later, it is especially important to pick up your child on time after Sunday morning sessions.

For afterschool OCIC or sacramental prep, **please pick up your child in the entryway of the Smith Center (920 Wilber Street)** at the conclusion of the catechetical session.

The catechist will release participants only to parents/guardians or other adults for whom we have written permission to release your child. Please ensure that the pickup person has a form of photo identification with them.

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.

Atrium Shoes

Students in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Level I and Level II atrium are encouraged to bring a pair of "atrium shoes" to leave in the atrium each week. (This helps keep the atrium clean, especially when there is rain or snow.) Please contact Heidi Witte at hwitte@hcpsb.org if this is a financial burden for your family so that we can assist.

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 registration or parent orientation meeting.

Calendar

The calendar for parish religious education will be provided to you via email and will be uploaded to <https://hcpsb.org/form-your-faith/childrens-catechesis> for your convenience.

Cancellations

If it is the case that an afterschool session must be canceled due to snow or another emergency, you will be notified via text and email through the Remind app. The front office will also be provided with cancellations as soon as possible.

Communication

All communication will be provided through the Remind app, which sends text messages and email notifications to the parental contact information provided on the child's registration form. If you need to get ahold of your child's catechist or the Director of Children's Catechesis, please contact Heidi Witte by sending a message on the Remind app, or contact her at hwitte@hcpsb.org / 574-233-2179 x 115. (The Remind app is the preferred method of contact.)

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 via the main office or the Director of Children's Catechesis (hwitte@hcpsb.org). 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). It is especially important to provide records of any sacraments received in the Catholic Church.

When a child coming from another Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium 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.

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

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.

Catechist 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 volunteer, please contact the Director of Children's Catechesis at hwitte@hcpsb.org or 574-233-2179 x115.

Change of Information

Please notify the Director of Children's Catechesis of any changes in address, phone numbers, emails, or medical situations.

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

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

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 may not be 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 hours (such as special sacramental retreats) will follow the procedures of Holy Cross School.

Electronic Communication

With Adults

All electronic communication with adults will occur in several ways. The standard method will be via the Remind app, which sends text messages and emails to parents. In case of emergency, a phone call will be made to any phone numbers given at registration.

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 diocesan waiver (page 2 of

<https://diocesefwsb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Electroniccommunication-ResourcesandForms1-15-2020.pdf>) or via a written note that will be kept on file in the parish office.

If necessary, 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 the 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 by contacting the Director of Children's Catechesis at hwitte@hcpsb.org or 574-233-2179 x115.

Home Study

Parents are the first and primary catechists of their children. When a family has discerned that home study is the best approach 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

<https://diocesefwsb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Homeschooling-Statutes.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 Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series of the USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism available at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Current%20Conformity%20List.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 were asked on the registration form to either grant or deny permission. It is the right of every parent to choose whether or not to give this permission.

Registration

Requirements to Register

Normally, in order for a child to be eligible to be registered in 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.

Priority Registration for 2023-2024

For the 2023-2024 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

In most cases, 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.

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.

Retreats

Holy Cross and the Diocese of Fort Wayne / South Bend offer 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

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

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

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).

Because Confirmation is celebrated in the Fall at Holy Cross, it is usually 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 / Padrinos

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, Eucharist, and Confirmation) 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 <https://diocesefwsb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-Training-Program-for-Children-in-Pre-school-to-Grade-Eight.pdf>. Parents indicate on the child's registration form if their child has permission to attend these in-class presentations. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the Director of Children's Catechesis at 574-233-2179 x115 or hwitte@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. This formation will be utilized with middle school students, usually in the 7th grade.

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 catechist aide or a lead catechist, please contact Heidi Witte hwitte@hcpsb.org or 574-233-2179 x115.

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 Heidi Witte (hwitte@hcpsb.org or 574-233-2179 x115) 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.

We thank you for accompanying your child on their catechetical journey! We look forward to sharing this journey with you and your child as we grow in faith together!